



How to Help:

The Impaired Lawyer (Alcohol)

Has a colleague's drinking become problematic? Are you concerned about their well-being? If you're noticing there's an issue, chances are others are too. There are ways to provide support before things worsen. The LAP can assist, give us a call. 518-487-5688

Common symptoms of alcohol misuse:

Alcohol odor: on their breath at any time throughout the day. Uses mints/mouthwash frequently.

Changes of mood: may be irritable in the morning, but after lunch is friendly and outgoing.

Memory lapses: forgets conversations, appointments, and agreements.

Decline in work product/quality: increased sick days and tardiness, missed deadlines, sloppy or incomplete work, fails to follow through on assignments.

Decline in appearance: clothes are disheveled and/or unclean, bloodshot eyes, hand tremors, hair/facial hair unkempt.

Constant crises: car accidents, lost wallets/phones, injuries, family problems, financial issues.

How you can help:

- If you are close with the lawyer, set up a time to discuss your concerns with them. Choose a time when they haven't been drinking, in a place that is private and familiar to them.
- Approach the conversation from a point of concern and empathy.
- You may wish to have another person with you that is familiar with the situation, if that person is in recovery, even better.
- Ask them if they're okay and if they are noticing any issues they're having, then clearly state what you've been observing.
- Most people will become defensive, that's okay. Don't try to convince them there's an issue. Let them know you are there for them and want to help.
- If the lawyer's behavior is endangering themselves or others, i.e. believed to be driving while intoxicated, displaying physical aggression in the work place, or negatively impacts clients directly; supervisors and/or HR must be alerted.
- If speaking directly to the lawyer is not possible, **call the LAP for assistance**. All calls are confidential and you do not have to identify yourself. LAP's experienced volunteers in recovery will reach out to the lawyer to discuss the concerns. 518-487-5688.

Do:

- Speak clearly and identify the issues.
- Show compassion and respect.
- Offer resources.
- Understand that alcohol use disorder is a progressive condition, without intervention, things will get worse.
- Learn more about alcohol use disorder.
- Call the LAP for more support.

Don't:

- Ignore the behaviors and think they will improve on their own.
- Be judgmental or punitive in your language or tone towards the lawyer.
- Diagnose.
- Don't push the lawyer to admit there's an issue. If they tell you they don't want to discuss, revisit the conversation at another time.

Conversation starters:



I've been concerned about you. I've noticed that recently you are coming into the office late and look like you haven't been sleeping. I can smell alcohol when I walk in your office too. I know you have been dealing with a lot lately, can we talk about what's going on?



Are you doing okay? You've been calling out sick on Mondays the past few weeks and you've missed a few court appearances because you said you forgot about them. This isn't like you. Let's sit down in your office and talk, I'm worried about you.



I understand that you've lost your court ID and phone again. This has happened several times this quarter, I don't recall you having issues like this before. Are you doing okay? You have been really up and down lately and it's impacting your work. Let's talk.

Lawyer Recovery Meetings

Central NY | Mondays at 12:00 pm
[CNY Zoom](#) Zoom ID: 833 5470 6859 Password:
Serenity

Erie County | Thursdays at 5:30 pm Hybrid
[Erie Zoom](#) Zoom Pswd: 476374 Contact
swhiteley@nysba.org for in-person location.

Monroe County | In-person meetings once a month. For info: swhiteley@nysba.org

Nassau County | First and Third Wednesday of the month at 12:30 pm
[Thomas Moore Recovery Meeting](#)

NYC Bar | Thursdays at 6:30 pm Zoom link:
contact Alan Gray alangrayjr@gmail.com

Suffolk County | Tuesdays at 6:00 pm. Hybrid
Log into Zoom: Meeting ID: 5580751056
Pw: ReachOut Contact swhiteley@nysba.org for in-person location

International Lawyers in Alcoholic Anonymous (ILAA) Mondays 8:00 pm
[ILAA Zoom](#)

Additional Recovery Resources

[In-person AA meetings](#)

[Online general AA meetings link](#)

[Secular AA Meetings](#)

[Al-Anon](#) -for families and friends impacted by a loved one's drinking


[NYS Office of Addiction Services and Supports](#)

Hopeline: 1-877-8-HOPENY or text 467369

[SMART Recovery](#)

[Refuge Recovery](#)

[Life Ring Secular Recovery](#)



Lawyer Assistance Program
If you or someone you know is struggling with mental, emotional, or substance abuse issues call the Lawyer Assistance Program Hotline
877-772-8835
#useyourfour

The LAP Hotline is available 24/7 for anyone needing support. NYSBA members are eligible for four free counseling sessions through Hotline referral.

For information on how to manage a temporarily transition out of the practice of law, download [NYSBA's Planning Ahead Guide](#).

www.nysba.org/lap