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# September Newsletter

Volume I | Issue I | New Hampshire Lawyers Assistance Program

WWW.NHLAP.COM

## *NH LCL Monthly Meeting*

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers is a monthly meeting on the  
**SECOND TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH**  
of New Hampshire lawyers, judges and law students who come  
together for free, confidential peer support for issues that interfere  
with professional responsibility. Check our website for exact dates  
and locations at [www.lapnh.org](http://www.lapnh.org)

Absolute confidentiality is the LCL promise.

## *Inside This Issue*

**Pg. 2**

Why Lawyer Wellness

**Pg. 3**

What Is NH Lawyers Assistance?

**Pg. 4**

Meet the Executive Director

## Lawyer Wellness

Since 2017, the latest buzz in the legal community is all about wellness for lawyers. It started in earnest with the CoLAP Report on Attorney Wellbeing that was published that year and then adopted by the ABA House of Delegates in 2018. Essentially, this report highlights the dire situation facing lawyers, judges and law students. The legal profession suffers substance abuse rates higher than any other profession, with the only exception being physicians. Finally, a priority discussion regarding the personal and professional toll of stress in the legal profession. It takes a huge toll in all measurable ways—increased professional responsibility complaints, lost productivity, increased sick leave and increased numbers of lawyers leaving the profession. The general mentality has been that the practice of law is one of unyielding stress and just part of the job. The perception fostered is that only those that have the fortitude to endure this profession at all personal costs will be successful

“Lawyer wellness is all about maintaining core competency to avoid disciplinary action, legal malpractice, and in the worst cases, suicide.”

“Getting Help  
Doesn’t Sabotage  
Your Career, But  
Not Getting Help  
Can!”

is a harmful and inhumane myth. It is now widely recognized that the culture surrounding the practice of law needs to change both by the individuals who practice and the employers who hire them. The definitive study on this issue may be found in the “National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being: Creating a Movement to Improve Well-Being in the Legal Profession” (2017). Every one of the 44 individual recommendations have been adopted by the American Bar Association’s Board of Governors and 26 separate state supreme courts. Make no mistake, we are a profession in crisis. It should be the priority of every legal practitioner to understand the issues, fight against the stigma in addressing them and engage the institutions that are working to help each and every legal practitioner. Too often, lawyers don’t seek help until it’s too late. Let’s work together in New Hampshire to change that.



## WHAT IS NHLAP?

We are a confidential, independent 301(c)(3) non-profit to assist NH lawyers, judges and law students with any issue that may impact or impair the ability to practice law. Many lawyers think we only help with substance misuse. Although that is a very important part of NHLAP, it is no means sole focus of our work. We help with anything that has become problematic. Just some examples are depression, anxiety and other mental health issues; grief; cognitive limitations resulting from aging; eating disorders; professional dissatisfaction and burn-out; work-life imbalance and time management strategies.

We are here to help before consequences of these issues become problematic, public or both. We are not part of the NH court system nor the NH Bar. Because we are solely funded by a per attorney mandatory assessment, we are akin to an additional lawyer insurance policy- we can help individuals or legal employers understand the risks in ignoring these very real issues and point to concrete solutions.

We are your resource. We are here to help make your legal practice something you enjoy, not something you endure.

## QUICK TIP

Set a time to check email (Example: first thing at 8:30 a.m. and again at 5:00 p.m.) and don't check it outside the limits you have set. Create an automatic reply that explains your email schedule. Include a line explaining that by scheduling time for email response you can give emails your full attention. If you stop constantly checking email, your stress level decreases and you can remain focused to increase overall productivity.



RESILIENCE





**TERRI HARRINGTON, ESQ.**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
**NH LAWYERS ASSISTANCE**



“Rock bottom became the solid foundation in which I rebuilt my life.”  
-J.K. Rowling



“Sometimes asking for help is the most meaningful example of self-reliance.” -Unknown



“It is the knowledge to speak, and it is the privilege of wisdom to listen.”  
- Oliver Wendell Homes

## Why I Do This Work

I spent much of my legal professional life as a criminal litigator. I did everything from public defender work in Maine to felony prosecution in New Hampshire and everything in between. I know the stress of defending clients with impossible demands and expectations. I know the anxiety that trial preparation of a large, complex case provokes. I sacrificed the care of myself as well as time with my family and friends in pursuit of a winning verdict, a promotion or simply to look like a tough litigator. Unfortunately, in 2016 my never-ending exhaustion was diagnosed as drug induced lupus, a rare consequence of taking a simple antibiotic. My immune system was completely compromised from stress and lack of self-care. I was forced to take a break from law to regain my health. In looking back, I can remember many individual conversations with colleagues about constant deadlines, stress, lack of sleep and the imbalance of time away from work which was creating an impossible legal culture to live up to.

Many changed jobs. Some left law altogether. Most felt unhealthy and out of control a majority of the time. These conversations rarely moved beyond the closed, private space where they took place. We were talking amongst ourselves with little opportunity to voice these concerns. Once I regained my health, I returned to the practice of criminal litigation. The culture had not changed at all. The pressure, the unrealistic expectations, the crushing workload were all there waiting for me. The difference was I had changed. These expectations are unsustainable. I had experienced firsthand the devastating toll a chronic physical illness can take. This experience is no different than having a chronic mental illness, a substance misuse problem or feeling so burnt out that the thought of going to work can reduce one to tears. This time, instead of leaving law, I feel an imperative to work to change the culture that allowed me to get so ill I had to stop working. My story is not unique. My story is your story. Let's change this culture together.