

An American Inns of Court Professionalism Program

Title

Legal Workplace Culture: How Well-Functioning Environments Support Ethical Practice

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Speakers

Tara van Brederode, Director of Attorney Discipline, Iowa Supreme Court and Administrator of the Attorney Disciplinary Board, Iowa Supreme Court

Program Overview and Educational Relevance

The traditional law firm model does not foster a positive workplace culture. Jealousy, competitiveness, incivility, and territoriality are key features of many legal workplaces. But it starts even earlier: legal education rewards individual performance, issue spotting, and adversarial thinking. It rarely teaches leadership, supervision, or organizational behavior. Now at a firm, associates are subject to unwritten rules and expectations, and new partners often manage by copying what they experienced as associates: hierarchy, scarcity of feedback, and fear-based control. In addition, time economics work against effective and positive management. Billable hour pressure pushes lawyers to prioritize personal production over people development. And since management tasks do not bill, lawyers delay or rush supervision, feedback, and mentoring. But change is possible. This program will provide tools to increase productivity, engagement and retention. Learners will gain a better understanding of:

- Workplace bullying: causes and effects.
- How a negative workplace culture can hurt your reputation for legal competence.
- Ethical implications of for supervising attorneys.
- How a positive workplace culture can increase output and competence.
- How to foster a positive workplace culture.

Speaker Biography

Tara van Brederode is the Director of Attorney Discipline and Administrator of the Iowa Supreme Court Attorney Disciplinary Board. Prior to taking her current position in 2015, Tara was the Executive Director of the Legal Aid Society of Story County. She is a past president of the Story County Bar Association, has served on various Iowa Bar committees, participated in the Supreme Court's family law case processing task force, and has been an adjunct professor of Family Law at Drake University Law School. Tara is active in the National Organization of Bar Counsel and on the state well-being task force committee of the Institute for Well-Being in Law. Tara's well-being activities include knitting, genealogy, and travel.