



CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

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TEXAS YOUNG LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

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I. Introduction

This “Career Development Guide” is intended to be a starting point for young lawyers who are interested in more fully developing their careers beyond working their jobs. There are many reasons to pursue a more rounded professional career in the practice of law. Engaging in other law-related activities other than just billing hours or going to work and then going home will add a richness to your experience as an attorney. Like the various types of fields in the practice of law, there are a variety of law-related activities that can suit you and your individual needs and goals. Those activities include socializing with other attorneys, engaging in pro bono or other volunteer work, writing articles, and getting more involved in bar associations and other organizations for lawyers. The benefits of these activities include becoming viewed as an expert in your field, developing new job or business-development prospects, and adding a richness to your experience as a Texas-licensed attorney.

II. Applying for Awards & Recognitions

Awards and recognitions include accolades you can receive as an attorney. You may be familiar with certain recognitions, such as Super Lawyers or the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division’s Top 40 Under 40. This section of our Career Development Guide assists with steps to take to learn about such awards and strategies to apply for them.

A. Researching Awards & Recognitions

The first thing to know about awards and recognitions is that, while sometimes attorneys are considered without ever knowing they’re being considered, most of the time, you have to show initiative and either apply for the award yourself or ask another attorney to nominate you to be considered for the award or recognition.

If you’re interested in being recognized for your work accomplishments and/or service to the bar and local community, the first step is to research what awards are available that you would qualify for. Many awards and recognitions require you to have a certain number of years of experience, while others that are focused on more recently licensed attorneys require you to have *under* a certain number of years of experience. Some awards will be based on practice area or demographic background.

In researching awards that you qualify for, keep in mind that many awards are given out by bar associations. This includes the State Bar of Texas, the various divisions and sections of the State Bar of Texas, the American Bar Association and other national bars, and local city-based or affinity bar associations.

Another point to be mindful of is that certain awards are “paid for” awards. Research to see whether the award you have in mind requires you to pay. Such awards are not always viewed as prestigious because they are purchased, rather than earned. Generally speaking, so long as you are a member of a bar association and/or otherwise qualify to be considered for an award, most awards do not require you to pay for them.

B. Tips & Strategies in Applying for Awards & Recognitions

Once you develop a working list of awards that you could qualify for, start identifying timelines to apply. The following includes tips and strategies for such applications.

1. Timely Apply

Awards and recognitions typically have deadlines by which you must apply or be nominated. Do not expect the organization that issues awards and recognitions to make exceptions for you or your work schedule. If there is a deadline, show initiative to make sure your application is timely submitted. One goal for such applications is to include both the quantitative (how much you've done) and the qualitative (your impact on individuals).

2. Line Up Good Letters of Support/Recommendation

Oftentimes, award applications require the submission of letters of recommendation or letters of support from people with whom you have worked or volunteered. Try to avoid duplication among your various supporters. For example, if one of your skills is that you're a good researcher, try to avoid having all of your letters of support repeat that you are a good researcher. Invite those writing your letters of support or recommendation to write from their personal perspectives about what it was like working or volunteering with you. Also, be mindful of others' time. Writing a good letter of support/recommendation is very time consuming. Don't be taken aback if you ask a supporter to write a letter of recommendation and they turn around and ask you to write it for them. This is not unusual and is something you should be prepared to take on in applying for awards and recognitions that require such letters.

3. Write a Persuasive Personal Statement

Many organizations that have awards/recognition programs will want you to write a personal statement. The personal statement should not simply repeat your resume. Instead, use your personal statement to personalize you, which means to convey who you are, not what you've done. Additionally, if you want to emphasize matters on your resume, draw out specific examples of what you want to highlight. Your personal statement may be a good place to include objective metrics that aren't always appropriate on a resume (e.g. if you volunteered at an organization, flesh out what that volunteer service included).

III. Announcing Career Achievements

A. Celebrate and express your gratitude.

Before taking steps to publicize your award, take a moment to celebrate it. Congratulate yourself on the accomplishment, and tell your loved ones about it. Also, don't forget to respond to the award notice (if practicable) to thank the person who informed you about the award. The individuals who participate in notifying recipients usually enjoy the excitement of award winners, and it is an opportunity to leave a good impression with the organization by thanking the person who notified you.

