

Lesson Plan – Alcohol, Health, and Attorney Wellness

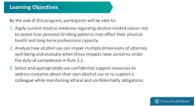
Course Designer: State Bar of California LAP **Target Audience:** California attorneys **No. of Participants:** Unlimited **Length of Course:** 60 mins

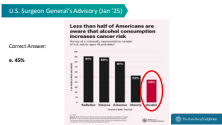
Course Description: This one-hour competence MCLE program provides a research-based examination of alcohol's health effects, its documented impact on professional functioning, and the ways in which alcohol misuse affects multiple dimensions of attorney wellness. The program begins with a medical overview of alcohol's role as a carcinogen and its contribution to cancer incidence and other chronic health conditions. An attorney in recovery then offers a candid personal account illustrating how alcohol use disorder affects legal practice, relationships, and personal well-being. The presentation concludes with a detailed review of confidential support resources available to California attorneys, law students, and bar applicants, including the State Bar's Lawyer Assistance Program and peer-support organizations.

Equipment Needed: projector, laptop for presentation if in person; laptop, online platform if virtual
Prerequisites (if any): none
Pre-course assignments (if any): none
Fairness/ADA Issues to cover: none

Learning Objectives (LO)

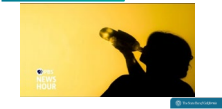
- Apply current medical evidence regarding alcohol-related cancer risk to assess how personal drinking patterns may affect their physical health and long-term professional capacity.
- Analyze how alcohol use can impair multiple dimensions of attorney well-being and evaluate when those impacts raise concerns under the duty of competence in Rule 1.1.
- Select and appropriately use confidential support resources to address concerns about their own alcohol use or to support a colleague while maintaining ethical and confidentiality obligations.

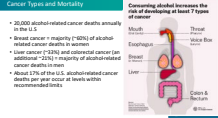
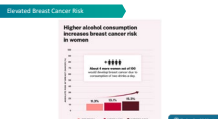
Time	Slide Number	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
1 minute	1 	Alcohol, Health, and Attorney Wellness: Navigating Risks and Professional Responsibility	Lecture	• Replace the placeholders with your name/title and event/date before presenting. • Briefly introduce the presenters, emphasizing credentials and lived experience where applicable. • Reiterate that the tone is nonjudgmental and based on data, ethics, and compassion. • Optional: Invite attendees to take notes or reflect privately during the session.
1 minute	2 	Agenda 1. Introduction (facilitator) 2. Medical Insights into the Health Effects of Alcohol (medical professional) 3. The Professional and Personal Toll of Alcohol Use Disorder (attorney in recovery) 4. Resources for California Legal Professionals (facilitator)	Lecture	• Clarify that this MCLE explores both medical science and lived attorney experience. • Emphasize intersectionality: this is about well-being <i>and</i> legal competence.
1 minute	3 	By the end of this program, participants will be able to: 1. Apply current medical evidence regarding alcohol-related cancer risk to assess how personal drinking patterns may affect their physical health and long-term professional capacity. 2. Analyze how alcohol use can impair multiple dimensions of attorney well-being and evaluate	Lecture	• Briefly review objectives

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		when those impacts raise concerns under the duty of competence in Rule 1.1. 3. Select and appropriately use confidential support resources to address concerns about their own alcohol use or to support a colleague while maintaining ethical and confidentiality obligations.		
1 minute	4	Introduction 	Lecture	Set the stage for highlighting the gap between alcohol's cultural normalization in the profession and the emerging scientific evidence on its health risks
2 minutes	5	Poll: Alcohol and Cancer Risk What percentage of Americans are aware that alcohol consumption increases cancer risk? a. 91% b. 89% c. 81% d. 53% e. 45% 	Poll	- Tip: Use polling software (Zoom polls, Zoom Q&A or chat, Teams polls) or hand raise - Highlight how unfamiliar many are with alcohol-cancer links compared to tobacco or radiation - This question primes awareness for the Surgeon General's Advisory
1 minute	6	Correct Answer: e. 45% 	Lecture	Introduce the 2025 U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on Alcohol and Cancer Risk. Note that this is the first advisory to call for updated alcohol warning labels in decades — frame it as a significant shift in public health messaging, with parallels to how tobacco risks were first communicated to the public. Frame alcohol as a carcinogen with parallels to tobacco messaging in past decades

