

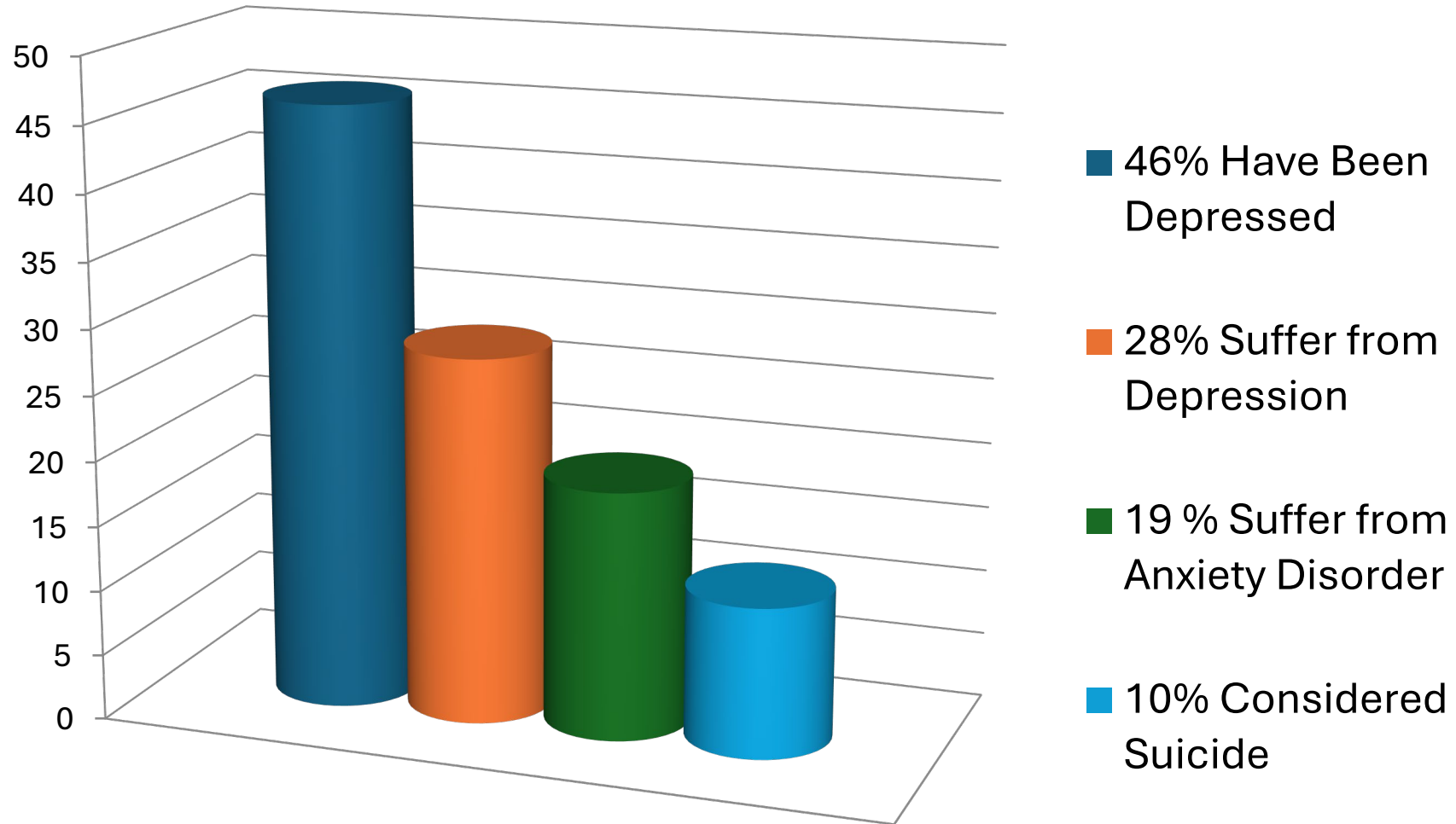
Recognizing Mental Health Issues in the Practice of Law



TEXAS LAWYERS'
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
1-800-343-TLAP

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Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program, Director*

2015 ABA Study of Almost 13,000 Attorneys: Attorney Mental Health Issues



Lawyer Well-being

- 21% qualify as problem drinkers.
 - That's more than triple the rate for the general population (6%) and nearly double the rate for other highly educated professionals (12%).
- 32% of attorneys under 30 years of age qualify as problem drinkers.

“Problematic drinking” = hazardous, possible dependence

2015 ABA Survey of Almost 13,000 Attorneys



Lawyer Mental health problems

- 2022 study of 4,450 lawyers by The University of Chicago:
 - 77% reported feeling burned out;
 - 26% reported high rates of anxiety;
 - 21% reported depression;
 - 42% reported unhealthy or hazardous substance use; and
 - 7% reported suicidal thoughts.