B. Review the Award Notification for Any Limitation or Restriction on Announcements

When you're notified that you've received an award or recognition, read the notice carefully to determine whether there are any limits on publicly announcing the recipient(s) of the award. Many organizations will notify the recipients before announcing the recipients publicly, and they do not want the award recipients to announce the organization's awards before the organization does. If there is a restriction on the announcement, calendar a reminder to make the announcement on the date you're able to announce. Although you cannot announce before any date set by the awarding organization, this does not mean you cannot start preparing content to make the announcement for when the awarding organization allows you to do so.

C. Write a Blurb as a Starting Point for Publicizing Content

Write up a brief blurb about receiving the award. A blurb is "a short description of a book, movie, or other product written for promotional purposes and appearing on the cover of a book or in an advertisement." In your blurb, state the name of the award, the awarding organization, what the award is intended to recognize, and a personal comment or two on your reaction to receiving the award.

The following is an example: "INSERT."

Sample:

BLURB

Audience | Form of Communication | Individual Name | Contact Information

Media	Press Release	Jane Smith	Jane.Smith@news.org
Media	Press Release	Steve Cisneros	Scisneros@news.org
Coworker	Email	Ricky Clifton	ricky@lawfirm.com
Family	Text	Mom	mom@parents.com

D. Identify Your Audiences & Determine How They Receive Information About You (or People Like You)

Make a list of the audiences to whom you want to announce the award. Examples of audiences include family, friends, coworkers, clients, professional groups, other community organizations, or the public. When identifying your audiences, make sure you consider your personal and professional goals. For each identified audience, if you already have a line of communication established with them, determine how they receive information from you. For example, you might text your family, post social media content to share with your friends, email your coworkers, send letters to clients, and write press releases for the media to write up news stories for the public. Once you've identified and made a list of your audiences, make a corresponding list of the types of written communications you need to use to reach those audiences.

E. Using the Blurb, Draft the Different Communications for Your Audiences

The general blurb you wrote can be adapted to different forms of written communication for your audiences. You might need to shorten the blurb for less formal communications (like texts or Twitter), or add to the blurb for more formal communications (such as press releases or letters). Draft, revise, and edit the various forms of announcements that you've identified for each target audience. For letters and press releases, use a personalized or firm letterhead.

F. Make a contact list of recipients, organized by audience, and then send.

The next step is to send the various communications about your award to your target audiences. Within your target audiences, identify the individuals who you want to inform about your award. For each individual, include the contact information for you plan to send the information. For example, if you plan to email a particular audience (like your media contacts), insert their email address into your list.

G. Reply to any responses.

For anyone who responds to you, make sure to follow up with some sort of acknowledgment that you received their response. If someone responds and asks for more information (such as someone from the media asking for a comment/quote), ensure that you respond promptly. Sometimes your communications will spur others to share what you shared with them to others. For example, if a news story features you or otherwise mentions you and the award, this provides you another opportunity to repeat this whole process by letting people know you were featured in the news article (i.e., additional content for publicity).

H. Update your resume.

Don't forget to include your recent accolade in your resume. After receiving three or so awards, you can create a new section of your resume just for your accolades.

When you receive your first award, you can perhaps include the award or recognition under a different section. For instance, if your first accolade is your first listing in *Your City's Best Lawyers*, perhaps consider temporarily including that accolade under a description of your current role. Or if your first accolade is for writing an article, consider including that award next to the article under the Publications section of your resume.

IV. Publishing Legal Articles

Publishing legal articles in your practice area is important to becoming a well-rounded legal professional and developing your legal career and reputation. Published articles can be listed on your resume; will typically exist online for most journals/publications, which improves your general web presence; can establish your experience on a certain legal issue in your field; and, in the drafting process, can help you acquire a better familiarity with legal issues in your practice area. The drafting and publishing of legal articles can also count toward hours of CLE credit, which can account for quite a lot of hours, as well as hours that count toward board certification credit. This section of the guide discusses the different types of publications to which legal articles and manuscripts can be submitted, general tips for drafting articles, and strategies to get the most out of your published legal articles.

A. Types of Publications for Legal Articles

1. Existing Law Blogs

Publishing for an existing law blog is probably one of the most overlooked opportunities for legal publishing. When attorneys think of law blogs, they think of all the work that goes into creating and maintaining their own law blog. However, many attorneys, legal organizations, and law professors have law blogs and often struggle for content because the burden to generate this content generally falls on the host of the law blog. While the willingness to publish content from external authors will vary from law blogger to law blogger, many hosts of law blogs would love to have another attorney author an article or post. Law bloggers that are more familiar with publishing content from other attorneys know there are cross-promotional benefits to publishing such content, including improving the reputation of the law blog in the legal community and improving the online visibility of the blog through search engine algorithms.