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				Explain that many professionals are unaware of these risks despite regular exposure
1 minute	7	Rule 1.1, Duty of Competence RPC 1.1(b) “For purposes of this rule, ‘competence’ in any legal service shall mean to apply the (i) learning and skill, and (ii) mental, emotional, physical ability reasonably necessary for the performance of such service.”	Lecture	- Explain how this rule includes physical, emotional, and mental competence - Highlight risk to clients when attorneys are impaired or chronically unwell - After reviewing the rule, pause and invite participants to consider: 'What does competence look like on your best day and what gets in the way?' Let the question sit without calling on anyone.
1 minute	8	The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations Our Challenges 21-36% problem drinkers 28% depression 19% anxiety 23% elevated stress 25% work addiction - High suicide rate - Sleep deprivation - Work-life conflict - Avoid seeking help - Job dissatisfaction and attrition Our Potential - Physically healthy - Mentally thriving	Lecture	- Introduce the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being report: The Path to Lawyer Well-Being - Note that the legal profession has elevated rates of substance use, depression, and anxiety - Introduce the cultural norm of alcohol in law and how it intersects with stress, identity, and performance - Emphasize that education (like this program) is a critical recommendation

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		• Contributing to society • Focusing on client care • Feeling connected and a sense of belonging • Willing to seek help • Engaged at work • Continually seeking intellectual growth • Emotionally intelligent • Experiencing a sense of meaning and purpose		
2 minutes	9 	Defining Well-Being in Law A continuous process in which we strive for thriving in each dimension of our lives: Emotional: Value emotions. Develop ability to identify and manage our emotions to support mental health, achieve goals, & inform decisions. Seek help for mental health when needed. Intellectual: Engage in continuous learning. Pursue creative or intellectually challenging activities that foster ongoing development. Monitor cognitive wellness. Occupational: Cultivate personal satisfaction, growth, and enrichment in work. Strive to maintain financial stability. Physical: Strive for regular activity, good diet & nutrition, enough sleep, & recovery. Limit addictive substances. Seek help for physical health when needed. Spiritual: Develop a sense of meaningfulness and purpose in all aspects of life. Social: Develop connections, a sense of belonging, and a reliable support network. Contribute to our groups and communities.	Lecture, Optional audience participation	• Define each wellness domain briefly • Optional: Invite participants to note where they feel strongest and weakest • Emphasize that alcohol use can disrupt multiple domains, not just physical health

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1 minute	10	Medical Insights into the Health Effects of Alcohol 	Lecture	- Set up the section by noting it will present recent evidence, not moral judgments - If a medical professional is presenting, introduce them here and allow the medical professional to tailor the slides below as needed - If no medical professional: following the 6-minute interview video, the facilitator may narrate this portion using citations and script support
7 minutes	11	U.S. Surgeon General Calls Explains Why He's Calling for Cancer Warnings on Alcohol, PBS NewsHour report (Jan 3, 2025) 	Media	- Prep audience for what they'll hear in Dr. Murthy's remarks and the impact of alcohol on physical health - Encourage listeners to focus on parallels with tobacco in terms of how risks are communicated and perceived - Link to video: https://youtu.be/CpBIQg4Nx14
1 minute	12	Cancer Cases Attributable to Alcohol • 72% of U.S. adults reported they consumed one or more drinks per week (2019-2020) • Leading preventable cause of cancer in the US after tobacco and obesity • Nearly 100,000 cancer cases and about 20,000 cancer deaths each year • 42,400 in men • 54,330 in women • Largest impact of alcohol-related cancer in the U.S. is for breast cancer in women • Estimated 44,000 cases, representing 34.6% of the approximately 127,000 total breast cancer cases for women (2024) 	Lecture	These statistics come from the 2025 U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory. Present them matter-of-factly and avoid dramatizing. If participants seem surprised by the breast cancer figures, acknowledge it and note that this is precisely why the Advisory was issued.

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		Estimated 44,180 cases, representing 16.4% of the approximately 270,000 total breast cancer cases for women (2019)		
2 minutes	13	 20,000 alcohol-related cancer deaths annually in the U.S. - Breast cancer = majority (~60%) of alcohol-related cancer deaths in women - Liver cancer (~33%) and colorectal cancer (an additional ~21%) = majority of alcohol-related cancer deaths in men - About 17% of the U.S. alcohol-related cancer deaths per year occur at levels within recommended limits	Lecture	The 17% figure (that alcohol-related cancer deaths occur at levels within recommended limits) tends to land hardest with audiences. Pause briefly after stating it. You do not need to editorialize; let the statistic speak. If a participant asks what 'recommended limits' means, note that the Advisory itself calls for those limits to be reassessed.
1 minute	14	 - Light drinking = small but present increased risk - Moderate drinking = noticeably higher risk - Heavy drinking = substantially elevated risk	Lecture	This slide summarizes the dose-response relationship. Emphasize that there is no established 'safe' level of drinking; even light drinking carries some risk. Avoid framing this as an instruction to stop drinking. The goal is informed decision-making, not behavior prescription.
1 minute	15	 Elevated Breast Cancer Risk - Higher alcohol consumption increases breast cancer risk in women. - About 4 more women out of 100 would develop breast cancer due to consumption of two drinks a day.	Lecture	These statistics highlight how breast cancer as the largest category of alcohol-related cancer cases in women. Present this information matter-of-factly and emphasize that even moderate alcohol consumption carries measurable risk. If participants appear surprised, acknowledge this common reaction and connect that

