



NHLAP
NEW HAMPSHIRE
www.lapnh.org



ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023

Prepared by
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and
Dakotah Thunder Wilson

www.lapnh.org

Consultations

When you contact NHLAP, we will provide you with education about issues being presented, develop goals to address these issues, offer helpful resources, and develop strategies for moving forward. We recognize the nuances of legal culture and the unique personality characteristics and sophisticated defenses that are part of the typical "lawyer's profile." We are prepared to help you design a customized plan of support leveraging personal strengths and challenging these defenses.

Peer Support Services

NHLAP Volunteers are peers who offer confidential advice and support to legal professionals calling or emailing NHLAP for help. Peer volunteers share with our legal community a lived experience of recovery and/or adaptation to such life challenges as mental health, substance use, transitioning into or out of law practice, providing tremendous therapeutic value. Often, legal professionals who have accessed NHLAP services go on to become NHLAP Peer Volunteers.

Professional Monitoring Services

The NHLAP Health and Recovery Monitoring Program is a voluntary program for legal professionals adversely impacted by a mental health condition, substance use disorder, or co-occurring disorder. The goal is to restore competency and fitness to practice through participation in a formal evaluation and recommended treatment coordinated and monitored by the NHLAP. If you face discipline, please proactively contact NHLAP for help developing a support plan.

Case Management Services

NHLAP helps legal professionals navigate and connect with vetted specialists for purposes of assessment, psychotherapy, inpatient or outpatient treatment, career counseling, coaching/mentorship, and other needs. NHLAP has a group of treatment providers experienced in treating lawyers. We can help you, your family member, or your colleague get connected to services. At consultation, we will gather details to match providers, coordinate the first visit, and provide follow-along support to guarantee satisfaction with your care.

Wellness Programming

NHLAP provides personalized information and resources to merge better, healthier ways of life with legal practice. NHLAP offers free access to educational programming or CLEs in all areas related to well-being in law. NHLAP can help firm leadership and management to address systemic issues on these matters, and improve wellness, staff engagement, and job satisfaction. For more health and wellness tips and tricks, please check out our social media pages or our website, or come join us at one of our educational programs/events!

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers

This monthly meeting is exclusively for lawyers, judges, and law students in or seeking recovery from unhealthy substances and coping behaviors — and is always confidential. All stages of sobriety and behavior abstinence are welcome to connect with peers and gain support. You may join in observing; active participation in the group is not required.

"In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute."

— Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall

Other NHLAP Programming

Events and Highlights

Piloted Process Peer Support Group:

This weekly meeting is exclusively for public defenders intended to hold a safe space to shed the accumulating daily stress and develop healthier practices. We discuss, process, and brainstorm ideas and strategies to address personal and professional challenges in a confidential setting. The group is co-facilitated by a peer (public defender) and NHLAP Director.

CLEs and Presentations:

The New Hampshire Lawyers Assistance Program has delivered a number of CLEs approved for credit by the New Hampshire Bar Association for the purpose of educating members of the New Hampshire legal community about issues of wellness. These CLEs have included such themes as *"Surviving to Thriving: Managing Stress and Avoiding Burnout"*, *"Managing Challenging Attorney-Client Relationships"*, and *"Burnout: Signs, Strategies, and Solutions for the Ethical New Hampshire Lawyer"*. NHLAP has also delivered presentations at New Hampshire Bar Association events, Swearing-In Ceremonies for new and transferring attorneys held at the NH Supreme Court, and events at the UNH Law School.



Publications:

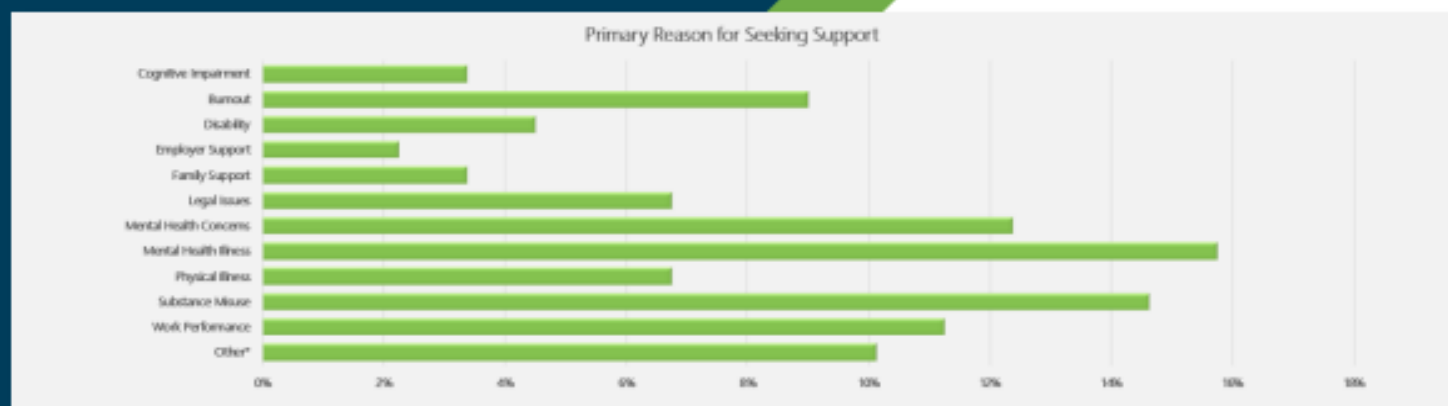
The New Hampshire Lawyers Assistance Program has been instrumental in helping build awareness and foster acceptance of mental wellness topics among legal professionals. In collaboration with the New Hampshire Bar Association, the New Hampshire Business Review, and others, NHLAP has published multiple articles on well-being in law. Many of these contributions have a goal of educating, sharing insights, and reducing stigma concerning the ways in which legal professionals are specifically impacted by mental health issues.