Suggested Action Items:

- a. Research law blogs in your practice area and determine whether the blog host publishes content from other attorneys.
- b. Contact the law blog host to see if they are willing to publish an article from an outside attorney and, if so, what the requirements are for publishing.
- c. When contacting a law blog host, include your resume and any draft article or proposed topic ideas you have; avoid asking the blog host for ideas for what you can publish on their blog because the goal is to have the blog host

invite you to be an author, which is less likely to occur if the law blogger has to generate topics for you.

- d. If the blog host is open to publishing an article you write, draft and submit a blog article to the blog host according to the host's specifications/requirements.

2. Bar Association Publications

Many bar associations have journals or other publications and will publish legal articles from attorneys. For example, the State Bar of Texas publishes the *Texas Bar Journal*. Generally, local bar associations also have magazines or journals that publish attorneys' articles. Practice area sections (such as the Litigation Section of the State Bar of Texas) have their own newsletters and publications. Like law blogs, bar association publications are very overlooked outlets for attorneys to submit articles and manuscripts. And like law bloggers, editorial boards of bar association journals often struggle to find content. As a result, publishing in a bar association journal may be a very viable way to develop your list of legal publications.

Suggested Action Items:

- a. Research publication opportunities within the State Bar of Texas. All Texas-licensed attorneys are members of the State Bar of Texas. The State Bar publishes the *Texas Bar Journal*, and many voluntary sections provide publication opportunities as well.
- b. Join bar associations that provide publication opportunities in your practice area. Sometimes, but not always, a bar association will require attorneys to be members of their bar association before accepting a proposed article or manuscript from an attorney. Being a member of a bar association will improve your chances of having an article selected for publication.
- c. Consider serving on the board of editors of a bar association's publication. Many times, bar association publications will have a board of editors or a committee that reviews attorney submissions. Frequently, those boards will also solicit articles from the editors or committee members themselves. Additionally, serving on the board of editors will give you insight into the caliber of articles being submitted by other authors and reasons why certain articles get published while others do not.

3. Newspapers & Trade Publications

Another overlooked group of publications in which to publish a legal article are non-legal publications, such as newspapers or trade journals and magazines. For these publications, the writing style and audiences are very different from those for legal publications. The editorial boards or committees that select articles for publication are also very different and are looking for more cutting-edge trends and updates that are relevant to the general public (for newspapers) or to a particular industry (for trade

publications). Lawyers have unique perspectives to add for the public and to different industries; however, lawyers also care more about certain aspects of an industry that many others in the industry or public do not care about. That said, a well written and helpful article for a newspaper or trade publication may be much more effective than a paid advertisement in the same issue of the same publication.

Suggested Action Items:

- a. Research trade publications or newspapers that publish articles authored by lawyers. For trade publications, consider those for which the readership overlaps with prospective clients of your firm, if applicable.
- b. Review prior issues to determine what types of articles from lawyers that the publication has published. If a trade publication or newspaper has published articles from lawyers, consider modeling the outline or style of your article or submission on those previously published.
- c. Find the relevant contact information for submitting your draft article or manuscript. Generally, newspapers and trade publications have editors or editorial boards that determine what articles will be published. Find the contact information for those editors or boards and make any relevant inquiries about publishing articles, including any formatting requirements.
- d. Draft your article in a way that appeals to the interest of the readership. Keep in mind that your audience is not a legal audience, but a more generalized audience that might be interested in the legal topic you want to write about.

4. Law Review & Law Journals

Most guidance that exists for legal publications addresses how to publish articles in law reviews and law journals. Getting published in academic law journals is highly competitive because law professors throughout the country are all competing to get published in these legal publications. Getting published in law reviews and law journals is part of their job responsibilities, and they therefore have much more time to dedicate to scholarly articles than practitioners do. However, many law journals and publications strive to be more useful to actual practitioners than to law professors. In other words, if you are wanting to publish a scholarly research article in a law review or law journal that provides useful guidance to practicing attorneys, do not set your sights solely on getting published in the *Harvard Law Review*. Publishing in law reviews and law journals is also challenging because the level of scholarly work required to be competitive for publication is very labor-intensive. But starting with the goal of getting published in a law review or law journal can be a great way to generate a series of smaller articles that would be highly competitive for bar association publications and law blogs.

