



MOLAP News

The Missouri Bar

Winter 2009



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The New Year brings with it some new opportunities to share the message of MOLAP. I presented to the Lawyer's Association of Kansas City on January 14. On March 31st I have an invitation to speak to the law students at UMKC. I will also be part of a Professionalism Workshop for law students at three of Missouri's law schools on three different dates in April. In addition, I will present in April at the Missouri Prosecutor's Conference. I hope you take every chance you have to mention MOLAP, and to invite people to use the service. That's why we're here. If you would like some talking points to help you promote MOLAP, just email me at jbrady@mobar.org, and I will provide you an outline.



Jim Brady, LCSW

Lawyer Support Groups

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

St. Louis
Tom Casey
(314) 421-0763

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

Mid-Missouri
Julian Ossman
(573) 634-3165

Southwest
Bob Richart
(417) 781-6770

Southeast
Peter Statler
(573) 243-3482

2008 MOLAP Numbers

The numbers for MOLAP services for calendar 2008 have been tallied. We are in the process of preparing our annual report to the Executive Director of the Bar. 118 new matters came to MOLAP last year, a slight decline from the 127 in calendar 2007. Of interest was the number of substance abuse matters, 48, compared to 40 in 2007. This past year 41% of all new matters were substance abuse situations. Alcohol continues to be the most frequent problem chemical.

The numbers also indicate that in 65% of 2008 cases, the person of concern was the caller. Thus, 35% of the time people call about someone else. Often this is the spouse or a legal colleague of someone having trouble. We certainly welcome these third-party calls, and work with the caller to make a plan that will help the situation. The third-party referrals this year included 14 referrals from the Board of Law Examiners. The BLE seeks consultation from MOLAP on applicants to the Bar who have evidence of substance abuse or mental health problems in their character and fitness files.

MOLAP records also indicate that 12 volunteer assignments were made this year.

The 2008 numbers are consistent with previous years in the types of problems reported. As in previous years, there is a wide, wide variety of issues causing trouble for Missouri lawyers and law students.

Keep On Keeping On

by Jim Brady, LCSW

I think it was Winston Churchill who once remarked, “If you find yourself going through hell, keep going.” This strikes me as useful advice as I listen to all the gloom and doom talk, and read headline after headline about job losses and economic woes. There is no doubt that pessimism is contagious, and that hand-wringing and gripe sessions do little or nothing to make things different or better. Sitting and moping in the midst of this isn’t helpful. Blaming all the outside conditions for our malaise may serve to protect our tender egos, but does not move us in a helpful direction. The accuracy of our analysis doesn’t matter if we react to that accuracy by simply stewing in our own juice.

Our friends in AA and NA seem to agree with Mr. Churchill. What is it they say? “Keep on keeping on.” What they seem to mean with this phrase is that if things are getting better, if progress is being made, then continue on that track. Obstacles and slow progress should not be surprising, nor should they deter a determined AA from staying the course and continuing to progress in their program. Eyes are kept on the prize. Action and effort are expected toward the next right thing. Sniveling about how bad things are and how badly we are being treated is definitely not valued. Rather than staying stuck in the past, AAs expect action for a better future.

What if we collectively worked toward that better future, no matter how bad it is now? How can we decide what’s “better?” I think there are three domains to guide us:

1. Right Direction: Is our current plan moving us toward where we want to go? Have we even thought about where we’re heading, or are we so busy just doing what’s in the In Box, that we don’t look up or reflect on that bigger picture? One of my lawyer clients, an experienced practitioner, said to me recently, “I’m not sure what I want to be when I grow up.” I was delighted with his statement, because that led us to a serious conversation about his key values and the way he was currently headed. Knowing the goal makes the task clearer, if not easier.

2. Right Pace. The current economic mess is prompting much panic and much dramatic action. Do you need to be doing something, anything, to make a change? Maybe. But maybe a change strategy that suits you and your style would be more comfortable and ultimately more effective. I occasionally ask my clients how much longer they intend to live. They are usually surprised by the question, hadn’t even considered it. But if you have another 25 or even 45 years to go, doesn’t that affect your pace? Frenetic action also often has bad side-effects on those closest to you. I can plan for 30 more years of living, but that’s no guarantee I’ll get them! But a 30 year race is run at a different pace than a sprint to the next election. Some lawyers seem to be working as if the world will end shortly after Easter, and they have to do it all and finish it all by then. The economic morass seems to prompt them to go even faster. The ecology movement proposes the notion of “sustainability,” which probably applies to our effort as well. This is a marathon, so run like it.

3. Right Expectations. If things get really economically ugly for a lot of us, then some of us will have some dramatic new experiences. Lawyers will be filing for bankruptcy, getting food stamps, draining off retirement assets, and closing practices. This seems awful, primarily because that’s not what those folks set out to do in the practice of law. But that suggests that lawyers are not real human beings, and not exposed to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune which afflict all of us. That makes it sound as if folks became lawyers just for the wealth and the community prestige, and not for the doing of justice or the benefit of their community. As the whole community

goes, so it will go for lawyers. Some will really struggle, and that struggle will have only minor connections to their knowledge and skill. But the bigger the gap between our expectations and our actual experience, the greater the prospect for depression.

Just recently I had a chance to visit by phone with a recovering lawyer who had just celebrated 21 years of continuous sobriety. As I marveled at that achievement, I did a quick calculation and noted that 21 years amounted to 7665 days, which is a lot of 24 hour periods. She commented, "Yes, but the day's not over yet." Now there's a "keep on keeping on" philosophy. Let's apply that to our difficult times. If we think that past practice successes, or past financial successes will guarantee our flourishing in the next years, then we are naïve. However, if we 'keep on keeping on' with our 3 Rights in place, then we will have a much better chance of flourishing. No matter what our economic outlook, our mental outlook will be much healthier, and the persistent effort in the best direction for us will finally prevail. Mr. Churchill was right, it is best that we keep on going.

Lawyer Support Group Offered

A new therapy group just for recovering lawyers has been proposed for the St. Louis area. The MOLAP Director recently met with Dr. Ralph Orlovik, a psychologist with extensive experience in substance abuse counseling, to discuss this new offering. Dr. Orlovik maintains an office in Clayton. He proposes putting together a treatment group for lawyers only that would address issues unique to lawyers in recovery, offering therapy on the personality, family, and distinct lawyer work issues that are usually not discussed in 12 step settings. This will not be a 12 step group, but will recognize, value, and expect 12 step participation by the group members in addition to this counseling group. If a recovering lawyer has interest in personal growth through group work, they can phone Dr. Orlovik directly at 314-863-7141 .

If there is interest in such a recovery group in the Kansas City area, the MOLAP Director will seek out a suitable professional therapist to work with lawyers in that area.

MISSOURI LAWYERS' ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A program of The Missouri Bar

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