

**MINUTES OF INFORMATION SESSION FOR SOUTH AFRICAN CHAPTER OF
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN JUDGES' MENTORSHIP PROGRAM**

HELD AT JOHANNESBURG ON 19 MARCH 2019

IN COURT 11E

Present:

Judge Khumalo

Judge Victor

Judge Tefo

Judge Mahalelo

Acting Judge Dario Dasio

1. WELCOME

Judge Khumalo welcomed everyone.

2. FUTURE INFORMATION SESSIONS

Judge Khumalo explained that there will be further communication sessions for other organisations and persons from JAA/GAA can come to those should they wish.

**3. INTRODUCTION TO PURPOSE OF SOUTH AFRICAN CHAPTER OF
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN JUDGES**

Judge Victor explained that the program is run by the South African chapter of an international organization (in 85 countries), the head office of in Washington, comprised of 6,000 judges all over the world. Regional and international meetings are held every year, with sometimes 1,000 women judges or more at one conference.

The bench in South Africa is very diverse, with around 50% of the judges being female. Some places in the world have no or less gender diversity (Syria has just appointed its first female judge).

The women judges of South Africa have stood on the shoulders of other women who have gone before and fought for gender equality, and the hope is that they can take up the cudgels and play a part in furthering equality (of all types) in South Africa. The aim is to pay it forward, and help other young women (and men) who are facing challenges in their professional legal careers.

Judge Khumalo explained that apart from wanting to foster access to justice and a greater respect for human rights, the Women Judges (and their male Judge counterparts who are also part of the program) wanted to give access to mentees in order to expose them to areas that they might not have exposure to in practice, such as ethics, litigation skills, drafting skills, etc.

The mentorship program started with final year students but it was decided to roll it out to candidates as well, in order that they too can benefit. The Judges experienced also that candidate attorneys are always asking questions that could be best addressed by allowing them to observe for themselves what happens at court.

There are around 67 magistrates and 30 judges in Gauteng. There are many 'friends of the association' such as advocates, attorneys, etc. There is also a student chapter. The idea is to spread the word as much as is possible in order to build a stronger chapter with greater influence for the good of all of its members and justice in South Africa.

Candidates who join the program will be either candidate members, or friends of the association. The Judges will still decide on this aspect.

4. MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Judge Khumalo explained that the mentors will be men and women judges and magistrates. At this time attorneys will not be mentors because, as candidate attorneys, candidates will already have access to attorneys.

Mentees will have to sign confidentiality agreements to ensure that no information obtained whilst in the program can be divulged.

Mentees will be expected to commit to the program and to complete all aspects of it.

The Judges give of their time to do this, and in return expect mentees to do their part and attend. The requirement is a minimum of 25 hours. The 25 hours will be made up of contact sessions (personal sessions with the mentors) and other outings/tasks, court attendances, pre-reading, some drafting experience, etc.

Each mentee will be carefully matched to a mentor. The issues that will be considered when matching are accessibility of the mentor, the location of the mentee, and other issues (such as travelling, time off work, etc). The

If there are any issues with the mentee/mentor relationship, there can be a re-matching where necessary. Ideally, however, this is to be avoided because it would be best to work these issues out rather than simply to change mentors.

The program is open to all candidate attorneys. The intention is to advance Women's rights but the program is open to men as well, because the overarching aim is to advance the rights of all persons in South Africa, regardless of race, gender or background.

The kinds of exposure that candidates can expect would be to all types of court matters handled by the mentor judge/magistrate. Ideally candidates can be exposed to different kinds of work from the work that they do on a day to day basis in their practices. The mentor would spend time with the mentee showing them "real" court documents, taking them through them, explaining concepts, attending at court to watch the proceedings, and a "break down" afterwards to review how the presentation of the case was handled by the legal representatives. There is also an opportunity to visit different courts and prisons, and to meet other judges/magistrates. All of the above is subject to the unique employment context and all sensitivities will be respected.

Judge Tefo explained that first impressions are important and that candidates should dress respectfully when coming to court. Women should confine themselves to dark colours and men should wear suits (no jeans). It is important to get used to dressing for the professional role that you will have to play as an attorney. You might go out with or spend time with the mentor judge/magistrate in a setting with other judges, etc, and you will be required to make a good impression.

At the end of the program there will be an assessment to see how valuable the program was to the mentees. There will also be follow ups afterwards to ascertain what changes can be made to make the program more valuable for future years.

Judge Victor added that at the end of the program there will be a certificate that the mentees can use to bolster CV applications, as proof of the intensive program that they have been through.

She also explained that after the program, mentees can remain on as 'friends of the association' and keep up the association. Gender equality for women is important and there are other initiatives by the judiciary (especially by Judge Zondo) to ensure that women judges are appointed to the bench.

5. APPLICATIONS

Application forms are available from the GAA/JAA – gladwin@schindlers.co.za.

They need to be returned and will be adjudicated upon by the Women Judges'.

They will need to be returned, fully completed, by 15 April 2019.

The program will start by the end of April and will terminate at the end of the calendar year, with graduation in December.