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				reaction to why the Advisory was issued: most people do not know that alcohol is a carcinogen.
2 minutes	16	Four Ways Alcohol Causes Cancer  - Alcohol breaks down into acetaldehyde which damages DNA in multiple ways, causing an increased risk of cancer. - Alcohol induces oxidative stress, increasing the risk of cancer by damaging DNA, proteins, and cells and increasing inflammation. - Alcohol alters levels of multiple hormones, including estrogen, which can increase breast cancer risk. - Alcohol leads to greater absorption of carcinogens.	Lecture	Consider “We’re not sharing this to overwhelm you with biology, but to illustrate that alcohol impacts the body in several ways that all point in the same direction, an increased cancer risk.”
1 minute	17	Advisory Recommendations  - Be aware of the relationship between alcohol consumption and increased cancer risk when considering whether or how much to drink - Update warning labels on alcohol-containing beverages to reflect cancer risks - Reassess recommended limits for alcohol consumption in light of new evidence - Educate the public and healthcare providers about alcohol as a modifiable cancer risk factor - Empower patients to make informed decisions about drinking based on individualized risk	Lecture	Frame this as the practical implications of the Advisory: public health measures, not personal directives. Consider “These recommendations are designed to help people make informed choices. Competence for attorneys includes staying informed about health factors that can affect well-being and professional functioning.”
2 minutes	18	Poll: Self-Assessment of Alcohol Misuse  How confident are you in identifying early signs of alcohol misuse in yourself or others? a. Very confident	Poll	Remind participants that this poll has no right or wrong answer and is designed to help them check in with their own awareness. Identifying early

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		b. Somewhat confident c. Neutral d. Not very confident e. Not confident at all		signs of Alcohol Use Disorder, in themselves or colleagues, is part of competence and well-being. This next section explores the professional and personal impacts of AUD to better understand what these signs look like in real life.
15 minutes total for this section	19 	The Professional and Personal Toll of Alcohol	Lecture	- The goal is to illustrate that Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) can touch every aspect of an attorney's life, but also that hope and improvement in each dimension are possible with recovery. - Recovery speaker: This portion of the program is where your personal experience has the greatest impact. Consider telling your recovery story using one or more of the six dimensions of attorney wellness as guideposts. Speak authentically to the areas that were most meaningful in your journey. The goal is to illustrate how AUD can affect an attorney's life <i>and</i> how recovery can restore well-being and professional competence. 1. Emotional Wellness – How you were feeling then, and how you feel now 2. Intellectual Wellness – Cognitive impact and mental clarity

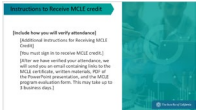
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				3. Occupational Wellness – Work performance and professional identity 4. Physical Wellness – What your body was showing you 5. Spiritual Wellness – Meaning, purpose, and personal ethics 6. Social Wellness – Relationships and community. - If no attorney in recovery is available to participate in the MCLE, consider first contacting The Other Bar (see https://otherbar.org/contacts/) to source a speaker. Alternatively, consider using a recorded video of an attorney in recovery available on The Other Bar website. (https://otherbar.org/testimonials/). The testimony provided by M.M. (9:20) and J.C. (12:23) are two candidates.
2 minutes	20	Reflection and Hope Alcohol's Multidimensional Impact - Not isolated to "just one" part of life, alcohol can undermine physical health, mental health, career, relationships, intellect, and spirit all at once. Recovery is Possible - Recovery can restore wellness in each dimension; lawyers can and do recover, often becoming healthier, more engaged professionals and individuals Breaking the Stigma - It's okay to admit if you're struggling—in fact, it's courageous and often the first step to getting better. Next Steps - If you are warning signs of alcohol distress in yourself or others (mood swings, performance, withdrawal from social connections, etc.), don't ignore them—help and resources are available, and often early help can prevent a full-on crisis.	Lecture, Self-reflection	- Reiterate key takeaways: - Alcohol misuse impacts more than just physical health - Attorneys can recover - Early detection and help-seeking are acts of professionalism - Suggest attendees reflect on one dimension of well-being in their own life they might examine more closely.