Suggested Action Items:

- a. Research law journals that specialize in your practice area. For example, if you practice criminal, research law journals that specialize in criminal law. Create a list of the possible journals that publish articles in your practice area and include in that list any information about the legal publication, such as word limits, formatting and citation preferences/requirements, and any deadlines for submitting articles.
- b. Review past issues from those law journals to determine information about published authors and the topics of articles published. For example, if a law journal tends to publish articles only from law professors, it is likely customary that the law journal will not publish articles from practitioners. Conversely, if a law journal regularly publishes from practitioners, these law journals may be more likely to publish something you submit.

B. General Tips for Drafting Legal Articles for Publication

Many books have been written, and many resources exist online, for how to write well. This guide focuses on tips and recommendations that are most likely to help in getting your article seriously considered for publication.

Suggested Recommendations:

1. **Write for *both* of your target audiences.** Consider at least two audiences when you are drafting a legal article. Your primary audience is the readership of the publications in which you will likely seek to have your article published. A very important secondary audience is the editors of those publications. The goals in publishing are to provide helpful information to your primary audience, while presenting the information in a way that is attractive to the secondary audience of those who will decide whether your article will be published at all. For the secondary audience, which is at times arguably more important than the primary audience, you want to “sell” your article by explaining the importance of the legal topic you are writing about in your introduction and in any correspondence with those editors, and to have the article appear to be “publication ready” without an obvious need for excessive editing and revisions by the editors.
2. **Use an easy-to-follow outline.** Most legal publications start with a strong introduction that grabs readers’ attention with an interesting fact, quote, anecdote, or other attention getter; clearly present the legal issue and the author’s main thesis; and articulate the importance and contents of the article. After the introduction, lay out any necessary factual and legal background information necessary to understand the context for your thesis and discussion. Then, in the body of the article, include the main points of your article in a logical format. Finish strong with a conclusion that underscores the thesis and main points of the article and makes specific recommendations for legal or policy proposals, or for further research.

3. **Get feedback before submitting.** Several books and articles have been written on how to write publishable legal articles. However, the best way to ensure your draft article or manuscript is written well is to have another attorney in the practice area review it and provide feedback. This will also make your article's thesis stronger and help ensure that any oversights are corrected before the article is submitted for publication.
4. **For legal publications, use correct citation form and strategic formatting.** One of the most important considerations for submitting an article to a legal publication is formatting and citation form. Many publications will require a specific type of formatting (e.g., Times New Roman, size 12 font, double-spaced, etc.). For those that do not require a specific type of formatting, consider using the formatting used in the publication's final published issues. The goal is to have the editors visualize seeing your article as something that would fit within their publication. One of the best ways to do that is by using the formatting structure that the editors are most familiar with: the one their publication uses. The same goes for formatting of citations. If the legal publication uses endnotes, include your citations in endnotes. Also, ensuring that your citation form follows the requirements for the publication goes a long way; the more disorderly your citations, the more work the editors have to do to publish your article. While all articles require some editing, editors are disinclined to accept articles that require an inordinate amount of editing work. One other citation tip is to cite prior articles from the publication in which you want your article published. For example, if you want your article published in the Texas Law Review, cite prior articles from the Texas Law Review if possible. This approach builds credibility into your article among the editors by citing the publication's prior work product, and it makes your article seem like part of larger discussion already created by the legal publication.
5. **Contribute something new or insightful.** Generally, legal publications require articles to add to an ongoing discussion by providing updates, insights, and new perspectives. Readers generally do not want to read the same thing over and over. For any article, consider providing new recommendations or new insights on prior articles' recommendations. If you are providing a case update, connect the importance of any recently decided case to the field generally, identify potential impacts the decision could have on the area of practice, or draw some "takeaway" rules from the case that, even if not novel, are good reminders for practitioners in the area of law.

C. Promotional Strategy

Once your article is published, consider how to maximize the fruits of your hard work. Think of your promotional strategy as the "book tour" for your publication. When an article is published, the author has the option of simply letting the article fade into the abyss of legal publications, or using the article as an opportunity to

highlight the author's work. Promoting your publication is also a good way to improve your odds at having more publication opportunities. To illustrate, if you post on social media that you recently published an article, others in your network who might be looking for articles for their publications will be more likely to think of you the next time they need an author to fill their publications. Also, editorial boards and committees like to see that attorneys are reading and finding value from their publications. By promoting your article, you are also promoting the publication that published your article. This adds value to the publication and builds your reputation with the editors of the publication, thereby increasing the chances of success of publication of articles you submit to that publication in the future.

