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**PROGRAM MATERIALS**

**Program #35107**

**July 30, 2025**

## **Don't Give Up 5 Minutes Before the Miracle - A 2025 Update**

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lawyers PA**

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# *Don't Give Up 5 Minutes Before the Miracle*

*Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers of PA, Inc.*

*Laurie J. Besden, Esquire*

*Confidential Helpline: 1-888-999-1941*

*[www.lclpa.org](http://www.lclpa.org)*

*[Laurie@lclpa.org](mailto:Laurie@lclpa.org)*

# Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers

## [www.lclpa.org](http://www.lclpa.org)

Independent, non-profit PA corporation

**Confidential Helpline (1-888-999-1941)**

**24 hrs./day, 7 days/week, 365 days/year**

- Free information and literature
- Free evaluation by a healthcare professional
- Free assistance with interventions
- Peer support
- 13 Lawyer/Judges-only recovery meetings (11 on zoom)
- Weekly meditation session (Monday evenings)
- LCL staff support

**Our services are free, confidential,  
non-judgmental and non-obligatory.**

**MY STORY =  
OUR STORY  
=  
THEIR  
STORY=  
HIS STORY=  
HER  
STORY...**

We all have a “carfax.”

We all know someone that has struggled with substance use and mental health, personally.

People like me get sober and well because of consequences and the gift of desperation.











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7. On March 29, 2002, Petitioner was arrested in Collegeville, Pennsylvania and charged with violations of the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act, Forgery and Pharmacy Act.

8. On September 3, 2002, in the Court of Common Pleas of Montgomery County, Petitioner was placed on A.R.D. as a result of these charges.

9. On August 8, 2002, Petitioner was arrested in Whitmarsh, Pennsylvania and charged with DUI and other vehicle offenses.

10. On February 13, 2003 Petitioner entered a plea of guilty to DUI and other vehicle offenses in the Court of Common Pleas of Montgomery County and was sentenced to incarceration of not less than 48 hours nor more than 12 months in the County Correctional Facility.

11. On October 16, 2003, Petitioner was arrested in Norristown, Pennsylvania and charged with violations of the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act, Theft by Deception and Identity Theft.

12. On January 29, 2004, Petitioner was arrested in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania and was charged with violation of the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act, Pharmacy Act and Identity Theft.

13. On July 28, 2004, Petitioner entered an open guilty plea to violations of the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act, Identity Theft and the Pharmacy Act.

14. On October 14, 2004, Petitioner was sentenced to undergo imprisonment for 11 ½ to 23 months followed by three years of probation at the Montgomery County Correctional Facility.

15. In addition, Petitioner was arrested in Ventnor, New Jersey on September 7, 2002, for prescription drug fraud and possession. Petitioner entered into a negotiated plea agreement which included two years probation, fines and a six month driver's license suspension.

16. On January 29, 2004, J. David Farrell, Esquire, visited Petitioner in prison as a representative of Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers (LCL).

17. Petitioner joined LCL and developed a long term plan for her treatment and rehabilitation.

18. Upon her release from prison Petitioner attended a 35 day program at the Caron Foundation and intensive outpatient treatment at Program in Counseling for approximately eight weeks.

19. Petitioner continued with weekly drug counseling at Program in Counseling and joined Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).

20. Petitioner currently continues as an active member of LCL, NA and AA, attending at least bi-weekly NA meetings, a weekly women's AA meeting, and monthly LCL meetings. She averages four to six meetings per week in which she frequently relates her story of addiction.







**Patti Bednarik**

November 20, 2012 · Harrisburg · 2

...

Do you know how uncomfortable it is fundraising for a cause and asking people that you know for money? Well let me tell you, that is nothing compared to the situation that I'm in. I'm in desperate need of kidney. Most folks have two and both of mine are failing due to a disease called PKD. I've put this off for as long as I possibly can but my kidney function is down to 15% and I need a kidney to live and I need it soon. If you are willing to be tested to see if you are a potential donor for me, please contact me or Angela Barber at UPMC Transplant Center 412 647-5489 to find out more information. If you are willing to be tested to be my donor but you don't want to be placed on a general donor list, that is easily do-able. Making this request is one of the hardest things that I've had to do but I don't have options. I know that this is asking a lot but please consider this...and have a happy Thanksgiving!~ [Patti Bednarik](#)





