Kansas Lawyer’s Assistance Program – Personality of a Lawyer Presentation

On Tuesday October 31, 2017, Anne McDonald, the Executive Director of the Kansas Lawyers Assistance Program (“KALAP”) came to present on behalf of the Kansas Bar Association for a lunch and learn lecture sponsored by the KU School of Law Student Bar Association with funding provided by the American Bar Association Law Student Division. This event was attended by a little over 30 students and was held in a classroom here at the KU School of Law Building, Green Hall, during the lunch hour from 12:30-1:20pm.

Ms. McDonald began her presentation by doing a brief overview of statistics created from recent studies (including the recent ABA study of roughly 11,200 participants) which showed that attorneys in general are at a heightened risk for substance abuse, depression, stress, and other related issues. These statistics also included a look at the rate of suicide and suicidal thoughts among attorneys and law students. Ms. McDonald informed us that the thought used to be that it was the older attorneys that had the most problems, but that the studies showed the rate of harmful alcohol use was actually higher for young lawyers (and actually close to twice the national average). Next, Ms. McDonald shared a presentation that was put together by an outside firm which took a look at the personality of lawyers and what makes them so susceptible to these issues. The lecture was an engaging presentation of the recent information discovered regarding the actual cause of lawyer’s increased likelihood to abuse substances. Ms. McDonald also discussed some of the warning signs in an effort to alert students to potentially harmful behavior in ourselves and others in order to catch these problems before things spiral out of control.

Personally, one of my favorite parts of the presentation was about resilience. She informed us that lawyers are at bottom 30% for resilience, and while part of this behavior is biological/genetic, it can be influenced by what we do. She informed us that a large part of resilience is attributed to perspective. We learned about some techniques to improve our ability to handle tough situations that call our resilience into question. We learned a simply 4x4 breathing technique where you breathe in for 4 seconds, then out for 4 seconds, and repeat this four times. Ms. McDonald also shared the STOP technique which is an anagram for Stop, Take a Breath, Observe your feelings and situation, and then Proceed. This portion of the presentation finished with Ms. McDonald reminding us that the only thing we can control is our own attitude and behavior and that the most unselfish thing we can do is to take care of ourselves.

At the end of the presentation Ms. McDonald shared some of the resources that are provided by KALAP and the lawyering community. The physical materials that were provided will be included with this final report. Our 3L Class President also shared more information on resources in and around the University of Kansas campus and Lawrence community. Overall, the feedback from the participants was positive. We believe the event was very successful and that it made a positive impact on the attendees.

Advertising Materials:
Advertising for this event consisted of two things: A Facebook event, and a Facebook post on each of the KU Law Class Facebook Pages (class of 2018, 2019, and 2020).

This was the full content of the posts on the class pages, but full disclosure, I did originally post that funding was provided by the Young Lawyer Division of the ABA and upon realizing my mistake I edited the posts to correctly report funding was provided by the Law Student Division, and clarified at the beginning and end of event.
“Hey Everyone, Please join SBA for a presentation about the personality of a lawyer. Anne McDonald from the Kansas Lawyers Assistance Program will be in room 127 at 12:30 TODAY to talk about why we as lawyers and law students are so susceptible to mental illness and substance abuse.

Chipotle will be provided, thanks to funding provided by the ABA Law Student Division!”

Below is the description from the Facebook event:
Please join SBA for an ABA sponsored presentation about the personality of a lawyer. Anne McDonald from the Kansas Lawyers Assistance Program will be in room 127 at 12:30 THIS TUESDAY to talk about why we as lawyers and law students are so susceptible to mental illness and substance abuse. We will have an interesting presentation on how we all tick as well as a discussion about local and national resources. I hope to see you all there.

Oh and CHIPOTLE will be provided while supplies last :)

Special thanks to our sponsor: the ABA Law Student Division.

Disclaimer: Attached is a copy of the Facebook event page. Please disregard the amount of student that show they went or were interested in the event. That is not an accurate number of student who attended the event and to illustrate who attended the event, we passed around a sign in sheet which is attached as well to illustrate the accurate number of students who attended the event.

Budget Materials:
As per our request, we wanted to get funding to provide food for those attending the lunch lecture. This is a regular practice at our school, and essentially all lunchtime presentations provide some sort of food option. Therefore, in order to compete with alternative events and ensure the success of the event, we requested funds to provide food. The request we submitted contemplated four different lunch lectures, and asked for $250 each. All of these presentations were intended to be part of a single Visibility Initiative Program that was new to our school, but we completely understood when we were approved for $250 of funding for a single event, rather than the four-part program. We are extremely appreciative that the ABA Law Student Division was willing to provide funding at all! Discussion of actual revenues received is not applicable for this event because it was free to attend lunch lecture.

