

Charleston School of Law's Inaugural "Mental Health Week"

Summary and Evaluation

The Charleston School of Law (CSOL) ABA Committee put on three days of Mental Health Awareness Programming from October 22, 2019 through October 24, 2019. This was the first event of its kind at CSOL and was well-received by students and faculty alike.

On October 22, 2019, Beth Padgett from Lawyers Helping Lawyers was a guest speaker at a lunch panel that highlighted substance abuse and depression in the legal field. Lawyers Helping Lawyers (LHL) provides programs and services to assist members of the legal profession in South Carolina who suffer from problems of substance abuse or depression, which affect their professional and/or personal life. LHL is a program of the South Carolina Bar that assists legal professionals with alcohol and drug problems and/or depression problems, providing referral services, peer support and monitoring services. LHL is not a treatment program, counseling center, employment agency, legal referral center or employee assistance program; however, all of these services can be accessed through LHL resources. Approximately thirty students and five faculty members attended this lunch panel. The goal of this lunch event was to bring attention and awareness to the incredibly high percentage of law students and lawyers who turn to alcohol and drugs as coping mechanisms, and why we need to reach out to law students and provide them with healthy coping mechanisms long before they enter the legal field full time.

On October 23, 2019, the ABA Committee set up a table in the Barrister (the main entrance of CSOL's Library). This table was focused on raising awareness about mental health issues and providing students with a variety of resources available to them both locally and nationally. Coffee, snacks, and awareness items such as pens, pencils, stickers, and rubber duckies were provided to draw students in, and ribbons and pamphlets were explained and given out once students approached. The goal of this lunchtime table was to "grab and go" as there is still an incredible stigma surrounding mental health. Many students do not wish to discuss it, and many feel 'less' if they admit they are not 100% happy and healthy (especially since the majority of law students are Type A and Perfectionists!). By providing ribbons and easy to grab flyers, students were not pressured to discuss or interact regarding mental health. Instead, they were simply encouraged to "take whatever you need" because we all need a little help sometimes, and it's okay to ask for help. Unsurprisingly, this was our most popular day of our Mental Health Week with approximately one hundred and forty (140) students stopping by the ABA Table in the Barrister over a span of one and a half hours. Students appreciated not being required to sit through a lunch panel for forty-five minutes or more just to get resources they need.

On October 24, 2019, the ABA Committee hosted a second lunch event, this time discussing triggers and providing various coping mechanisms to help combat the triggers that cause anxiety and depression in today's fast-paced society and overwhelming law school curriculum. While only approximately twenty students attended this event, this was the programming material that the attendees were most responsive to. Every student in attendance appreciated the presentation and over half asked for a copy of the PowerPoint provided. Many expressed their desire to see mental health events such as this particular lunch continue to be provided in the future at the law school.

Student/Participant Feedback:

The lunch with Beth Padgett was eye-opening. I didn't realize how many students and lawyers suffer from mental illnesses. I think this is the type of information we should be getting during orientation week, and not the fall before graduation. I hope the school can make that change.

- 3L Law Student

I loved the awareness ribbons! I have three on my backpack. They are great conversation starters. Talking about it will always help end the stigma!

- 2L Law Student

I didn't know what to expect from this Mental Health Week, but I knew it would probably be in my best interest to attend at least one day. I went to the last day and I wish I had gone to all three. I didn't really know what a trigger was and some of the coping mechanisms discussed were things I never would have thought about. I have since looked more deeply into mindfulness and I think it's something I will continue to practice.

- 2L Law Student

My university used to put on multiple mental health days throughout the year so I was very excited to see CSOL doing something similar. I told the ABA Committee they should continue to do this because mental health is so near and dear to my heart, and many people suffer in silence.

- 1L Law Student

The table in the Barrister was so thoughtful! Seeing so many people take flyers, pens, ribbons, and awareness duckies gives me hope that we can be the generation of lawyers who actually prioritize our mental health.

- 1L Law Student

Total Event Cost: \$837.79
 Grant Award: \$750.00
 Requested Reimbursement: \$750.00
 Revenue Generated: \$0.00

COST BREAKDOWN:

	October 22, 2019	October 23, 2019	October 24, 2019
Chick-fil-A Lunch	\$221.45		
Coffee (Starbucks)		\$59.77	
Snacks (Granola Bars, Crackers, Chips, Honey Buns)		\$61.34	
Non-Alcoholic Drinks for 2 Lunches	\$8.13		\$8.13
Awareness Ribbons		\$26.73	
Safety Pins, Display Trays and Buckets for Ribbons, and Frames for Ribbon Flyers		\$23.50	
Cardstock for Flyers (personal ink used for printing to save on printing costs)		\$7.94	
Awareness Materials (pens, pencils, duckies, stickers)		\$269.00	
Publix Lunch			\$151.80
	Tuesday Total: \$229.58	Wednesday Total: \$448.28	Thursday Total: \$159.93
		GRAND TOTAL: \$837.79	