THE SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA  
PENNSYLVANIA JUDICIAL CENTER  
601 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE, 8TH FLOOR  
P.O. BOX 90828  
HARRISBURG, PA 17106-0828

THOMAS G. SAYLOR  
CHIEF JUSTICE

(717) 772-1599

November 6, 2019

Board of Pardons  
333 Market Street, 15th Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Dear Honorable Members of the Board of Pardons:

I write in support of the application of Laurie Besden for a gubernatorial pardon. I cannot imagine a more deserving applicant. Since achieving sobriety, she has devoted her life, both professional and personal, to serving others. She is the embodiment of successful rehabilitation, turning her own life around and then working tirelessly and selflessly to help others do the same.

Beginning in 2011, Laurie has worked for Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers of Pennsylvania (LCL), serving as executive director since 2015. As Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, I am closely familiar with the important work of that organization. By helping lawyers and judges address substance abuse and mental health problems, LCL provides enormous benefit to our judicial system, the legal profession, and society at large. Under Laurie's leadership, LCL now reaches more and more lawyers and judges before their problems spiral out of control, saving lives, protecting the public, and reducing the burden on our disciplinary bodies. For so many lawyers and judges, she is truly a steady hand in rough seas.

In sum, I support Laurie's pardon application without qualification.

Sincerely,

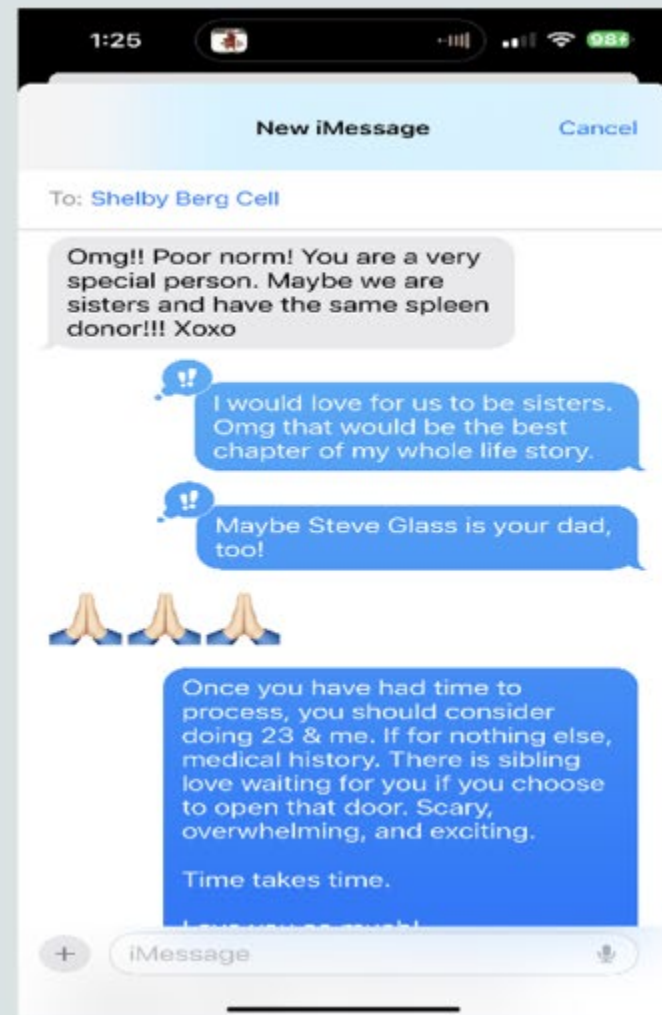
  
Thomas G. Saylor

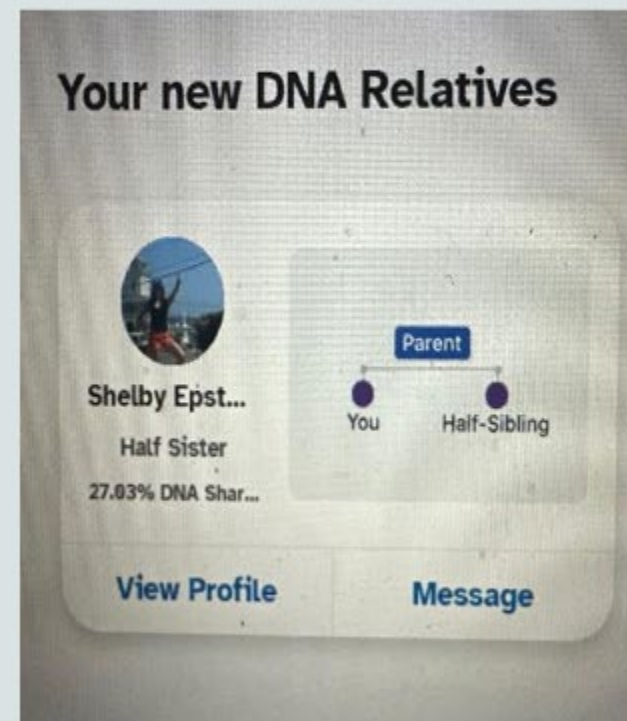
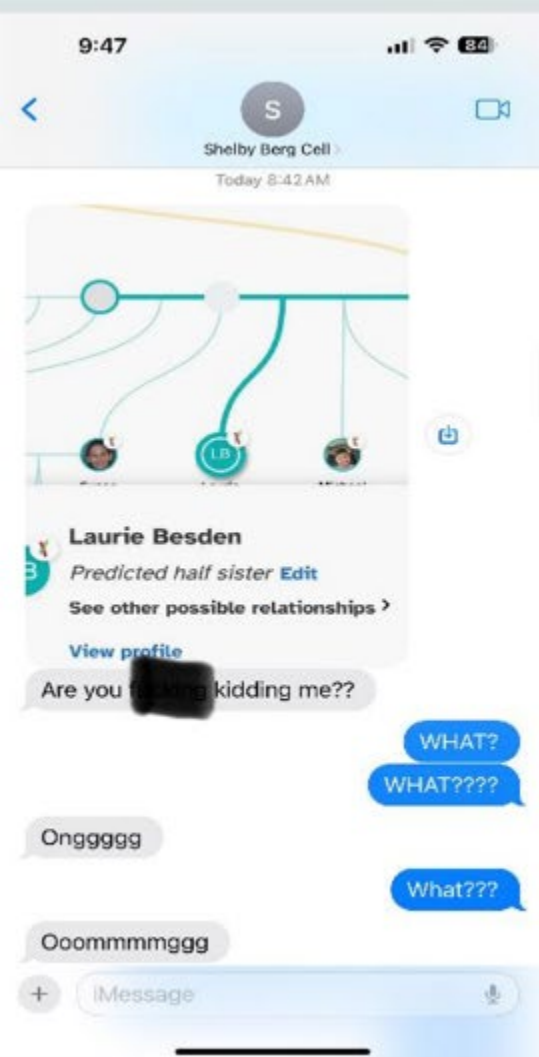
















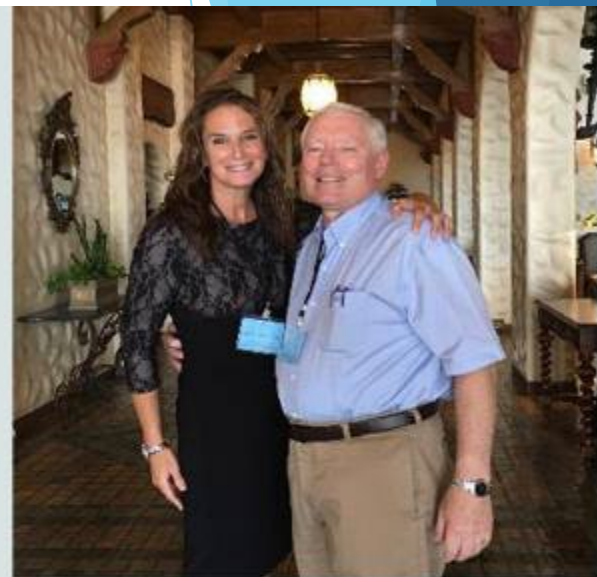
## **The MAGIC of the Criminal Justice System**

Judge William R. Carpenter,  
James Barker, Chief Justice  
Emeritus Saylor, Laurie J.  
Besden













# The Starfish Story

## *Original Story by: Loren Easley*

One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it back into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked "What are you doing?" "Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they'll die." "Son," the man said, "don't you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish?" You can't make a difference." After listening politely, the boy bend down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said ***"I made a difference for that one."***



# What is your “WHY?”

Your “**WHY**” is a statement of purpose that describes why you want to do the work you plan to do and why you live the lifestyle you do.

