

# CPR Speaks

The Blog of The CPR Institute

## CPR, LCLD & FINRA Program Aims for Actual Selection, Not Just Training, of Diverse Neutrals

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CPR's Diversity Task Force, in collaboration with Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD) and Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA), have been hard at work on a program that aims not only to train diverse candidates to become mediators and arbitrators, but provides meaningful opportunities to position participants to ultimately become selected as neutrals—the only thing that will ultimately have an impact on diversity in ADR.

As Noah Hanft, CPR's President & CEO, has stated (<https://www.cpradr.org/news-publications/articles/2017-03-20-making-diversity-happen>), "Diverse neutrals need experience to show quality, build their reputations and earn their selections—but, in order to gain that all important experience and develop their skills, they first need to get selected. The riddle is circular but *not* impossible to solve, and those who prevent, or at least fail to support, the latter cannot in good conscious unequivocally demand the former. We can, and must, do better. This next generation of talented individuals is poised to make a real difference, if we will only recognize our roles and do our part."

The program, which launched last year in a pilot phase, provides participants with early skills development and unique access to professional development opportunities in dispute resolution through: (a) formal training in mediation and arbitration skills and practical observational experience; (b) mentoring by skilled neutrals; and (c) networking opportunities within CPR's commercial dispute resolution community via attendance at these organization's events at no cost or at a discount. Last year's program produced six neutrals, and this year we have five participating—a wonderfully diverse and talented group hailing from New Jersey, Chicago, Houston, Miami and Atlanta.

According to **Joseph M Hanna** (pictured left), a Partner at Goldberg Segalla and a participant in last year's program, "Even if you're not engaged in arbitration or mediation, you will use the techniques and the 'soft processes' that you pick up during this training and from your mentors every day—whether you are practicing law, litigating cases, working with colleagues, mentoring young associates or even dealing with your family."

"I found the program to be quite valuable on a number of levels," explained **Brenda DiLuigi** (pictured right), Counsel at Linklaters LLP. "The program provided access to very high-quality ADR training, mentoring by seasoned professionals, and networking opportunities in the ADR community generally. From my perspective (in particular, as counsel to clients facing the significant challenges associated with doing business in a heightened regulatory environment), the FINRA arbitration training program was extremely valuable, and I feel fortunate to have the ability to serve as a neutral in that capacity. I also enjoyed being part of a cohort of program Fellows who are beginning their careers in ADR."



As a first step in this year's program, participants were invited to complete the [FINRA application](http://www.finra.org/arbitration-and-mediation/apply-now) (<http://www.finra.org/arbitration-and-mediation/apply-now>) to become an arbitrator so that they could become eligible to join FINRA's roster of neutrals. After indicating their individual areas of interest, participants were assigned to, and have started to meet with their program mentors.

The program's first official event will be CPR's Corporate Leadership Award Dinner (including VIP reception) honoring David McAtee II of AT&T. Thereafter, program participants are invited to attend all CPR events that take place during the program, at no cost.

Once applications are approved, participants will be required to take FINRA's first two training components online at their convenience. FINRA will then hold an in-person training for this group at the CPR offices in early April, following CPR's annual meeting in Atlanta, GA taking place March 8-10, 2017. There will be no cost associated with any aspect of FINRA's training and application process.

**Kristy Offitt** (pictured left), an Employment litigator at Ogletree Deakins and a member of this year's program, signed up after receiving an email from LCLD. She has already been assigned two mentors and has started meeting with them. In addition to feeling that the negotiation and other skills learned in the program will be transferable, generally, to the work she is currently doing, Kristy explained, "I would love to do more mediation and arbitration later in my career, so I saw this as a great opportunity to start building a foundation toward that goal. It's great to get this mediation experience."

And do last year's participants have any parting advice for the current class? As program alum **Joseph Hanna** aptly summarized, "Take full advantage of your mentors; they are there to help you. Take every opportunity you have to ask questions, meet with them, spend time watching them work. Nobody does it better than the mentors in this program."

Uncategorized

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