We spent pretty much the full $250 on Chipotle on a first come first serve basis to those who attended the event. This was our only cost, as our speaker travelled to KU and spoke for free.

Grant Fund Request Approved: $250
1. Food $248.09

Additional Materials:
As required, we will include the original receipt, Facebook posts, and a copy of the materials offered by KALAP.

Thank you,
David Hammack and Alyssa Bauer
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David Hammack  |  KU Law Class of 2018  
October 31 at 7:35 AM - Lawrence  

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FREE SERVICES: LAPS CAN HELP

REFERRALS & RESOURCES
Students may be referred for assessments, therapy, or treatment as needed. Counselors perform assessments and make referrals to therapists as needed.

INTERVENTIONS
Trained KALAP volunteers, licensed professionals, and concerned others will discuss and plan an intervention.

SUPPORT GROUPS
A licensed therapist leads support groups to help participants learn effective coping strategies.

MENTORING
One-on-one support by volunteer lawyers or law students often supplements treatment or therapy. KALAP makes every effort to connect a student with an appropriate mentor to provide support and guidance.

EDUCATION
KALAP offers educational programs for the legal profession; law students may attend.

HELPLINE
Staff responds to calls 24/7: 888-542-6080 785-365-8775

"A few students think that once they get treatment they are on a blacklist. On the contrary, the problem lies in those who don’t get help...it was incredible relief to have found that there are others out there like me...lawyers, judges, students..." – Allison

ATTORNEY ADMISSIONS
RULE 707, CHARACTER AND FITNESS
Once you complete law school, if you wish to practice law, you must apply to take the bar exam and be admitted to the bar. The admissions process is rigorous and past legal issues or behaviors or illness may affect whether or not you are allowed to sit for the exam or be admitted as a lawyer. Supreme Court Rule 707 in Kansas sets out character and fitness qualifications. However, the focus of inquiry under Rule 707 is the applicant’s current situation. Honesty in disclosing past conduct is essential but having a DUI, or having received treatment for addiction or mental illness in the past does not disqualify a law school graduate from taking the bar exam and being admitted to practice law in Kansas. The issue is whether the applicant has successfully addressed the situation and is no longer engaging in illegal behavior, or not presently experiencing any mental or emotional condition that could adversely affect the ability to practice law. Rule 707 states it this way: "...the applicant possesses the requisite good moral character and current mental and emotional fitness to engage in the active and continuous practice of law." If you think you might have a situation that could affect the admissions process, you should contact your Dean of Student Affairs, your school counseling office, and/or the Kansas Lawyers Assistance Program.

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KANSAS LAWYERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
785-365-8775 OR 888-542-9080
Visit us at: 515 S. Kansas Avenue Suite 902 Topeka, KS 66603

For LAW STUDENTS
Free Confidential Help For alcoholism, drug abuse and other mental health problems, including chronic stress, anxiety and depression

LAP services are available to all law students through a statewide network of professionals and volunteers.

CONSIDER THIS REGARDING LAW STUDENTS:
34% report they have abused alcohol
Nearly 4% feel they need help to control drugs and/or alcohol
17%-50% of law students suffer from depression
Report use of illegal substances, including marijuana and cocaine
12% began abusing substances in law school
Self-reports of anxiety and depression are significantly higher than among the general population or medical students.

THE CHALLENGES OF LAW SCHOOL
Although intellectually stimulating, law school involves:
• heavy workload, high expectations
• competition for top grades, outside pressures
• fear of failure
• mounting Law School debt and job searches

MAINTAIN YOUR BALANCE – Become a Healthy Law Student New and/or Avoid Becoming an Unhappy, Unhealthy Unprofessional Lawyer Later
It is not easy to achieve balance and perspective with the challenges of Law School. Maintaining a social life is important, but it is easy to turn to heavy drinking, drug use and too much partying to relieve the tensions. Others may turn to a life of isolation or a life of all work and no play.

Depression, anxiety, and other stress-related illnesses are all too common among law students and lawyers. While moderate levels of stress have a positive impact, excessive and prolonged stress negatively impacts performance. The key is to recognize potentially harmful demands, eliminate those you can and moderate your response to those that are unavoidable.