*It is your calling.*

*It is your conviction.*

*It is your mission statement.*

*It is a vision of your life and work.*

*It is the thread of your career story.*

*It is your core source of motivation.*

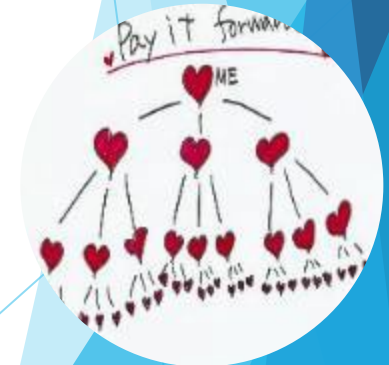
*It is the reference point for all your decisions and actions.*

*It defines who you are and what makes you productive.*

*It's the reason for your life's work.*

*Your “WHY” comes from within you.*

<https://lifeskillsthatmatter.com/find-your-why/#:~:text=Your%20%E2%80%9CWhy%E2%80%9Dis%20a%20statement,of%20your%20life%20and%20work.>



# HARVARD STUDY ON ADULT DEVELOPMENT

(‘Good Genes Are Nice, But Joy Is Better,’ The Harvard Gazette, Mineo, April 11, 2017)

(Tedtalk, Robert Waldinger, ‘What Makes A Good Life? Lessons From The Longest Study On Happiness’)

- ▶ 1938 (ongoing)
- ▶ 724 men - 2 groups
  - ▶ Harvard male students
  - ▶ Boys from a poor Boston suburb
  - ▶ 60 original participants still alive (90’s)
- ▶ 2,000 children and spouses added to the study
- ▶ Interviewed every 2 years/medical records/blood work/videos of family interactions

## Results:

- ▶ Good relationships and social connections, including quality, are best predictors of happiness, health, and longevity.
- ▶ People most satisfied with their relationships in their 50’s were the healthiest in their 80’s.
- ▶ Good relationships protect bodies and minds, including memory/cognition.

**NO ONE REPORTED WISHING THEY WORKED MORE AT THE END OF THEIR LIVES! NOT ONE PERSON!**

# The Fragility of Time

*What would YOU do differently if you knew for certain you ONLY had 30 days to live?*

- We don't get a 24-hour death notice
- Time is our greatest currency and non-renewable resource.
- We get 86,400 seconds in your bank each day upon waking up – use them wisely. We cannot 'bank' time.
- Instead of saying "I don't have time to..." replace that with "It isn't important to me." That sounds a little differently, doesn't it?





# “One More Day” (February 19, 2019)



# What LCL-PA, Inc. witnessed in 2024....

- ▶ 629 requests for support
  - ▶ 79 after-hours calls (44% increase)
- ▶ **Call volume:** lawyers 50%, law students 22%, judges 11%, family members 1%, JD 2%; other 4%
- ▶ **Top 4 presenting issues:** stress 25%, alcohol 20%, anxiety 12%, and depression 8%
- ▶ **Law students:** 5% of population we serve and 22% of our requests for assistance
  - ▶ **Top 4 presenting issues in the law student population:** stress, anxiety, alcohol use disorder, and depression/mood disorder
- ▶ 74% MH; 26% SUD/other
- ▶ 73% self-referral; 27% interventions (3<sup>rd</sup> party calls)

Recent research by ALM and Law.com Compass in the 2024 Mental Health and Substance Abuse Survey reveals additional alarming concerns regarding the well-being of legal professionals. Key findings show the following percentages of the 2,500 legal professionals surveyed:

