

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Members of the Alabama Lawyer Assistance Program Committee are volunteers who assist in the implementation of services provided by the Alabama Lawyer Assistance Program and serve active roles in the planning and developing of policies and procedures to assist ALAP in carrying out its mission. The recognized concepts of intervention, peer support and accountability have proven effective in helping lawyers in need take the necessary steps toward recovery. The value and effectiveness of these techniques, carried out by other lawyers who are themselves in recovery or who have had personal experiences in dealing with these illnesses, is invaluable. Committee members also assist ALAP in providing educational programs to promote awareness about these issues.

During this year the Alabama Lawyers Assistance Program will focus primarily on the following areas by preparing and offering educational programs, articles, CLE training, and other presentations as appropriate or needed:

- (1) Addiction, depression and discipline among Alabama attorneys;
- (2) Stress and how it particularly affects lawyers;
- (3) Aging of the lawyer population and the inevitable increase in cognitive decline due to diseases such as Alzheimer's and Dementia; and,
- (4) The recommendations of *The Path to Lawyer Well-Being*, a report published by the ABA's National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being, to promote health and wellness.

In addition to the four primary topics listed above, the Lawyer Assistance Program Committee shall continue this year to be guided by the following four core competencies.

1. Assure the highest Standards of Bar Admission, Professional Conduct, and Professional Competence and Service.

A) Bar Admissions

In keeping with the Bar's long term plan to ensure admission standards are current and consistent with the best practices nationally, members of the Admissions Subcommittee will:

- 1) Continue to review the manner in which addiction and other mental or emotional health issues impact the character and fitness process;
- 2) Continue to review alternatives to address and foster admission procedures. The urgency that surrounds Bar Exam deadlines and admission requirements impacts character and fitness decisions. The Admissions Subcommittee is reviewing other states admission procedures and will submit a report with recommendations.
- 3) Develop a training program for Character and Fitness Committee panels to ensure panel members are educated about these issues and the various services ALAP provides.
- 4) Develop policies and procedures for admission referrals to foster consistency in how these referrals are made.

Initiating early positive relationships between future bar members and the association decreases anxiety in students and increases the likelihood of future involvement and service with the association. The ALAP director will continue to meet once a month with law students at their school and provide assistance as needed.

B) Professional Conduct

Today members are confronting many challenges unique to the times. Rapid changes in technology, economic and industrial downsizing, extreme debt, healthcare cost and aging, are just a few. The ALAP Committee will:

- 1) Continue to work with the bar's disciplinary system to enhance procedures and establish rules related to ALAP participation.
- 2) Continue to review and identify problems confronting members of the bar and judiciary and develop programs and resources to address these issues.

C) Professional Competence and Service

- 1) ALAP will continue to develop and sponsor CLE programs which address the stressful nature of the practice of law and the difficult issues lawyers confront every day. Presenting programs on resiliency, healthy coping skills and the development and maintenance of healthy boundaries better prepares lawyers when they encounter difficult situations and decreases the potential for ethical violations.
- 2) When individuals are stressed, depressed or utilize unhealthy mechanisms to cope, these issues reflect in every aspect of their lives and directly affects the manner in which they practice their profession. Currently an ALAP representative is not involved with the course on professionalism. Having a member of the committee directly involved with the development/presentation of this course can not only add additional insight but also help identify solutions for inappropriate and unprofessional types of behaviors.
- 3) Continue to access data, resources and professionals established in the community who specialize in the elderly and make these resources available.
- 4) Work with the Elder Law and Senior Lawyers sections of the bar to improve services available and establish procedures to better address aging and cognitive issues in the membership.

2. Advance Improvements in the Administration of Justice

- A) Continue to be a resource for the Judicial Inquiry Commission when addiction, mental or emotional problems are present.
- B) Research procedures and policies other states are implementing with regard to judicial referrals.
- C) Establish procedures and policies for judicial referrals.
- D) Continue to participate with the ABA COLAP Judicial Initiative.
- E) Continue to reach out to the judiciary and present educational programs about ALAP.

3. Maintain an Effective State Bar Structure

- A) Continue to update and review the committee in terms of goals and purpose

- B) Establish subcommittees to address specific areas of focus.
- C) Continue to stay updated on legislative issues that affect the quality and standards of addiction and mental health services.
- D) Continue to update and review professional resources in the community as referral sources.
- E) Continue to maintain active fundraising efforts for the Alabama Lawyer Assistance Foundation.

4. Serve Members' Need While Enhancing the Use of Bar Technology and Communications

- A) Research other state programs to find appropriate data management programs to improve the quality and accuracy of client file management.
- B) Continue to improve and update the ALAP web site to user friendly applications.
- C) Continue to publish articles in *The Alabama Lawyer* which address issues related to lawyer health and well-being.
- D) Continue to utilize brochures, handouts and other material to improve program awareness.
- E) Participate in educational programs to assure that highest standards and most up to date information is utilized when addressing client needs.

Healthy and well balanced lawyers do not commit ethical violations nor do they get arrested for violating the laws they are duly sworn to up hold. Lawyer assistance is about promoting health and balance to improve the quality of life for all members. How the Alabama State Bar addresses and supports these issues will be reflected in the manner in which our members practice their profession. Lawyers help individuals daily to prepare for the future, the unexpected and for other contingencies of life. It only makes sense that when a lawyer is in need of the same kind of assistance that similar resources are readily available.

The Director of the Alabama Lawyer Assistance Program shall ensure that a written report of its actions is made. The secretary, or a designee, should keep minutes of all meetings of the committee, or any subcommittee. The original of the minutes will be filed with the Alabama State Bar within 14 days after the meetings, to be made a part of the committee's permanent file. The committee will divide itself into such subcommittees as may be necessary to effectively carry out its functions. The chairperson should appoint sub-chairs for each subcommittee.

The Alabama State Bar, through its designated staff liaison, will assist the committee in carrying out its purpose.

Done this 11th day of August, 2020.



Robert G. Methvin, Jr., President
Alabama State Bar