



MOLAP News

The Missouri Bar

Winter 2007



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Lawyer Support Groups

If you are interested in joining a Lawyer Support Group in your area, contact the appropriate person:

Kansas City
Hugh O'Donnell
(816) 931-5533

Mid-Missouri
Julian Ossman
(573) 634-4120

Southwest
Bob Richart
(417) 781-6770

Southeast
Peter Statler
(573) 243-3482

A year-end tabulation indicates that 27 MoLAP volunteer assignments were made during calendar 2006. Fifteen of those assignments were for 12th step work, usually at the request of the lawyer of concern. Three volunteers have accepted Monitoring assignments requested by the Board of Law Examiners. In each of those cases, the BLE had concerns regarding a Bar Applicant's use of alcohol. Monitoring agreements have been done to insure that alcohol issues do not impact the practice of these individuals. Seven volunteers have undertaken assignments for the Intervention Committee, based on reports of substance misuse. One volunteer has accepted a monitoring assignment from the OCDC, as well as a specialized Mentoring assignment, and two volunteers have made public presentations about Molap issues. MoLAP records indicate that 20 different lawyers have been involved in these efforts.



Jim Brady, LCSW

These numbers reflect a substantial investment of time and energy, but have yielded even greater returns. I have a number of very gratifying reports about the positive response to these volunteer efforts.

The geography and gender of our cases has meant that some volunteers have not been called on this past year, but be assured that our list remains active. When the need arises, I will not hesitate to call. I very much appreciate the willingness of every volunteer. JB

Utilization Report Figures Sent to Board of Governors

Each year the MoLAP program produces an annual utilization report, tabulating the number of cases, the number of therapeutic contacts, and some basic demographic information about the lawyers, judges, law students and family members who use our services. The initial tabulations from the MoLAP data base for 2006 have been included in the staff reports to the Board of Governors for their mid-year meeting, held January 17-19 near Tucson, Arizona. Those numbers indicate 143 new cases for MoLAP in 2006, a record number. The previous high was 137 cases in 2001. Of those

new cases, 52, or 36% of the total, were substance abuse matters, another new record for that type of case. The records reflects 502 telephone contacts, a 185% increase over 2005 totals. "Telephone contacts" includes conversations with the lawyer of concern, or those calling about the troubled lawyer, such as colleagues or family members. That total does not include calls to treatment providers or volunteers on behalf of the lawyer of concern. This is such a dramatic increase that the MoLAP annual report will examine these figures in more detail. One issue is the current

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Ask Dr. Know

Dear Dr. Know:

In past issues you have occasionally referred to certain web pages as sources for accurate information about addictive diseases. My husband, who I think has a problem, keeps coming up with wild stuff about alcohol and drugs from pages on the Internet. Would you please list perhaps a half dozen trustworthy sites that present current, authoritative, research-validated information?

Yours truly, Bett Erhaf

Dear Bett:

There are a lot of inaccurate (and even dangerous) websites on the Internet that talk about alcohol, other drugs, and addiction. If a person goes to the Internet today and “googles” the word “addiction” into a search engine, literally tens of millions of “hits” will appear in a split second (try it!). Narrowing the search to “addiction causes” leads to about 1.4 million “hits” in about a quarter of a second. Changing the search parameters to “addiction treatment” produces almost 10 times more “hits” than “addiction causes” in half the time!

I recommend that your husband stick with websites of universities and the federal government. Universities tend to have the most accurate and current research, but sometimes their wording is a little over (even Dr. Know’s) head. If you want more readable scientific information, then the websites of the government’s alcohol and drug agencies are best. Finally, there is an easy-to-read daily e-newsletter written at Boston University’s Join Together program. You can subscribe and receive free on your computer every day 5-6 briefs on new research and drug policy. Just click on the headline and it opens up into a small article (much like the ones in Findings), and viola! You can keep up with the science easy, easy, easy.

All of the following sites are evidence-based (latest research), written by scientists and experienced science writers, and have stood the test of time:

- University of Texas Addiction Science Research and Education Center: www.utexas.edu/research/asrec
- National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University: www.casacolumbia.org
- Boston University’s Join Together Online (sign up under “Stay Informed”): www.jointogether.org
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA): www.drugabuse.gov
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA): www.niaaa.nih.gov
- Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration: www.samhsa.gov

Have fun surfen’!

Sincerely, Dr. Know

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A Parable For Our Times

by Jim Brady, LCSW
Director, Missouri Lawyers Assistance Program

Once upon a time, two law school friends, John Noble and Sally True, set up a law practice together. Noble and True handled only Workers Compensation cases, but did them well. Clients were well-served, and the little firm flourished. But then new clients came to the office, bringing family law issues and even criminal matters. “What to do!” cried Mr. Noble. “I have no expertise. I cannot take such cases! We must refer elsewhere.”

“But wait,” said Ms. True. “Let’s add to the firm. We’ll find more lawyers who can do such things well.”

“That will be messy and complicated” warned Mr. Noble.

“But better for all in the long run,” said Ms. True, “and you and I will still do only our Workers Compensation matters and be happy about it.”

Thus it was that Ms. Just came aboard to handle family law cases, and Mr. Right to do criminal work. The clients were very well-served by such specific expertise, and the firm flourished so much that they hired a wise office manager to keep it all flowing in good order. And everyone lived happily ever after.

Moral: One cannot err doing what is Noble, True, Just, and Right.

Over the past several months, some volunteers have expressed concern about the prospect of investing more MOLAP resources, including volunteer time and energy, in mental health matters. Volunteers who feel competent and confident in engaging substance abuse issues are wondering if they will be asked to intervene in situations outside their knowledge and experience. There are concerns that this wider scope of action will dilute MOLAP attention to substance abuse concerns. I want to provide some reassurance on these issues. No volunteer will ever be asked to engage in a matter not suited to their knowledge and expertise. Further, volunteers can decline any prospective assignment. In fact, if a volunteer’s personal or work issues are salient, then it might be best that they do decline an assignment, so that a MOLAP or Intervention Committee matter can receive proper priority. Such a pass will certainly not have any effect on future assignments.

Most LAP programs around the country have expanded their mission beyond the initial focus on alcohol problems. Missouri is not unusual in that regard. Depression and other mental health problems certainly bring practice impairment and substantial misery that is very treatable. My personal vision statement is “More Lawyers Better,” which includes both those with substance abuse problems and those with mental health burdens. We have not neglected nor turned aside anyone who comes to the attention of MoLAP, whatever their burden. We continue to think about ways of reaching a greater number of those who still suffer. I trust that you each will continue with me in that quest.

Utilization Report

(from page 1)

director’s approach to follow-up. Issues that come to MoLAP are significant, and take time to resolve. Follow-up, checking on referral effectiveness, and continued support for change are important.

Several numbers from this initial report are similar to previous years’ figures. 24 of the new cases concerned

depression, 17% of the total new cases. This number of depression cases is consistent with the totals for the past several years. 23% of the new cases concerned female lawyers, very close to previous years. When the complete report is finished, it will be available on-line, within the MoLAP section of the MoBar website, www.mobar.org/molap

It was a record-setting year for MoLAP.

MISSOURI LAWYERS' ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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