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Growing concern over well-being of lawyers leads to comprehensive new recommendations

CHICAGO, Aug. 14, 2017 —A coalition of groups, including the American Bar Association Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs, released today a comprehensive [report](#), The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change, aimed at addressing the problem of substance use and mental health disorders of lawyers.

The report, by the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being, includes several dozen recommendations and represents the most ambitious roadmap yet related to the well-being of lawyers. It is intended to spark a broader conversation in the legal profession regarding reasons behind substance use disorders as well as the effects of impairment to guide policy changes and to lead to a cultural shift within the profession.

Last week, the Conference of Chief Justices, which participated in the development of the report, gave the recommendations its endorsement. Other groups involved in the drafting of the task force report were the National Organization of Bar Counsel, the Association of Professional Responsibility Lawyers and the National Conference of Bar Examiners. Patrick Krill, the co-author of the groundbreaking 2016 [study](#) published in the Journal of Addiction Medicine regarding mental health and substance use disorders among lawyers, also played a key role in its development.

This report's recommendations focus on five central themes:

- Identifying stakeholders and the role each can play in reducing the level of toxicity in the legal profession.
- Eliminating the stigma associated with help-seeking behaviors.
- Emphasizing that well-being is an indispensable part of a lawyer's duty of competence.
- Educating lawyers, judges and law students on lawyer well-being issues.
- Taking small, incremental steps to change how law is practiced and how lawyers are regulated to instill greater well-being in the profession.

"For more than a quarter of a century, the ABA has encouraged development and strongly supported state-based lawyer-assistance programs, which serve as front-line fighters to combat substance abuse," ABA President Linda A. Klein said. "By providing extensive resources and sponsoring numerous programs, among other ways, we work to educate the legal profession concerning substance abuse and other emotional health issues.

"Despite these efforts, sadly prior research clearly demonstrates problems persist for too many in the legal profession," Klein continued. "These task force recommendations represent renewed efforts by us and others to create additional policies and programs that will lead lawyers to a healthier and more satisfying life style, better representation of our clients and an improved system of justice."

With more than 400,000 members, the American Bar Association is one of the largest voluntary professional membership organizations in the world. As the national voice of the legal profession, the ABA works to improve the administration of justice, promotes programs that assist lawyers and judges in their work, accredits law schools, provides continuing legal education, and works to build public understanding around the world of the importance of the rule of law. View our [privacy statement](#) online. Follow the latest ABA news at www.americanbar.org/news and on Twitter [@ABANews](https://twitter.com/ABANews).

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