Identify your core values, focus on achievable goals and maintain a sense of balance between your personal and your professional life. Stay connected to those in your life who support you. Learn the difference between legal skills and life skills. Take care of yourself.

OTHER RESOURCES:
ABA LAW STUDENT LISTSERV: contact Matthew Reed at matthew@arlap.org

SELF-ASSESSMENTS
Consider your responses to the next series of questions; several affirmative answers suggest that you would benefit from lawyer assistance program services.

STRESS
Are you:
• Feeling nervous, irritable or moody?
• Feeling overwhelmed?
• Over-reacting to situations?
• Feeling frustrated or having trouble thinking clearly?
• Engaging conflict with classmates?
• Havig tension/migraine headaches?
• Experiencing sleep disturbances?
• Increasingly tense, with back, shoulder or neck pain?
• Experiencing eczema, psoriasis or itching?

ANXIETY
Are you:
• Experiencing extended periods of constant, exaggerated, worrisome thoughts and tension?
• Feeling trapped in distressful consuming thought patterns or compulsive behavior?
• Having nightmares, flashbacks, depressed feelings or irritability linked to a traumatic event?

DEPRESSION
Are you:
• Feeling sad, empty or irritable?
• Losing interest or pleasure in sex and other activity?
• Experiencing changes in weight or appetite?
• Having difficulty sleeping, or sleeping too much?
• Feeling restless or less active?
• Feeling more fatigued or less energized?
• Having difficulty concentrating, remembering or deciding?
• Feeling overwhelming guilt, hopelessness or worthlessness?
• Thinking of suicide or death?

ALCOHOLISM & ADDICTIONS
Are you:
• Trying to control your drinking or drug use but not succeeding?
• Hearing criticism about your conduct from others?
• Feeling guilty about your behaviors?
• Gambling as escape worry or trouble?
• Affecting your home life or finances by your behaviors?

The stigma is not in having the illness, but in failing to seek treatment once its presence is recognized.

Seeking treatment is perfectly acceptable social behavior. Chemical dependency is a progressive disease—it never gets better by itself.

Free, confidential help is available to any lawyer who may be having problems with alcohol or other drugs or with a psychological condition which is impairing the ability to practice law or to live life fully.

**Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Burnout**

Lawyers experience these at about twice the rate of other professions and any one of them can lead to serious physical or mental conditions and ethical lapses or malpractice. It is important to know the symptoms and to take action sooner rather than later.

Recognizing Depression:
- Persistent sad, anxious or empty mood
- Feelings of pessimism
- Irritability or restlessness
- Change in sleep patterns
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Change in eating patterns and weight
- Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed
- Fatigue or decreased energy
- Increasing isolation and withdrawal

If you or someone you know has had several of these symptoms for two weeks or more, a professional evaluation is recommended. Almost all people with depression can get significantly better and enjoy life again with treatment. A combination of medication and talk therapy are usually the most effective.

KALAP staff and volunteers have experience in working with lawyers affected by stress, anxiety, depression, or burnout.

1-888-342-9080
KANSAS LAWYERS
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

**FACTS ABOUT IMPAIRMENT**

Addiction and depression are treatable illnesses.

Early intervention and treatment of the addicted person often leads to complete recovery.

Addiction and depression occur in every socioeconomic group. It is generally accepted that their prevalence within certain professions, including the legal profession, is much higher than it is among the general population.

Alcohol is the most widely used and destructive drug in America. Alcohol abuse among women has doubled in recent years. Previously the ratio of female to male alcoholics was 1 to 6, it is now 1 to 3.

Complications associated with the use of cocaine include damage to the heart, brain and other vital organs. Continued use causes dramatic personality changes and deterioration of ethical values, leading to criminal and disciplinary penalties.

One of the unique symptoms of chemical dependency is denial—the addicted person usually has little or no insight into his/her problem and simply denies that it exists.

It has been estimated that as many as 50% to 70% of the lawyers who are respondents in disciplinary proceedings are substance abusing.
Full Budget Details:

Expenses:

We spent pretty much the full $250 on Chipotle on a first come first serve basis to those who attended the event which is detailed below.

Grant Fund Request Approved: $250

1. Food $248.09

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<th>Item</th>
<th>Price</th>
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</tr>
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</table>

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Revenue:

This event was provided to the law students for free, therefore, SBA did not make any revenue from this event.