



COMMITTEE ON ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

ANNUAL REPORT January 1 – December 31, 2008

January 5, 2009

This report covers the activity for the year of 2008 of the Lawyers Assistance Program, Inc. (LAP) and the Committee on Alcohol and Drug Abuse of the Louisiana State Bar Association.

GENERAL

The goal of the Lawyers Assistance Program is to serve the public, the Bar and the profession by assisting, on a confidential basis, lawyers or judges whose professional impairment may stem from alcohol, drug abuse or mental illness. LAP is first and foremost an absolutely confidential method of providing help to an impaired lawyer or judge. By statute and by Supreme Court rule, any information received by the LAP director or committee members must remain completely confidential.

ACTIVITY

In 2008, LAP assisted 127 lawyers with referrals to inpatient/outpatient treatment and detoxification/halfway house cases; 51 lawyers were helped into ongoing participation in 12 Step Programs; 71 lawyers were helped with gambling/mental illness/evaluation/ domestic abuse/suicide/depression; and 5 judges were helped. As of December 31, there were 82 active monitoring contracts in place for the ongoing recovery of these lawyers and law students (*see Statistical Data at end of this report*).

The referral sources of those given assistance were as follows: law firms 17; self 59; other lawyers, staff, family members, etc. 24; disciplinary system (Supreme Court Committee) 25; and Admissions System (Supreme Court Committee) 25.

Mental health issues with lawyers have risen significantly since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The loss of mental health professionals in the New Orleans area has contributed to people not getting help for their mental health issues until a serious crisis occurs.

The LAP Director has been appointed by the CoLAP Chair as Chairman of the Evaluation Committee. The LAP Director also serves on the CoLAP Judicial Outreach Committee and Work Life Balance Committee.

The LAP Director was appointed to the Board of Bridge House in New Orleans. The Bridge House provides long term treatment (up to one year) for men suffering from alcohol/drug addiction.

Little Rock, Arkansas was the host of the 2008 National Conference of Lawyers Assistance Programs October 21-24. This year's theme was "Working Together – Educating the Legal Community". The sessions presented topics about impairment issues in the legal community and the operation of lawyer assistance programs. In attendance this year were Mr. & Mrs. Jim Lambert, Mr. & Mrs. Steve Thomas, Ed Mouton, Jeannie Herman, Mr. & Mrs. Rob Shadoin and Bill & Kathleen Leary. The International Lawyers in Alcoholics Anonymous met following the conference October 24-26.

Our annual training session was held on April 25-26, 2008 in St. Francisville. There were 62 lawyers registered for the CLE program. Presentations were made by: Chuck Plattsmier, Chief Disciplinary Counsel,

“Disciplinary Update”; Deborah Faust and Craig Caesar, “What it was like, what happened and what it’s like now”; Dr. Rochelle Dunham, Medical Director, La. Office of Addictive Disorders, “Addiction & Depression”; and Bill Leary, “LAP Update”.

At the executive committee meeting in St. Francisville, James Lambert was elected Chair, Susan Tart was re-elected Treasurer and Donald Massey was elected Secretary.

Don Massey, a member of the Executive Committee of LAP, made presentations at the Ethics Schools and Bridging the Gap.

Steve Adams, a member of the Executive Committee of LAP, made a presentation at the Baton Rouge Bar Association CLE.

Susan Tart, a member of the Executive Committee of LAP, made presentations at the Loyola Law School and the Louisiana Bar Association’s Prime CLE.

LAP continues to assist the Committee on Bar Admissions with evaluating applicants who will be taking the bar examination. Law students are calling LAP to see what they should do if they have anything in their past that has alcohol/drug or mental health issues. LAP refers the students to independent evaluators so that it might be determined whether or not the student is fit to practice law.

The Louisiana State Bar Association instituted a Bar Admissions Education program in all the law schools. The LAP Director participated with a LSBA officer, representative from the Committee on Bar Admissions, Respondent Counsel, Chief Disciplinary Counsel and a member of the Bar Admissions Sub-Committee. This program informed the law students as to what information is needed to be included in the Character and Fitness section on the Application to the National Conference of Bar Examiners.

The LSBA/LAP web site continues to be a source of requests for information and lawyers seeking help. This site was recently updated with more articles on depression.

William R. Leary, J.D., LAC
Executive Director

STATISTICAL DATA

January 1 – December 31, 2008

Inpatient/outpatient/detoxification centers/halfway houses	127
12 Step Programs	51
Other (e.g., mental illness/evaluation/gambling/domestic abuse/suicide/depression)	71
Judges requesting help	5
Lawyers under monitoring contracts *	82

*(*NOTE: This number varies depending on the expiration of the contracts.
This number includes only active contracts and does not include expired contracts.)*

REFERRAL SOURCES:

Law firms	17
Self	59
Other attorneys, staff, family members, etc.	24
Disciplinary System (Supreme Court Committee)	25
Admissions System (Supreme Court Committee)	25