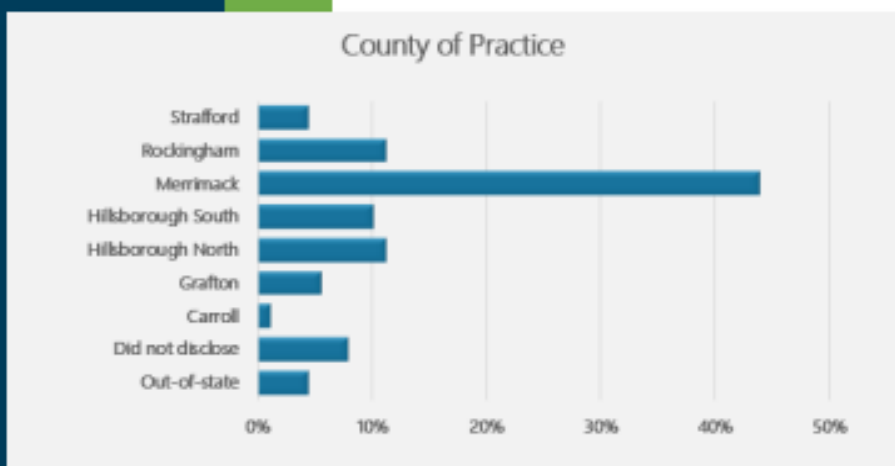
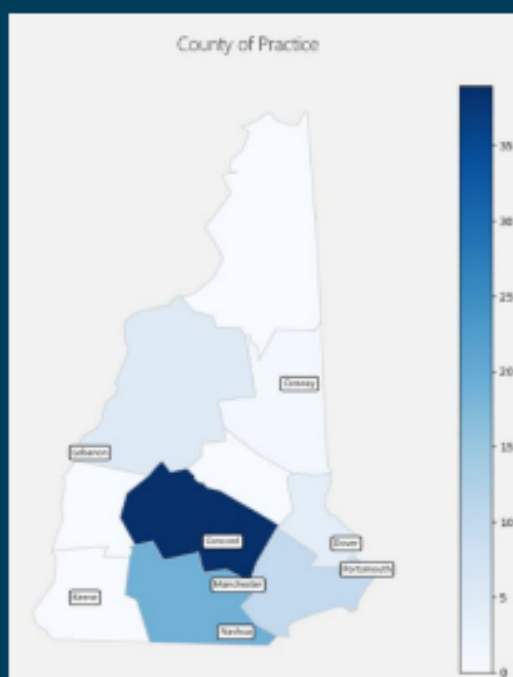
"Passion is a key ingredient to the study and practice of law and life."

– Elle Woods, *Legally Blonde*

Charts and Graphs



NHLAP distinguishes "mental health concerns" from "mental health illness" when a client presents with a diagnosed mental or behavioral health condition such as depression, anxiety, bipolar, or related conditions. "Other" includes anger management, ethics referrals, evictions, grief and loss, harassment, incivility, new parent support, professional mentorship, and volunteer offers.