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		- It's okay to admit if you're struggling - in fact, it's courageous and often the first step to getting better. Your Role - If you see warning signs of alcohol distress in yourself or others (mood swings, declining work, withdrawal from social connections, etc.), don't ignore them. Help and resources are available, and intervening early can prevent a lot of pain.		
2 minutes	21 	Poll: Alcohol and Wellness Next Steps After today's presentation, how do you plan to modify your relationship with and use of alcohol? - I plan to significantly reduce my alcohol consumption. - I plan to moderately reduce my alcohol consumption. - I plan to maintain my current level of consumption. - I plan to seek additional information or support before deciding. - I do not plan to make any changes.	Poll	- Given that this is a self-reflection, there is no correct answer. - Time permitting, consider asking for volunteers to share their answers and reasoning behind their answer if they are comfortable.
1 minute	22 	Resources for California Legal Professionals	Lecture	- Use these slides to reinforce confidentiality and support options - Present LAP as a safe, confidential program that supports all attorneys, bar applicants, and law students - Highlight The Other Bar, ABA CoLAP, and local resources - Encourage attendees to save contact numbers, visit sites, or talk to a trusted colleague

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				Review current LAP services (https://www.calbar.ca.gov/Attorneys/Compliance-Records/Lawyer-Assistance-Program) to get up to speed
1 minute	23 	California Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP) - Supports law students, State Bar applicants, and attorneys; - Enhance public protection; and - Maintain the integrity of the legal profession.	Lecture	- Consider reviewing the Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP) website to become familiar with LAP services and wellness support offerings: https://www.calbar.ca.gov/legal-professionals/legal-resource-center/lawyer-assistance-program - Support LAP provides services through free sessions with a mental health provider, MCLE programs accredited for the prevention and detection of substance use and mental health issues and wellness, and periodic series focused on specific wellness topics such as ADHD, mindfulness, and effective law office management. - Monitored LAP provides structured, formal support for participants referred by the Office of Admissions or the State Bar Court, as well as for self-referred members of the legal community who need a more comprehensive, accountability-based program.

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1 minute	24	California Business and Professions Code Section 6234 - Confidentiality is absolute - Unless it is a mandated reporting - Information cannot be disclosed - Rule 8.3 mandatory reporting exception	Lecture	- Acknowledge that one of the most common concerns about contacting LAP is confidentiality. - Note that communications with, and participation in LAP is absolute unless waived by the participant or a mandated reporting circumstance by a health care professional, such as elder abuse or child abuse. - Highlight the RPC 8.3 exception to the reporting obligation: it does not apply to information gained by an attorney while participating in a substance use or mental health program, or information that is otherwise protected by confidentiality rules or laws.
1 minute	25	Contact LAP Toll free: 877-LAP-4-HELP 877-527-4435 LAP@calbar.ca.gov www.calbar.ca.gov/LAP	Lecture	
1 minute	26	- Confidential research service for attorneys seeking guidance on their professional responsibilities - Ethics Hotline at 1-800-238-4427, Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon https://www.calbar.ca.gov/Attorneys/Conduct-Discipline/Ethics/Hotline	Lecture	Make sure to mention that Ethics Hotline staff members do not provide legal counsel, advice, or opinions

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		• Ethics Hotline Research Assistance Request Form • Staff members: • Cannot provide legal counsel, advice, or opinions • Can discuss issues and authorities • Can refer attorneys to statutes, rules, cases, and State Bar opinions • Can strive to assist attorneys in reaching informed decisions		
1 minute	27	Resources for Legal Professionals ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs (CoLAP) • https://abacolap.wordpress.com/author/abacolap/ The Other Bar • Recovery program for California law students, bar applicants, attorneys, and judges • https://otherbar.org • Hotline: 800-222-0767 988 Suicide and Crisis Prevention Hotline • Call or text 988 Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) Private insurance Your Law Firm/Law School/Bar Organization	Lecture	• Briefly describe the outside resources available to attorneys; pick one or two to highlight such as The Other Bar and the 988 Suicide and Crisis Prevention Hotline
1 minute	28	Closing Reflections and Our Role in Attorney Wellness • Alcohol affects all dimensions of attorney wellness: emotional, intellectual, occupational, physical, spiritual, and social. • Awareness is a professional strength, not a personal weakness.	Lecture, Self-reflection, Optional audience participation	• Invite final reflections • Reiterate that making informed choices is part of our ethical duty • Encourage attendees to share what they've learned with peers and seek help early

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		- Competence requires more than knowledge; it includes your well-being. - Recovery is possible. Support is available. - Be proactive. Be compassionate. Be informed.		Thank them for their time and openness to the topic and call to awareness
1 minute	29 	Instructions to Receive MCLE credit [Include how you will verify attendance] [Additional Instructions for Receiving MCLE Credit] [You must sign in to receive MCLE credit.] [After we have verified your attendance, we will send you an email containing links to the MCLE certificate, written materials, PDF of the PowerPoint presentation, and the MCLE program evaluation form. This may take up to 3 business days.]	Lecture	Provide instructions to receive MCLE credit certificate and ask participants to complete the survey about the program.