Suggested Action Items:

- 1. Add your published articles to your resume/firm webpage.** Don't forget to give yourself credit on your resume or CV and, if applicable, your page on your firm's website. Your firm will generally appreciate the opportunity to expand its information about you and your contributions to the firm's practice areas. Adding your publication to your resume will also improve your odds of connecting with better job opportunities that match your legal interests when applying for jobs.
- 2. Post about your article on social media.** Announce your publication on whatever social media platforms you use. Announcements of professional accomplishments generally fare well on social media. If you are connected to existing or prospective clients, the announcement will also keep you fresh in their minds if they are in need of legal services.
- 3. Repackage your article for different publications.** If you publish a law review article or a longer bar association article, consider reframing and republishing parts of the article in other publications or in law blogs. This will not only help build out the publications section of your resume, but also will increase the visibility of the main article.
- 4. Turn your paper into a presentation.** Some of the best legal articles make also for some of the best legal presentations. Longer research articles can be quite easy to turn into a CLE paper and presentation.
- 5. Submit longer publications for awards or competitions.** If your article is published in a law review or law journal, or as a CLE paper, consider submitting the publication for an award. Many bar or legal associations have awards or writing competitions for legal papers. Receiving such an award will also allow you to highlight your work again, and to receive additional recognition for your contributions.

V. Becoming TBLS Board Certified

A. Specialization Background

The Texas Board of Legal Specialization ("TBLS") was established in 1974 by the Supreme Court of Texas. TBLS certifies lawyers and paralegals that have substantial,

relevant experience in select areas of law, completed continuing legal education hours in the specialty area, and passed their exam.

TBLS is the largest state specialization program in the country. Its mission is to “promote the availability, accessibility and quality of the services of attorneys to the public in particular areas of the law.....and advance the standards of the legal profession.”

There are currently 25 specialty areas: Administrative Law, Civil Appellate Law, Bankruptcy Law - Business, Bankruptcy Law - Consumer, Criminal Appellate Law, Construction Law, Criminal Law, Consumer & Commercial Law, Civil Trial Law, Child Welfare Law, Estate Planning & Probate Law, Family Law, Health Law, Immigration & Nationality Law, Juvenile Law, Labor & Employment Law, Legislative & Campaign Law, Oil, Gas & Mineral Law, Personal Injury Trial Law, Property Owners Association Law, Real Estate Law - Commercial, Real Estate Law - Farm & Ranch, Real Estate Law - Residential, Tax Law, Workers Compensation Law.

B. Why Get Certified?

As per the TBLS, the benefits of board certification include the following list, among others: Mark of Excellence; Advance Standards of the Legal Profession; Elevate Your Expertise in Your Practice Area; New Cases and Opportunities; Builds Credibility with Colleagues, Clients, Judges, and Employers; Justifies Higher Billing Rate; and Differentiate Yourself from Others in Your Practice Area.

C. Standards for Certification

To obtain TBLS certification you must (1) meet certain criteria; (2) complete the application; and (3) pass a written exam. There are some general requirements, and others vary depending on the area of certification. Completing the application alone is time consuming. The following is a summary of what is required to sit for the exam.

- 1. General Requirements** - You must be an active member in good standing of the State Bar of Texas; have at least five years practicing law on a full-time basis; have maintained and worked from a Texas office; and complete disclosure of conduct, including disciplinary sanctions and criminal conduct. There is also a peer review process, which involves a minimum of five references substantially involved in the specialty area. Some specialty areas require more references and a CLE requirement (60 hours in the specialty area within the three years immediately preceding application).
- a. Substantial Involvement** - This makes up the bulk of the application, and varies by practice area. The applicant must devote a minimum required percentage of time practicing in a specialty area. Examples may be a certain number of jury trials, appeals, mediations, etc.
- b. Unusual or Exceptional Experience** - If you meet most but not all requirements, you are not without recourse! You should still apply for the exam and submit as part of your application an “Unusual or Exceptional

Experience” essay to explain to the board why your application should be accepted. Consider writing this essay as one of the first things you do so that you can return to the essay draft with fresh eyes as you go along, so that it will be more convincing.