**Have a mental health issue: 30%**

**Have a sense of failure/self doubt: 50%**

**Feel detached: 37%**

**Feel mental health fatigue: 62%**

**Feel Exhausted: 70%**

**Feel they have withdrawn from support systems: 21%**

**Hate their job: 25%**

**Have trouble concentrating: 60%**

**Feel always being 'on call' is impacting their mental health: 64%**

**Feel pressure to be on screens all day: 31%**

**Feel they lack sleep: 55%**

**Have a fear of asking for help: 16%**

# Why Are We Here?

- The legal profession has the **highest rate** of major depression (at least 20%) of any occupation.
- Attorneys are nearly **4 times** more likely to suffer from depression than others.
- 28% of lawyers screened positive for depressive symptoms in a recent landmark study of >12,000 U.S. attorneys. (Krill, et al.)
- Attorneys are nearly **twice** as likely than the general population to develop a substance use disorder (18-21%).

# Why Are We Here?

**At least 1 in 5 lawyers will develop a substance use (SUD) and/or mental health disorder.**

- Only 1 in 10 in the general population will develop a SUD.
- 40-70% of all disciplinary cases involve chemical dependency.
- Many substance abusers appear ‘functional’ in the workplace.
- The job is often the last place things fall apart.

# Why Are Attorneys at High Risk of Mental Health & Substance Use Disorders?

- High expectations and accountability
- Lack of work-life balance
- High stress level
  - High stress levels & work-weeks >50 hrs. are consistent predictors of SUDs and their severity.
  - 67% of attorneys work more than 40 hours/week.
- Inherent pessimism

- Excessive self-reliance
- Conflict driven and adversarial profession
- Emotional detachment
- Win-lose, often rigid thinking (black and white thinking)
- Perfectionism

These characteristics are highly beneficial and rewarded in the practice of law but are often harmful to mental health. It's very difficult to turn these 'off' after work, thus leading to an increased risk of mental health and substance abuse issues.

# The problem is bad and getting worse.

Data from Krill, Johnson & Albert 2016 survey of >12,000 lawyers:

- 28% of lawyers suffer depression symptoms (vs. 19% in 1990 study)\*
- 21% of lawyers exhibit problem drinking (vs. 18% in 1990).\*

# Problematic Alcohol Use\*

ATTORNEYS

**21%**

ALL HIGHLY EDUCATED WORKERS

**12%**

\*Using the AUDIT Alcohol Use Test; indicates hazardous, harmful, and potentially alcohol-dependent drinking

# Which Attorneys Are at Highest Risk for Alcohol Use Disorder?

- Lawyers practicing within the first 15 yrs. after law school
- Lawyers at or under age 30 (32%)
- Male attorneys > Female attorneys
- Those working in lower level positions in private firms (i.e. junior associates)

# Biology of a Substance Use Disorder

- Drugs and alcohol ‘hijack’ the brain over time, causing significant changes in how brain regions communicate with each other (via changes in chemicals called **neurotransmitters**).
- Decreased activity in the brain’s **pre-frontal cortex**, where rational thinking, decision making and prediction of consequences ‘lives.’
- Decreased communication between the frontal cortex and the ‘**primitive**’ **mid-brain** (which is primarily the ‘fight or flight’ part of the brain) impairs impulse control.

# Biology of a Substance Use Disorder

- Decreased size of **hippocampus** over time causes memory loss.
- Family history- several genes identified that increase the risk; up to 50% of your risk is determined by **genetics**

**Many of the brain chemicals and areas affected by a substance use disorder are also implicated in major depression.**

# The Impact of an Untreated Substance Use Disorder & Mental Health Challenges on Clients and Firms

- Inconsistent work quality; inattentiveness to detail
- Diminished diligence/competence
- Impaired response inhibition; losing his/her temper with co-workers and clients; behaving badly in court, etc.
- Absenteeism/tardiness; long unexplained absences and 'work' lunches

## The Impact of an Untreated Substance Use Disorder & Mental Health Challenges (contin.)

- Memory loss; forgetting appointments, conversations, etc.
- Isolation and unwillingness to cooperate on cases
- Missing filing deadlines; incomplete case documentation
- Professional misconduct complaints
- Malpractice claims against the lawyer and firm

The longer an SUD remains untreated, the more likely you are to become subject of a malpractice suit, disciplinary action, or disbarment.