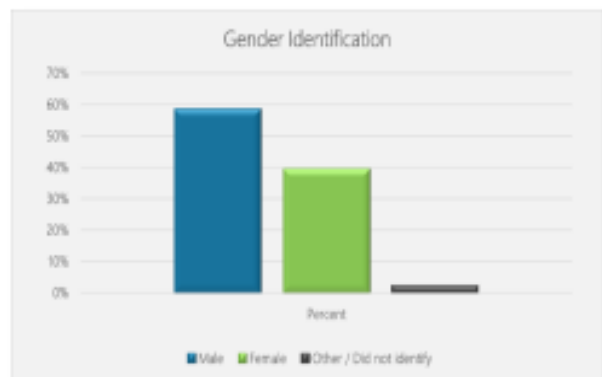
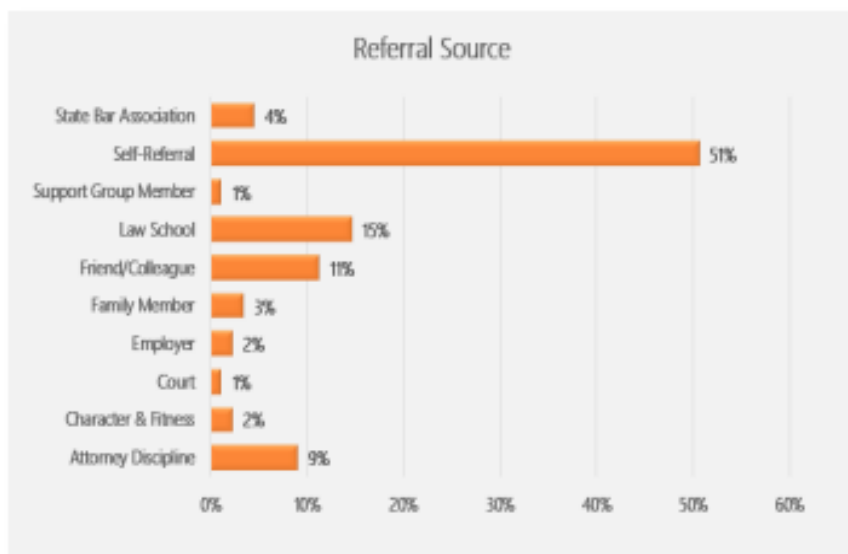


Hillsborough County is divided into two legal jurisdictions, characterized as Hillsborough North (greater Manchester region) and Hillsborough South (greater Nashua region). Not every county in New Hampshire is represented in NHLAP data, either for absence of referrals or for deidentification.

"Working with the NHLAP has been nothing short of amazing. The program is so versatile and in working with Jill, I have received really good advice. She is so knowledgeable about the profession and each stage that one may be at. She is not only knowledgeable, but so personable and encouraging. I am forever grateful for her and the program's assistance."



"The NHLAP understands its mission, its constituencies, and the needs of those benefitting from its role. Very effective in expressing clear pathways to, and accomplishment of, healthy mental, emotional, and social goals."



"Other / Did not identify" includes individuals who identify as transgender, non-binary, agender, queer, or otherwise unspecified gender identities and expressions.

"The NHLAP was a lifesaver. Ms. O'Neill provided highly competent, insightful, and compassionate [support] at a moment crucial to me. Her philosophy that progress consists of determination and action rather than outcome is purely helpful. Her accountability approach, in which she ends her session by very specific action promises, is further empowering."

Understanding the Pursuit of Excellence

A letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Looking back on the past year, we've witnessed countless journeys touched by the New Hampshire Lawyers Assistance Program (NHLAP). Each began their journey searching for answers to address issues of concern. Each professional was striving to achieve balance and wellness in pursuit of excellence. A question that longs to be answered - does the pursuit of excellence clash with our pursuit for wellbeing?

Achieving a state of wellbeing doesn't hinge on reaching a specific goal; it starts and runs on a strong foundation. True determinants of wellbeing include a healthy mindset, a clear direction, routine practice of healthy habits, a willingness to appear vulnerable while seeking guidance and support, embracing your identity for authenticity, and a consistent flow of attention and energy across the dimensions of wellness (areas of high priority). Wellbeing facilitates the pursuit of excellence. With resilience, personal empowerment, and meaningful connections, we pave the path to greatness. Using this approach, NHLAP has helped numerous legal professionals undergo profound transformations, unlocking their full potential.

This year, we have more than doubled our referrals. NHLAP staff have made it a priority to engage with the legal community through our presence at events, spreading awareness of who we serve, how we help, and our commitment to confidentiality. Trust between us and legal professionals is growing, and word of mouth is spreading the message that NHLAP is a reliable and steadfast confidante in overcoming personal challenges.

With a purpose mindset, NHLAP aspires to be a beacon of excellence. To this end, NHLAP Commission ("Board") members and the executive director embarked on our first ever strategic visioning and planning journey. NHLAP hired a consultant familiar with our community and convened a strategic planning committee comprised of legal practitioners, law students, law school faculty, colleagues in recovery, and treatment professionals.