c. Application Tips

- i. Once you decide to apply, determine what will be required. Because the application is time consuming, consider completing a draft application in a Word or an Excel document so you can plug the information into the form when the time comes. Best practice would be to identify the criteria and begin the application the year prior to your intended submission date.
- ii. Do not procrastinate. Many lawyers severely underestimate the amount of time it takes to complete the application. If you can, get someone else to assist you (perhaps your paralegal can help if your firm permits it).
- iii. Speak with previous applicants, and review their application when completing your own. Consider having a certified attorney review your application before submission.
- iv. Be detailed in your description of your cases.
- v. Simply call TBLS if you have questions about the application. They are super nice and very helpful!

D. The TBLS Exam - Once TBLS accepts your application, it will be time to sit for the exam.

1. Exam Format:

- i. Exam last six hours - three in the morning and three in the afternoon.
- ii. Typically the morning session consists of three essay questions worth 100 points each, and the afternoon sessions consist of 100 multiple choice questions worth two points each. You get a break for lunch in between.
- iii. Essays can be handwritten or on computer. Multiple choice questions are on scantron.
- iv. Passing score is 350.

2. Preparing for the Exam:

- i. You will get notified in July on whether you are approved to sit for the exam (approximately three months before the test). Here is a link to the important deadlines: <https://www.tbls.org/cert/fee-schedule>.
- ii. The exam is administered in October at the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center in Austin, Texas. Best practices are to stay at that hotel to assuage any concerns about travel. The hotel has

arrangements for breakfast and dinner. Book your room early because it fills up fast.

- iii. Best practices are to find someone who has taken the exam recently and pump them for information, as there is a high probability some of the questions may be repeated. See if they will share their study materials with you.
- iv. Generally, there are no study materials for the exam. However, TAFLS (Texas Association of Family Law Specialists) has created one for Family Law. You can order the guide here: <https://www.tafls.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/TAFLS-ord-form-Study-Guide-2022.pdf>.
- v. Consider using old bar exam questions to practice essay answers, as you likely have not written in that format since passing the bar. They are free and can be found on their website. Practice writing essays using the IRAC (issue, rule, analysis, conclusion) method.
- vi. Use O'Connor's for your practice area, along with any section reports for your practice area, and BarBri essay and MPRE practice questions, as ethics may be covered on your exam. Familiarize yourself with any new relevant caselaw pertaining to your practice area.
- vii. There is a possibility your exam may include intersections with other areas of law. Consider reaching out to lawyers you know on these subjects and see if you can get your head around them.
- viii. Consider creating your own outline based on the appropriate code sections for your areas of practice. Depending on your practice area, TBLS may provide a list of categories that are fair game for the exam.
- ix. Consider taking off work the week prior to the exam to devote solely to studying. Before that, mark time each week in the months prior to devote to preparation.
- x. When studying, do whatever worked for you in law school and the bar exam (group vs. individual, for example).
- xi. Consider bringing earplugs for the exam. The sound of a huge number of people typing at the same time can be deafening.
- xii. After the exam, write down everything you remember. You may need this information if you have to retake the exam, or to pass on to a colleague who may take it in the future.
- xiii. Results are tendered in January.

E. Post Certification Requirements

After you become TBLS board certified, there are continuing certification requirements including annual reporting in January of substantial involvement percentage; annual reporting of disclosure of conduct; and re-certifying every five

years (without having to retake the exam). You must also show 100 hours of CLE in the area and provide references.

VI. Joining Inns of Court

The American Inns of Court is an association of lawyers, judges, and other legal professionals from all levels and backgrounds who share a passion for professional excellence. The American Inns are modeled after the Inns of Court found in England that are for barristers (in fact, all barristers in England must belong to one of four inns, each of which has a unique and separate supervisor and disciplinary function).

The American Inns of Courts are often “invitation only” for American attorneys; however, the invites are generally freely given to those who express a genuine interest in joining and who exude a basic level of competency, professionalism, and connection the inn’s purpose. The American Inns hold regular meetings and members are encouraged to build and strengthen their professional and personal connections and discuss fundamental concerns about professionalism and pressing legal issues of the day.

