

Building, Growing, and Maintaining Your Public Interest/Public Sector (PIPS) Network

1. The Value of Networking

As a student pursuing a career in public interest law and/or government, connecting with practicing public interest and government lawyers can be a critical aspect of your career search and career development. These connections and relationships are an invaluable way to gain a nuanced understanding of the organizations and agencies that interest you. Through these relationships, you can start to explore career options and assess whether a certain path is a good fit for you. You can learn from lawyers who practice within an organization or at an agency, about their day-to-day work, what keeps them motivated each day, what they find most rewarding and most challenging, and what they or their hiring colleagues look for when they hire. The attorneys you meet may be able to offer advice on your future career or professional development. Sometimes, these connections may even open up opportunities that are not formally advertised.

As practicing attorneys, relationship building and networking continue to be valuable. Whether you are seeking new opportunities, looking for community, or want to gain perspectives and insights about how other organizations and teams work, it can be healthy and productive to maintain ties with other lawyers who are on similar paths to you, and with those who have been through similar experiences in the past and have wisdom to share.

While networking is an integral part of becoming and being a lawyer, we recognize that it is a skill that takes time and practice to develop. Every law student and lawyer has something to learn in this arena, and you will likely continue to improve your networking skills over the course of your career. This resource is specifically tailored to support students who are on the public interest and government path, with targeted resources and strategies to help you build and maintain a supportive community that you can benefit from – and also give back to – as you launch your career as a lawyer. Our hope is that this guide makes the process of networking feel a bit more approachable and less daunting. Remember that most lawyers, particularly in the Berkeley Law alumni community, are naturally inclined to share and help, and they welcome students approaching them to ask them about their career paths. As best you can, try to have fun with the process of connecting with others and remember that most lawyers want to support you as you embark on your own path, and that they themselves benefited from mentors along the way and are happy to give back.

2. Where to Begin

Tune into CDO Events and Programming Focused on PIPS Careers

The CDO seeks to foster connections between students and practicing attorneys through a variety of programming, so a good first step is to make sure you are reading our emails and attending our programming! A few events and programs that will be particularly helpful to you as you seek to meet attorneys and learn more about their day to day work and what it's like to work at their organizations are:

- PIPS Career Fair in the Fall (<https://www.law.berkeley.edu/careers/pips-fair/>) (an incredible opportunity to apply to meet or interview with over 100 public interest organizations and government agencies for summer and fall positions).
- PIPS Day Table Talk in late January or early February (<https://pipsday.weebly.com/>)
- 1L Mentorship Program where you are paired with a public interest or government attorney
- The EJW Career Fair, which takes place every October. (<https://www.equaljusticeworks.org/conference-and-career-fair/about/>) This is a virtual event that brings together nationwide employers and includes a “table talk” component. The CDO generally covers the registration cost for all Berkeley Law students.

The CDO publicises opportunities to learn more about PIPS career pathways and meet attorneys in the field through our PIPS events page and weekly programming emails. Student groups, journals and law school centers promote and publicize these events as well.

Use LinkedIn

If you don't already have a LinkedIn account, it's a good idea to set one up, and use the platform to connect with your Berkeley Law classmates, faculty and staff you have met since starting law school, including colleagues and supervisors of your pro bono work and internships. *THINK BROADLY* when you consider who to add to your LinkedIn network and be sure to include contacts from your undergraduate experiences, as well as colleagues and supervisors from all past jobs and internships you have had. Make sure to keep your LinkedIn profile up to date with your location and role(s).

On LinkedIn, begin to follow organizations that interest you. This will connect you with others who follow these same organizations and will also give you visibility into job opportunities and major updates with these employers.

Join Professional Groups and Affiliations

Consider joining professional groups and affiliations that are in line with your geographic and subject matter interests. Many have affordable law student membership rates or are free for students, and offer events, member directories, and other ways to connect with like-minded law students and lawyers. Some examples include:

- Federal Bar Association's regional chapters
- Student Chapters of the National Lawyers Guild, American Constitution Society, Federalist Society
- San Francisco Bar Association
- Student memberships with other local bar associations (targeted to the geographic locations where you want to practice)
- Affinity bar organizations often have government sections, public interest/pro bono sections, solo/plaintiff sections, etc.