Depression

Symptoms of Depression include:

- Feelings of sadness, emptiness, hopelessness, pessimism, guilt
- Inability to make decisions or to concentrate
- Loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities
- Loss of energy and drive
- Headaches, chronic aches and pains, appetite problems
- Behavioral changes, irritability, restlessness, desire to be alone
- Missing work and work deadlines
- Talk about death or suicide, thoughts about suicide



Depression: Treatment and Referrals

Most effective treatment is combination of:

- Talk therapy
- Medication
- Group of unconditional acceptance
- Wellness practices including:
 - Nutrition and exercise
 - Supplements
 - Meditation
 - Gratitude journaling



Depression: Treatment and Referrals

- TLAP REFERRALS:

- Individual therapy w/psychotherapist trained in various modalities:
- Group support, including TLAP wellness groups (Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers)
- Psychiatric
- Inpatient treatment
- Assessment/evaluation (medical, psychiatric, neurological)
- Peer assistance
- National Suicide Lifeline 988
- NAMI Helpline 1-800-950-NAMI
- TLAP Helpline 1-800-343-TLAP



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Anxiety Disorders

01

Anxiety disorders range from panic attacks to generalized anxiety disorder.

02

Anxiety that is excessive can cause significant distress.

03

Symptoms include:

- Restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge;
- Being easily fatigued;
- Difficulty concentrating;
- Irritability;
- Muscle tension;
- Sleep disturbance.

Anxiety: Treatment and Referrals

Most effective treatment is combination of:

- Cognitive behavioral therapy, including skills training and exposure therapy
- Medication (anti-depressants and buspirone)
- Wellness practices including:
 - Exercise and nutrition
 - Stress management
 - Meditation
 - Avoid alcohol and recreational drugs
 - Reduce caffeine



Anxiety: Treatment and Referrals

- TLAP REFERRALS:
 - Individual therapy w/psychotherapist
 - Group support, including TLAP wellness groups and Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers groups
 - Psychiatric
 - Assessment/evaluation (medical, psychiatric, neurological)
 - Peer assistance
 - NAMI Helpline 1-800-950-NAMI
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Warning Signs of Suicide

Risk Factors for Suicide

- Mental health and/or addictive disorders
- Loss of job
- Financial problems
- Relationship problems, disruptions
- Easy access to lethal means

Verbalizations:

- No reason for living
- Feeling trapped
- Hopelessness
- Dramatic mood changes (high or low)
- Anxiety or agitation

Behavior:

- Increased substance abuse
- Withdrawal from friends, family, society
- Rage, anger, revenge
- Reckless or risky activities
- Unable to sleep or sleep all the time

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Ask

- Ask about suicide
 - Sometimes when people are sad, as you are, they think about suicide. Have you ever thought about it?
 - Do you ever want to go to bed and never wake up?

Seek

- Seek information
 - Do you have a plan? A readily available means?
 - Who can help you? What has worked for you before?

Know

- Know resources
 - 911
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255 or 988
 - Local crisis line- 211 (Texas)

Substance Use Disorders (SUDs) and Other Addictions

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) defines substance use disorder (SUD) as:

- Uncontrolled use of a substance despite harmful consequences.
- People with SUD have an intense focus on using a certain substance(s) such as alcohol, tobacco, or illicit drugs, to the point where the person's ability to function in day-to-day life becomes impaired.
- People keep using the substance even when they know it is causing or will cause problems.
- Other addictions include gambling, sex, food, pornography, etc.

Substance Use Disorder Referrals

TLAP referrals for addiction/substance use:

- 12 Step meetings
- Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers meetings
- Individual therapy
- Intensive outpatient treatment (IOP)
- Inpatient treatment
- Assessment/evaluation by ASAM physician
- Peer assistance

Lawyers are particularly sensitive to burnout because:

We suffer from “**secondary trauma**” while dealing with the stress, anger, frustration, and emotions of our clients.

We often have a sense of **perfectionism**, that everything must be exactly right, or we risk absolute failure.

We are asked to act in ways that aren’t aligned with our **core values**.

It often requires extremely **long hours** that are not physically, mentally, or emotionally sustainable.

It is an adversarial system!



1. Help Helps!

- DON'T be afraid to ask for help.
- If stress and anxiety for any reason are getting in the way of daily activities, seek help.
- 80% of people suffering from depression get remission within 6-8 sessions of talk therapy. The other 20% feel better.
- Primary care physicians or providers are trained to help identify mental health issues, render care and/or refer to specialized providers, including free and confidential resources.
- TLAP can help with resources.

TLAP Provides:

Confidential support 24/7 (call or text)

Referrals to licensed professionals

In the moment counseling

Local group support and resources

Student Support Sessions

One-to-one local peer support

Self-care information

CLE / Education on Wellness

Service opportunities

Sheeran Crowley Trust



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Connecting Lawyers, Law Students, and Judges to Funds for Needed Care

- ***Sheeran-Crowley Memorial Trust***
- Up to \$3,000 for outpatient counseling and medication;
- Up to \$4,000 for intensive outpatient treatment and medication; and
- Up to \$10,000 for inpatient treatment.



TEXAS LAWYERS' ASSISTANCE PROGRAM 1-800-343-TLAP



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**TLAP is Strictly
Confidential**

