PENNSYLVANIA BAR ASSOCIATION
QUALITY OF LIFE/BALANCE COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATION

The PBA Quality of Life/Balance Committee recommends that the Pennsylvania Bar Association PBA adopt and encourage that county bar associations also adopt the ABA Wellness Pledge as well as the “seven-point framework” to reduce substance abuse disorders and mental health distress in the legal profession:

THE PLEDGE

Recognizing that high levels of problematic substance use and mental health distress presents a significant challenge for the legal profession and acknowledging that more can and should be done to improve the health and well-being of lawyers, we the attorneys of the Pennsylvania Bar Association hereby pledge our support for this innovative campaign and adopt and prioritize its seven-point framework for building a better future.

SEVEN POINT FRAMEWORK

1. Provide enhanced and robust education to attorneys and staffs on topics related to well-being, mental health, and substance abuse.

2. Disrupt the status quo of drinking-based events:
   Challenge the expectation that all events include alcohol; seek creative alternatives.
   Ensure there are always appealing non-alcoholic alternatives when alcohol is served.

3. Develop visible partnerships with outside resources committed to reducing substance use disorders and mental health distress in the profession: healthcare insurers, lawyer assistance programs, EAPs, and experts in the field.

4. Provide confidential access to addiction and mental health experts and resources, including free, in-house, self-assessment tools.

5. Develop proactive policies and protocols to support assessment and treatment of substance use and mental health problems, including a defined back-to-work policy following treatment.

6. Actively and consistently demonstrate that help-seeking and self-care are core cultural values, by regularly supporting programs to improve physical, mental and emotional well-being.
7. Highlight the adoption of this well-being framework to attract and retain the best lawyers and staff.

**REPORT**

The Quality of Life/Balance Committee makes this recommendation because:

1. The Pennsylvania Bar Association has a history of dedication toward the improvement of the quality of life of the members of the legal profession, their staffs and the families of its members.

2. The Pennsylvania Bar Association has been a leader nationally in recognizing how debilitating the stressfulness of the profession of law can be on the members of our profession, their staffs and families.

3. The Lawyers Assistance Committee, established by the Pennsylvania Bar Association to help lawyers deal with these stressors, and “Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers of Pennsylvania, Inc.”, a non-profit corporation operated by and for the benefit of Pennsylvania lawyers, as well as other similar committees that have been established throughout the Commonwealth by county and local bar associations, all recognize that the profession of law puts an enormous amount of stress on the lives of all lawyers.

4. Clients share the most intimate aspects of their lives with their lawyers, they expect their lawyers to solve the various problems impacting their lives; it is not surprising that lawyers internalize many of these problems and these problems end up impacting the lives of lawyers.

5. Many judges in the Pennsylvania Judiciary recognize the need to reduce the stress level caused by the practice of law. In addition, the Judiciary, at all levels, expects lawyers to be competent, prompt, and diligent and the legal profession to govern itself in a manner that upholds the principles of the Rules of Professional Conduct, which may be jeopardized by behavioral and mental health issues.

6. Many, if not all, of the substantive Sections and Committees of the Pennsylvania Bar Association have partnered with the Quality of Life/Balance in a cooperative effort to reduce the amount of stress lawyers, judges and their staff members encounter and to improve the quality of life for our members in all areas of practice.

Promoting lawyer well-being should be the foundation of our commitment to our members, the staffs of our members and well as the families of our members.
Respectfully submitted,
Tara Hutchinson & Erin Siciliano
Co-Chairs, PBA Quality of Life/Balance Committee
October 12, 2021

*Unanimously approved by the Board of Governors on November 17, 2021.
*Approved by the House of Delegates on November 19, 2021.