



LAP News to Use

Saving Careers, Saving Lives . . . One Attorney at a Time

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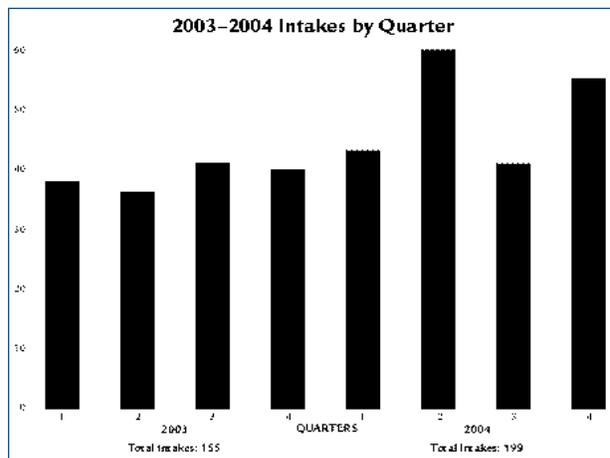
The LAP Turns Three

Sharp Increase in Self-Referrals

By every measure the LAP's accomplishments in 2004 continued on the steep upward curve of the Program's two previous years. The Program accepted 199 new participants in 2004, an increase of twenty-eight (28) percent over 2003. Requests for counseling increased substantially, and the number of professionally facilitated support groups grew to 27 meetings each week.

The widening knowledge of the LAP among California attorneys, and their increasing trust in the LAP as a confidential resource for recovery, were underscored by the sharply increased proportion of new participants who sought out the Program in the absence of any disciplinary proceedings. During the first two years of the Program's operation, near-

ly two-thirds of all participants faced some type of disciplinary proceedings. During 2004, only half of the new participants were facing discipline. This gratifying development suggests that the LAP is achieving earlier intervention, which means better client protection, better treatment prospects, and greater savings to the disciplinary process. ♦



LAP Video in Wide Release

A major success in the LAP's outreach efforts in 2004 was the release and widespread dissemination of a 17-minute video entitled "The Lawyer Assistance Program." The video, introduced and endorsed by Chief Justice Ronald M. George of the Supreme Court of California, is being distributed to judicial officers and lawyers' groups

statewide. It was viewed and favorably received by the Conference of Chief Justices of the 50 states and territories, and it is rapidly becoming a national model for LAP promotional material.

The video can be viewed over the internet on your computer. Visit www.calbar.ca.gov/lap and click on the link for (30 MB Video). ♦

Defeating Depression: One Lawyer's Story

Grace was one phone call away from ending her life when the Lawyer Assistance Program came to her rescue.

"That was probably the most important phone call I ever made because it led to a comprehensive evaluation and treatment plan that enabled me to deal with problems that I thought I had put away a long time ago," she says.

Clean and sober since age 30, Grace had emerged from law school at age 34 and started a solo practice, which she maintained fairly well for the first three years.

"I saw it as a logical extension of my previous jobs as a paralegal, office manager and legal secretary—I figured I could cover everything and handle all the pressures of being chief cook and bottle washer."

But her tightly wound practice began unraveling when the pressures of dealing with clients, dealing with judges and dealing with unreasonable opposing counsel "just became too much."

To keep up with all the responsibilities of running her own practice it wasn't unusual for the young lawyer to work 18 hour days.

"And, maybe because of my pathology, I wouldn't ask for help. We lawyers are accustomed to everyone looking to us for the answers, so I believed that I couldn't ask for help," she confesses.

"In 2000 and 2001, in response to all of the stress I was under, my immune system began to fail. I started getting sick more often and missing more and more work, which led to financial worries.

(continued on page 2)



One Lawyer's Story *(continued from page 1)*

I was on overload and didn't know how to stop the downward spiral. Ultimately, I fell into a deep depression.

"I reached a point where I couldn't bear answering the phone or opening my mail. I basically locked myself in my apartment for three months and contemplated ending it all permanently.

"I ended up having to close my office and I went to work for another attorney so I could at least stabilize my income. It was utterly demoralizing."

Finally, in 2002 Grace went to some meetings of The Other Bar as an extension of her recovery from alcohol and drug addiction, to try to get some support.

"I became friendly with a woman there who told me about the Lawyer Assistance Program. With her urging, I called up and spoke with a case manager. When I made that phone call I figured I had nothing left to lose. I told the case manager what was happening in my life and how hopeless I felt. She had me come in right away for an evaluation."

At that point Grace thought her problems stemmed from simply having a little weight problem. She had no idea it was just the tip of a psychological iceberg.

"I learned that many complex emo-

tional issues and problems had gone un-addressed during my life up to then.

