

# ABA/NLADA 2008 EQUAL JUSTICE CONFERENCE

## Stress, Mental Health and Unhealthy Behavior in a Legal Services Environment

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### **Brief Description:**

A commitment to assist clients in crisis, whether as staff or pro bono, engenders additional stress in the legal profession. Unresolved stress is a predictor for mental illness and high levels of drinking and other unhealthy coping behaviors. It is critical to balance caring for ourselves with caring for our clients. This program will provide strategies for pro bono volunteers and for those who work with and supervise them.

### **Topical Outline:**

- I. Introduction & Overview: Stress in the Legal Profession
  - a. Sources of stress for lawyers
  - b. Symptoms of stress
  - c. Our response to stress
  
- II. Impact of Addiction and Dependency in the Legal Profession
  - a. Statistics
  - b. Discipline and malpractice
  
- III. Disease of Addiction and Dependency
  - a. Definitions
  - b. Stages of dependency

- c. How chemicals affect the brain
  - d. Signs of impairment
  - e. Reaching out to others
  - f. Recovery
- IV. Discipline & Malpractice: Impact of Chemical Dependency on Lawyers
  - V. Mental Health Disabilities and the Practice of Law
    - a. Statistics
    - b. Impact on discipline and malpractice
  - VI. Mood Disorders: Depression and Anxiety
    - a. Depression
    - b. Bi-polar Disorder
    - c. Anxiety
  - VII. Suicide
  - VIII. Interrelationship Between Addiction/Dependency and Mental Health
  - IX. Stress and Pro Bono
    - a. Coping with stress
  - X. Lawyer Assistance Programs
  - XI. Conclusion

**Notes:**

**Bibliography & Website Links:**

1. [www.abanet/legalservices/colap](http://www.abanet/legalservices/colap)
2. [www.mnlcl.org](http://www.mnlcl.org)