# Spotting the Impaired Colleague

- ☐ Unkempt appearance, poor hygiene
- ☐ Absenteeism & tardiness
- ☐ Financial problems
- ☐ Declining work productivity & quality
- ☐ Attitude problems, moody, disagreeable
- ☐ Alcohol or drug related arrests or warnings
- ☐ Erratic or irresponsible behavior
- ☐ Frequent illness, injuries, an accident
- ☐ Not acting like themselves
- ☐ Isolating/avoiding social interaction
- ☐ Health issues (change in sleeping, eating, etc.)

# Major Depression and Substance Use Disorders Share Many Similar Symptoms

They both interfere with:

- Critical thinking and planning skills
- Ability to concentrate
- Motivation
- Comprehension
- Sleep
- Eating
- Sexual drive

**Due to symptom overlap and spectrum, only a health care professional should evaluate and diagnose.**

# Motivational Interventions

The goal is to motivate the attorney/judge/law student in distress to accept help.

1. Identify various approaches.
2. Discuss the pros and cons of each approach.
3. Choose the optimal approach.
4. Learn what to say and how to say it.
5. Learn what not to say.
6. Friends/colleagues may participate in the approach if indicated.

# Key Principles of Motivational Interventions

- It should be a collaborative conversation, not a confrontation.
- Build rapport, create trust, and convey that your primary concern is their health and best interest.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Re-state what the person says to act as a ‘mirror’ for them and to illustrate that you are listening attentively.
- Do not engage in argument or debate; no ‘right-fighting.’

## Key Principles (cont'd)

- Do not label them as an 'addict' or 'alcoholic' or as 'depressed.'
- Do not rely on hearsay.
- Do not use a 'laundry list' to prove your point.
- Make sure your body language and voice tone convey concern and kindness, not judgment.
- Use leverage as a last resort- when the risk of harm to self, others, clients, etc. is unacceptable.

# A Step-up Plan of Action

Start with the least confrontational approach possible under the circumstances, then increase pressure/incentive as needed:

1. Private meeting-conversational; build trust
2. Group meeting without leverage
3. Group meeting with leverage

# Attorneys & Mental Health

- Practicing lawyers exhibit anxiety & depressive symptoms and feelings of hostility 8-15 times more than the general population.
- 28% of US lawyers (>12,000 surveyed) screened positive for depression symptoms in 2016 study.

# Attorneys & Major Depression

Attorneys have the highest rates of major depression (aka major depressive disorder/MDD) of any occupation.

- 3.6 X more likely to suffer from MDD than the general population (6.9% of the general population will suffer from MDD in a given year).
- 1 in 5 attorneys will suffer from MDD in their lifetime.

# Major Depression (MDD) aka Clinical Depression

- An extreme, disabling, prolonged episode (at least two weeks duration)
- ...of sadness and feelings of hopelessness
- ...in which a person loses interest or pleasure in previously enjoyed activities.

# Wide Spectrum of Symptoms and Severity of Major Depression

Relative persistence over a two week period of:

- ☐ persistently sad or empty mood
- ☐ loss of interest in pleasurable activities
- ☐ withdrawal from family and friends
- ☐ dwelling negatively on the past
- ☐ negative thoughts and urges
- ☐ over-reacting / under-reacting
- ☐ emotional feelings of despair & hopelessness
- ☐ contemplation of death as a viable solution