"However, the professionals at the LAP understood how very sick I had become. As a result, they were able to recommend a comprehensive course of treatment, which included an intensive outpatient eating disorder program, individual therapy, and an antidepressant regimen that was managed by a psychiatrist.

"I accepted their recommendations for treatment. It saved my life. My treatment allowed me to realize that when I was growing up there had been a lot of neglect, so I didn't get a lot of tools to manage such a stressful and demanding career.

"Instead, I had come to rely upon destructive ways of coping with stress, including binge eating, drugs, abusing alcohol, and a rampant addiction to video games to dull pain and cope with stress. I came to appreciate that these destructive coping skills were enough for survival, but not good enough to actually live a good life and be an effective attorney.

"Today, seven years since starting my original practice, I am 41 and healthier than I have ever been. The eating disorder is in remission and I no longer

In telling her story, Grace emphasized two points:

- The ability of the LAP to make financial assistance available is crucial. Grace was able to obtain a loan from the program to fund the treatment she needed. In her words, "the treatment is costly, but without it, in many cases, there can't be recovery."
- It is very important for the LAP to have enough case managers to adequately handle a rapidly growing caseload. "When I was at a particularly low point, my case manager had the time available to come out to where I was working and spend four hours with me talking me out of giving up hope. Without her intervention it's possible I wouldn't be here today. I hope every case manager always has the time to respond to his or her clients like that," she says. ♦

need antidepressants. I am happier than I have ever been in my entire life and doing what I love, practicing law."

But Grace adds that she is still attending individual and group therapy, and she still participates in twelve-step programs to deal with her specific problems.

"The most important thing I now know is that we all need help. At some point in our lives we all need help, and we should never be ashamed to ask for that."

One of the ways the LAP helps is through a loan program.

"All of my treatment—the eating disorders program and therapy—was expensive. While the LAP doesn't provide a lot of money, I'm glad they made loans available, which helped me attend a treatment program and get the therapy that I desperately needed. I'm now able to pay my treatment expenses without further loans."

Grace has some advice for others who could be where she was four years ago: "Just make that phone call. It's the best phone call you could ever make for yourself, your family, the public, and other lawyers." ♦

Editor's Note: The Lawyer Assistance Program is completely confidential. "Grace" is not the real name of the subject of this article.

Chief Justice George Endorses the LAP

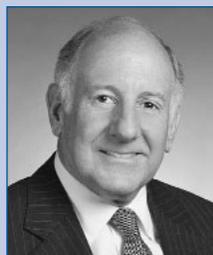
The Honorable Ronald M. George, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of California, plays a key role of endorsing the LAP through his introduction of the LAP's 17-minute video, which has been widely disseminated to judicial officers and lawyers' groups throughout the state.

The Chief Justice opens the video by telling viewers that he is "very pleased to recommend and endorse this new resource for California's courts and court employees."

He goes on to say that, "the Lawyer Assistance Program provides a vital tool for addressing the serious problems raised by impaired attorneys. The potentially adverse effects extend to harm to clients, to the legal profession, and to the affected attorneys themselves as well as their families.

"As President of the Conference of Chief Justices, I am aware that this is an area of concern in every state. The Conference has been active in encouraging the development of effective responses, and this videotape will be made available nationwide," he says.

The Chief Justice concludes his remarks by saying that, "as a judicial officer for more than 30 years, I am well aware that impaired attorneys can have a significant adverse effect on the administration of justice. I urge you to put this excellent resource to good use and thus implement yet another means to better serve the public." ♦



The Honorable Ronald M. George



Practicing Law Is a High Risk Profession

If you're reading this, the chances are good that you're concerned about yourself or somebody close to you having a substance abuse problem.

"The rate of incidence among attorneys is very high. And when you consider the factors involved, that should come as no surprise," according to Jeanie Griffin, case management supervisor for the California Lawyer Assistance Program.

Consider these statistics:

- While 10 percent of the general population is substance dependent, the rate for attorneys is 18 to 20 percent.¹
- Thirty-three percent of attorneys experience significant mental health issues, as opposed to about 14 percent of the general population.²

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Richard Carlton, *Editor*

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- Lawyers have now surpassed dentists for having the highest incidence of depression—up to 37 percent.³
- A study by the Canadian Lawyer Assistance Program found that the rate of attorney suicide was 10.8 percent, with suicide as the third leading cause of death behind heart attack and cancer. Furthermore, the group most at risk for suicide was judges and lawyers between the ages of 48-65.⁴
- In California, attorneys with pending disciplinary proceedings and investigations related to the consequences of substance abuse or mental health issues are referred to the Lawyer Assistance Program by the State Bar Court's Alternative Discipline Program ("ADP"). ADP cases now comprise forty (40) percent of the State Bar Court's caseload.⁵

Why is incidence of substance dependency and abuse so high in this profession? Generally speaking, the public's opinion of attorneys is very low today; job dissatisfaction is very high among lawyers; and competition is keen among lawyers seeking new clients and cases. For the solo practitioner, one must be the rainmaker, the office administrator and the person who actually does the legal work—all at the same time; the stress of managing those three roles simultaneously can be overwhelming.