According to Sushan Mohan, a TYLA director, “Through my involvement in Houston’s Garland Walker American Inns of Court, I’ve been able to attend monthly CLE presentations where dinner and cocktails are served. Regular attendance also allows for building new connections or reconnecting with old friends, including those I graduated with from law school. As part of my membership, I’m also part of a smaller ‘pupilage’ group within the Inn. Each pupilage group is led by a member of the judiciary and provides each member a unique opportunity to have meaningful interaction with a sitting judge. I highly encourage anyone looking to get more connected to join an Inn. Simply do some research into which inn(s) are operating in your respective city, find a member, and reach out to them to see if you can be invited. Then, once invited, submit the required paperwork (generally just an application and a resume), and start attending meetings regularly. The value in this, like any professional association or activity, is in the repeat. Do not just go once or twice to a meeting; go repeatedly. You’ll meet many others and slowly see your network of support grow.”

Research whether there is an Inn of Court chapter in your area and connect with others to see how you can get involved.

VII. Getting Involved In Bar Associations

You’ve graduated, passed the bar exam, and started your career. You may be facing an adjustment to working full time, navigating billable hours, and wondering what a work-life balance looks like, or, questioning whether it exists at all. It can seem daunting to add one more thing to your list of to-do’s, but getting involved with your local bar association is a great way to access resources in developing your career. Joining your local bar will give you access to numerous educational and mentorship resources as well as connections to practicing attorneys in your area and opportunities for growth. This section of the guide discusses the different ways to get involved with your local bar association, general tips for finding what group works

for you, and strategies to get the most out of your membership in developing your career.

A. Reasons to Get Involved in Bar Associations:

There are numerous reasons to get involved in a local bar association. These reasons include networking for professional growth, connecting with other lawyers, giving back, opening doors of opportunity, and taking advantage of educational resources.

B. How to Get Involved with Your Local Bar

Depending on where you are practicing in Texas, there may, or may not, be a lot of choices of local bar associations or affiliates to join. There are local, regional, specialty, and statewide bar associations as well as sections of the State Bar, affiliates, and young lawyers associations.

Join Your Local Bar Association or One of Its Affiliates

Many Choices with Unlimited Possibilities

- Find your nearest bar association:
<https://www.texasbar.com/Content/NavigationMenu/AboutUs/LocalBarServices/LocalBarWebsites/default.htm>
- Find a young lawyers affiliate group near you: **<https://tyla.org/affiliates/>**
- Join the bar association, section, or affiliate that you find will best fit your career goals and interests and start following their events, using your membership to access resources and networking.

C. Finding Where You Belong and What You Want to Gain From Your Membership

What areas of your career do you want to grow or gain experience in?

Have you opened your own practice in a specific area of law? Or, started with a government entity? Whether you are corporate, criminal, civil, or something in between, a lot of bar associations offer a variety of opportunities to get to know members in your practice area. By networking with and creating relationships with practitioners in similar areas, you can build your circle of colleagues whom you know you can turn to with questions and for mentorship as different situations arise. There are also opportunities to share your skill sets with the local bar associations in service to them and the community. You may enjoy writing and seek to get published or find that volunteering or serving pro bono brings you joy. Even if you are just beginning your career, pro bono work provides an opportunity to give back to those in need, learn new skills, and build new skill sets that may benefit your day-to-day practice.

The following provides some helpful tips:

- Find your bar association's events calendar and find some events or opportunities that interest you to attend or participate in. Be sure to register in time and make sure that if you commit to attending an event or

volunteering your time for community service or pro bono services, that you are able to attend and if not, give plenty of notice that you are not able to fulfill the commitment.

- If you have an interest in writing or getting published, join a bar association that provides publication opportunities in your practice area. Read weekly emails, monthly newsletters, or magazine publications. You may have an idea of a topic you would like to write on, and being a member of a bar association will improve your chances of having an article selected for publication.
- Look at the different committees or sections of your bar association and find your practice area. If your practice area is not already a section or committee, ask the bar association's leadership if there has been interest in starting one in the past and who you can be connected to in your practice area.
- Take advantage of the bar association's continuing legal education (CLE) courses that are offered. There are usually a variety of CLE courses offered throughout the year by both the bar association and young lawyers associations. Use the opportunity to learn about your practice areas and network with attorneys who practice and specialize in your area.

Commit to what works best for your work and life schedules and budget.