3. Targeted Searches for Specific Organizations and Roles

You may have come to law school with a specific interest in certain organizations and/or agencies, or perhaps you saw a job posting and you would like to learn more about an opportunity. Here are a few ways to approach your search:

- 1) LinkedIn is again a fantastic place to start to identify Berkeley alum and other connections you may have with attorneys who work at organizations. Within every organization's LinkedIn profile, there is a "People" tab, where you can enter a school's name to generate employees based on their alma maters.
- 2) Organizational websites for non-profits often have a "Team" or "Staff" page, where you can search for names of employees, and then use LinkedIn to learn more about those individuals.
- 3) [Leadership Connect](#): In partnership with the law library, the CDO offers current students access to this database that is particularly helpful as a tool to search government agencies, judicial chambers, and congressional committees.
- 4) The [California Bar Attorney Search](#) tool is useful if you know the name of an individual and would like to confirm their workplace or find their email address in order to contact them. Most other state bars maintain similar attorney directories.
- 5) To connect with Berkeley Law alums who have had fellowships, [Equal Justice Works](#), [Skadden Foundation](#), [Justice Catalyst](#), and [Immigrant Justice Corps](#) all maintain directories of past fellows and are searchable by law school.

- 6) Who Worked Where List is a list collected by the CDO and includes where 2Ls and 3Ls worked the previous summer. You can find this list by clicking “Resources” in b-Line and navigating to the Document Library.
- 7) Other Berkeley resources such as professors and clinic supervisors.
- 8) When in doubt, email us at the CDO or stop by. The Berkeley Law network is vast, and we also have our own professional networks that we can tap in order to help you find a human to connect with at your organization or agency of interest.

4. Reaching Out, Preparing, and Meeting

When reaching out to a contact, start by sending an email and asking for a meeting (generally asking for a virtual or phone meeting is a good way to start if this is someone you have never met before). Lawyers are busy people, and many public interest and government lawyers are juggling particularly heavy workloads, so we recommend being respectful of their time and generally aiming for having a 15-minute meeting.

Here’s a sample of an outreach email. You may want to include your resume as a part of your outreach:

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am a first year JD student at Berkeley Law and I recently learned about your career path through LinkedIn. I am particularly interested in a career in youth advocacy, and your work at the National Center for Youth Law is exactly the type of work I hope to do when I graduate. Prior to law school, I worked as a paralegal at a small civil rights firm, and I am now in the process of exploring different organizations in the youth advocacy arena, and to learn as much as possible from Berkeley Law alums.

I was wondering if you might have ten or fifteen minutes to spare for a zoom or phone meeting. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to learn more about your work, and to ask for your advice as I prepare to launch my career. I would be happy to work around your busy schedule to set up a time to talk. I have attached my resume for your reference. Thanks in advance for your consideration and I hope to talk with you soon.

*Sincerely,
Jane Doe*

Once the attorney agrees to the meeting, take initiative to set up the logistics for the zoom or the call and confirm the timing. If the attorney offers an in-person meeting, take them up on their offer if you can. Prepare for your meeting by doing your homework.

Research the person's background, and prepare 3-5 questions for the meeting about their current role, how they got there, what they enjoy about the work, and what advice they might have for someone like you as you explore.

A note about email introductions: From time to time, we at the CDO or another attorney you are speaking with may offer to send an email introducing you to someone in their network. This is exactly how you can continue to expand your connections! When you receive this type of introduction, it's a good idea to take the first step in responding, thanking the "introducer," moving them to bcc, and asking the new contact if they would be willing to connect.

5. Tips and Sample Questions

Before your networking meeting, be sure to do your homework about the person's background. Arrive with enthusiasm and curiosity (and of course, be on time). During the conversation, ask for advice about the person's experiences (but don't ask for a job). Ask clear questions. Be mindful of their busy schedules. Be conversational. Finally, remember that quality trumps quantity; expanding your network is just as important as nurturing your existing relationships. Take time and care within each conversation rather than trying to talk to as many people as possible. Within 24 hours of your meeting, send a quick email thanking them for their time and letting them know that you would love to stay in touch.

Here are some sample questions to help you prepare for a networking meeting:

- Can you tell me about your path to your current role? How did you know that this was the path for you?
- What is a typical day like for you?
- What experiences did you have in law school that helped prepare you for your career?
- What do you love most about your job?
- What do you find challenging about your job?
- Is there any advice, based on what you know now, that you would give to your law student self?
- Since I am very interested in this particular area of practice, is there anyone else who you would recommend that I speak to?

6. Maintaining Your Network

Once you start building your network, it's a good idea to keep track of your conversations using any type of tracking mechanism that works best for you. This does

not need to be particularly formal, but it can be helpful to jot down the name, date of contact, and brief notes from each of your conversations. This tracker can be a useful tool for you as you stay in touch with your contacts. If there are certain people you'd like to stay in touch with, consider sending a friendly and very short email once a year or so. The start of the school year, the end of the calendar year, the beginning of the calendar year, or anytime you are making a career move, can be appropriate and natural times to reach out with a brief update about your career and wishing them well.

7. Additional Questions About Networking?

We hope this guide has made the process of networking feel manageable and less daunting. We are here to provide extra guidance and support so never hesitate to reach out to any member of the PIPS team (Deep, Ja'Nai, Lucy, and Neta) with specific questions about how to build, grow, and maintain your own professional network.