Family practitioners, public defenders and others who handle cases dealing with cruelty and heartlessness face a moral conflict between their repulsion of the ugly side of humanity and their duty to represent these people. This per-

sonal conflict over time can have a cumulative traumatic effect which, in turn, can lead to depression and/or the use of legal or illegal substances in an attempt to cope.

How to know if there's a problem? "You might be one of the many attorneys who can't open the mail (even when you

**Call the Lawyer Assistance Program
 toll-free at (877) LAP-4-HELP
 (877-527-4435).**

know there are checks in some of the envelopes); who knows that your cell phone and office phone voicemails are full, but you can't bring yourself to review the messages; who doesn't have the energy to go to work, but does have the energy to go do something else. Those are hallmark signs of depression. If you're feeling that way, it's OK to call the LAP," Griffin emphasizes.

"This profession is extremely high risk for substance abuse and mental health disorders. We as a society look to attorneys to help us navigate a murky legal system with an unfamiliar language. I remind attorneys that it's OK to ask for help for their own problems," she adds. The LAP is here to assist attorneys to navigate a mental health/substance use disorder system that may be unfamiliar to them. The LAP offers three no-cost counseling sessions as well as a more structured assistance program.

"Through the LAP group process, attorneys learn how to relate to others as human beings instead of 'talking law,' which is a more comfortable way of relating. They also learn they are not alone. They can take those new interaction skills back into their lives, which can help them," Griffin says. ♦

¹ Reported in Connie Beck, Bruce Sales, and G. Andrew H. Benjamin, *Lawyer Distress: Alcohol-related Problems and Other Psychological Concerns Among a Sample of Practicing Lawyers*, 10 *J. Law and Health* 1, 1-60 (1996).

² *Ibid.*

³ 1990 Johns Hopkins Study of 12,000 people in 103 professions.

⁴ Canadian Lawyer Assistance Program Survey 1994-1997.

⁵ Lawyer Assistance Program State Bar of California Annual Report March 1, 2005.

Save the Date: January 28, 2006

Mark your calendar now for the first annual Saving Careers, Saving Lives event on Saturday, January 28, 2006 at the Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel. This will be an evening event featuring dinner, speakers and entertainment, with proceeds to benefit the Financial Assistance Plan of the Lawyer Assistance Program, a loan program for indigent lawyers who need treatment but are unable to pay for it.

Additional funds will allow the LAP to provide more assistance to more attorneys in need.

“Our clients are individuals who have lost nearly everything—their homes, families and career status—to the devastation of addiction or mental illness. They are trying to rebuild their lives and careers and again become productive members of the profession and society,” said Richard Carlton, M.P.H., deputy director of the LAP. ♦

For more information, or to volunteer to help with the event, please contact Richard Carlton at (415) 538-2355 or richard.carlton@calbar.ca.gov.

Resources to Help the Impaired Attorney

Organizations

Lawyer Assistance Program

www.calbar.ca.gov/lap
1-877-LAP-4-HELP

The Other Bar

www.otherbar.org
1-800-222-0767

Alcoholics Anonymous

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org
www.al-anon.alateen.org
1-888-4AL-ANON
or call local directory assistance

Narcotics Anonymous

www.na.org

Cocaine Anonymous

www.ca.org

Debtors 12-Step Groups

www.debtorsanonymous.org

Dual Diagnosis Site

www.dualdiagnosisfriendly.org

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

www.ptsdalliance.org/home_family.html

Information for Family Members

Recovering Couples

www.recovering-couples.org

Treatment Centers

<http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>

Sober Living Houses

<http://soberhousing.net/referral.html>

California Department of Mental Health

www.dmh.ca.gov/default.asp

Books

A Time to Heal by Timmen Cermak M.D.

Alcohol and the Addictive Brain by Kenneth Bloom, Ph.D.

Alcoholics Anonymous by AA World Services

Lawyer, Know Thyself by Professor Susan Swaim Diacoff

Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers (An Updated Guide to Stress, Stress-Related Diseases, and Coping) by Robert M. Sapolsky

Lawyer Assistance Program



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