We completed a deep environmental scan of New Hampshire's legal landscape, holding 1:1 interviews and twelve virtual focus-

group sessions to understand the issues better. NHLAP learned the top stress drivers unique to law practice, received feedback useful for creating high-impact wellness programming for legal practitioners and leaders, developed marketing for inclusivity across generations of legal professionals, and heard great ideas for addressing stigma. In February 2023, NHLAP finalized a 3-year Strategic Plan. However, we didn't stop there; NHLAP went on to successfully deliver two funding proposals to hire two additional staff members essential to effectuating the strategic plan and meeting the growing demand for NHLAP support. Both funding proposals were approved.

We are happy to announce in conjunction with this annual report, that the state of our organization is strong. We are charging forward with our initiatives, including creating new programming, expanding our footprint across the state, and engaging all members of the profession, especially underrepresented groups such as solo and small firm attorneys and judges. It is imperative to maintain and nurture trust between us and New Hampshire's legal professionals.

We've achieved remarkable success through collective effort. The legal community in New Hampshire may be small, but it is a community that cares for its members. It may not be visible to you given the adversarial nature of the work, but remember you are united as members of the legal profession, sharing a deep appreciation for the demands of law practice and the quest for excellence in your craft. Your work is valued and appreciated, and here at NHLAP, we thank you.

Thank you all for being with us on this journey and for continuing to strive to be your best selves. We look forward to the new year!



Jill O'Neill

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Jill O'Neill".

Executive Director, NHLAP

A Vision for Strategic Planning

A letter from the incoming Project Coordinator

To members of the New Hampshire legal community,

It is my privilege to join the New Hampshire Lawyers Assistance Program as the Project Coordinator. As the soon-to-be husband of a Boston attorney who shares with me all the ups and downs of mental well-being, this mission is close to me, personally.

I get to see really high highs and personal satisfaction, when everything seems to be going well and the weight of the world is a yoke she proudly and confidently bears. I also get to see some pretty low points, where we share tears over the – sometimes out of nowhere – overwhelming physical and emotional burden of busy, if fulfilling lives. Between multiple high-demand jobs, wedding planning, and the early stages of starting a family, we make things work, but not without grueling challenges. If not for each other and an intimate knowledge of available resources, we might be in a more difficult situation.

It is my goal and strategy, in implementing NHLAP's strategic plan, not to depersonalize the work of the organization, but to address each challenge with a golden rule standard. I wish to deliver for others who may be struggling the kind of assistance I would wish to have.

NHLAP's initiatives must be carried out in an efficient manner with respect to considerations such as legal culture, workplace stigma, and individuals' personal history. That is why my day one prerogative is to begin immersing myself in the field, speaking early and often with legal professionals, and educating myself through courses and self-guided research.

I want to thank everyone for trusting me with this responsibility, and I look forward to working with the Executive Director, the Board of Directors, and the New Hampshire legal community toward our shared mission.



Dakota Thunder Wilson

A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink.

Project Coordinator, NHLAP

Year in Review

NHLAP Quick Hits

2022-2023

Findings

Most common reasons for contacting NHLAP were for mental health concerns and illness (28%) and substance misuse (15%)

Individuals contacting NHLAP were disproportionately located in Merrimack County (44%), followed distantly by Hillsborough County (21%)

Those who identified as male were more likely to contact NHLAP for assistance (58%)

A majority (51%) of NHLAP clients self-referred for assistance

Solo and small firm practitioners accounted for the greatest share of referrals (36%) but many who sought assistance (28%) were law students

The most common actions taken were treatment referrals and resources (36%) and follow-along support (21%)

Recommendations

NHLAP recognizes a need for more outreach in New Hampshire's more rural counties. Zero referrals came from Belknap, Cheshire, Coos, or Sullivan Counties, despite the fact that 400 legal professionals live in these regions (*New Hampshire Bar Association Membership Statistics, 2022*). In order for NHLAP to continue to do its best work, it is vital that our services accurately reflect the diverse demographic makeup of the New Hampshire legal community including race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and professional background.

New Hampshire Lawyers Assistance Program

About Us

Under Supreme Court Rule 58, all contact with NHLAP, whether with lawyers, judges, law students, or concerned third parties, is confidential. We are here to help with any issue that may be negatively impacting the ability to practice. We have helped hundreds of New Hampshire lawyers address and overcome challenges to engaging successfully in their professional and personal lives. As a confidential program, no information gained through NHLAP work is ever shared unless we are asked to do so by the affected person. In addition, NHLAP employees and volunteers are exempt from reporting professional misconduct under Rule 8.3, and prohibited from doing so under Rule 37. All interaction is strictly confidential.

NHLAP Commission ("Board")

As of February 18, 2022

Honorable James Leary – Chair

Sean List, Esquire – Vice Chair

Sean Filiault, PhD, JD – Treasurer

Honorable William Decker

Leonard Korn, MD

Molly Rossignol, DD

Christopher Regan, Esquire

Charla Stevens, Esquire

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