# More Signs of Major Depression

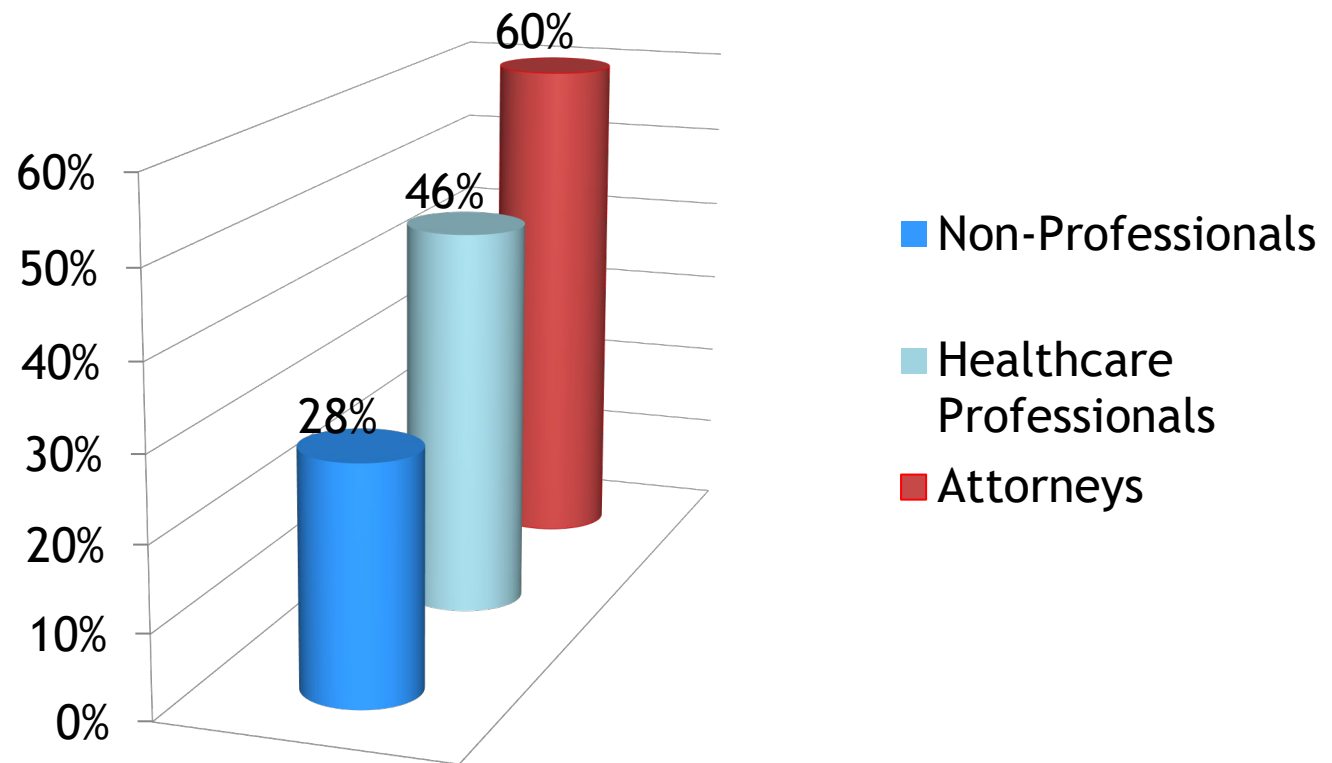
- change in eating habits/unusual weight gain/loss
- sleep pattern disrupted (too much / too little)
- difficulty in thinking, planning & concentrating
- difficulty in making decisions
- moodiness: irritable, anxious, easily angered
- feelings of inadequacy and helplessness
- feelings of worthlessness; undeserving of help

# Co-occurring Disorders (Dual Diagnosis)

Simultaneous existence of a psychological and substance use disorder (SUD) is common:

- 60% of attorneys in SUD treatment had a dual diagnosis compared to:
  - 46% of healthcare professionals
  - 28% of non-professionals
- 32% of attorneys with a dual diagnosis had major depression and a SUD.

# Incidence of Co-occurring Substance Use and Mental Health Disorders



# Why Don't Attorneys Seek Help?

- Perfectionism
- Fear of stigma
- Ego
- Excessive self-reliance
- Seen as problem-solvers
- Fear of impact on job & reputation
- DENIAL & rationalization; lack of insight into self

# Why Attorneys Can Be Treatment Resistant

## Rules of Recovery

- Don't analyze
- Don't judge
- Don't compare
- Don't blame
- Don't justify

vs

## Rules of Legal Practice

Analyze  
Judge  
Compare  
Blame  
Justify

# Treatment: There Is Hope

- Substance use and mental health challenges are treatable through a combination of therapy, medication &/or 12- Step and other support groups.
- Treatment addresses the underlying struggles that may be a causal factor in professional impairment.

# Take Home Messages

- **1 in 3 of you will struggle with a Substance Use or Mental Health Challenge**
- **It only gets worse if you don't get help (chronic, progressive and fatal).**
- **Get help, get better, and get back to your life.**

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