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Stephanie Scharf Spearheads ABA Commission’s “Men in the Mix” Program

[Stephanie Scharf](#), Chair of the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession, discussed a new project aimed at giving actionable advice to law firm leaders and women lawyers about engaging male colleagues in new strategies for leveling the legal playing field. The “Men in the Mix” initiative will conduct a national series of focus groups, to be held in 2019 and into 2020, to address these core questions: Why do men help (or not help) in advancing their women colleagues in the legal profession? What can we do to incentivize senior male leaders to help their women colleagues advance? In a series of group sessions, men and women will first discuss their answers in gender-identical groups and then share their views in gender-mixed conversations. The women will hear directly from the men about the steps to take to engage in door-opening conversations. And the men will hear directly from the women about how they experience barriers to advancement.

Ms. Scharf described the initiative in the latest edition of the ABA Commission’s newsletter, [Perspectives](#).

Ms. Scharf stated, “The Commission has a long history of sponsoring research projects to learn about a problem and frame data-based solutions. We have that same expectation for our “Men in the Mix” program—that it will shed light on the value of men taking the lead on sponsoring the advancement of women, both for the men who do so and the women who work with them. Ultimately, in all settings in which lawyers work, enhanced gender diversity at the highest levels will provide better decisions, better business results, and a more congenial workplace. We look forward to presenting the results of the “Men in the Mix” study and arming ourselves with great strategies to open the doors to successful careers for men and women in the legal profession.”

Ms. Scharf is one of the nation’s leading lawyers for advancing women in the law and has designed and conducted a broad range of empirical studies about women in the law. A former President of the National Association of Women Lawyers (2004-2005), and a member of the Advisory Board of DirectWomen, Ms. Scharf founded the NAWL Annual Survey of Women in Law Firms, the National Survey of Women’s Initiatives, and the first-ever Survey of Women as Lead Counsel in Litigation.