Depending on where you work, your employer may pay for your membership in the local bar association and/or local affiliate young lawyers association. If finding the funds to join is an issue, be sure to ask if there are discounts on membership based on practice area and years of practice. Many bar associations base membership prices on how many years you have been practicing and if you are a solo or government attorney. Before signing up for any and all committees and events, be sure to let your employer know that you intend to commit to these types of obligations, especially if there may be some overlap with the work week. Many employers are supportive of local bar involvement and it's important to let them know that you're interested in joining the bar association to enhance your advocacy, practice, and (for some) leadership skills.

Leadership and Growth Opportunities

If you are interested in growing your leadership skills, some bar associations offer types of leadership academies for attorneys looking to grow and develop skills to lead in both the bar associations and within their own firms or employers. These types of academy programs are even beneficial for solo attorneys who have to manage and lead their own employees and teams. You should be able to find information about such programs through your bar association's website or asking executive board members if and when the opportunity to apply for one of these programs arises. You don't have to, but starting in local bar leadership can open doors for other opportunities of statewide leadership including serving as a TYLA director or on a section of the State Bar. There is also a leadership program through the State Bar of Texas called LeadershipSBOT.

D. How to Gain the Most from Your Local Bar Association Membership

In taking the first steps of getting involved with your local bar, there are many ways to make the most of your time when you make it to your first networking or volunteer event. Obviously, if you are interested in networking, it would not be beneficial to show up to a bar event and not talk to anyone. At first, it helps to have a plan before attending an in-person or virtual event until you get to know some members and find which methods work best for you. A plan can mean that you do some research on the local bar executive team and board members to know exactly who you would like to meet before going to an event. If it's a virtual event and the speakers or attendees are listed, look up who they are, what they do, and prepare questions in advance if you would like to know more about their work. Another option is to invite a colleague or two to attend the event with you to help you feel more comfortable approaching new people.

Below are additional helpful tips to make the most of the opportunities presented at networking events and establish lasting and purposeful connections following the event.

Helpful suggestions for when you attend your first events:

1. Prepare an “elevator” pitch to describe your work and career goals.
2. Have business cards or an easy way to share how a colleague can contact you.
3. Send follow-up emails or make calls to attorneys you wish to establish connections with.
4. Find out how to take a path into leadership if you are interested.

Take advantage of the resources provided by the bar.

Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Courses

Many local bar associations offer monthly or quarterly CLEs as part of being a member. There may also be a conference or seminar hosted by the local bar association that focuses on your practice area or an area of practice you are interested in. Check the bar's website to see if they have discounts for other CLEs, resources for local court best practices, special discounts for memberships or services.

Access to Publications

Other helpful resources that bar associations may provide through publications are:

- Local job listings
- Classifieds section
- Membership directories

You may find yourself looking for the next step in your career. Your local bar association membership may include access to a local job listing page that you can use as a resource to see what types of opportunities in your area are open and to determine if you have a connection with someone to ask questions and collect more information about the position.

If you are looking to hire or need a new rental office space, there may be a classifieds section in one of the publications, emails, or posts made by the bar association. Another great resource provided by bar associations is a membership directory. Having access to a membership directory is a great way to look up the contact information for a potential referral or follow up with an attorney you met at a bar event but didn't have a chance to get their contact information.

Participate in Community Service and Pro Bono Work

If you prefer to spend your time volunteering or are looking for ways to give back, check with your local bar association for community service and pro bono opportunities. Volunteer community service events are a great way to meet other attorneys and connect by serving others without the stress of a formal reception or networking event.

Some law firms encourage or may require their attorneys to provide pro bono service to the community. Pro bono work is a great way to help others and gain legal skills that may be outside of your practice area but may be useful in other stages of your career.

Support the Bar's Foundation

Once you join your local bar association, you may be invited to events or asked to support the local bar foundation, which is separate from the bar association. Throughout Texas, there are several bar foundations that are affiliated with the local bar associations. Foundations have a variety of purposes providing different services and programs to the communities they serve. The programs and services that the foundation provides may mean an opportunity for you to volunteer to help plan a fundraising event or become a fellow by donating a certain amount. You can also get involved with the foundation by joining the board in a leadership role.

E. Conclusion

By creating these connections and getting involved with your local bar, you will be opening doors and developing skills that will benefit you throughout your career. It is up to you how involved you want to be and how you choose to make the most of your bar membership. If you find yourself with additional questions or needing someone to introduce you to some local bar members, don't be afraid to look up your local TYLA director on the TYLA website and ask for help. There are several ways to get involved and avenues to take when it comes to making the connections that will help you as you begin your career in the legal profession.

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