



**Lawyer Assistance
Program**



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

2025

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Dear Volunteer,

Thank you for your interest in volunteering your time and experience to the Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP). The Lawyer Assistance Program assists hundreds of lawyers every year in receiving the support they seek. With a small staff located in Albany, we truly rely on our volunteers to help us meet the need around New York. The LAP would not be as vital and as valuable as it is without volunteers like you, so thank you!

This manual outlines the various ways in which you can assist the LAP as volunteer. Included here is information on becoming a committee member, a peer support person or monitor, or assisting with programming and outreach. Although we attempt to explore the roles thoroughly in this manual, you will probably have additional questions. The LAP staff is here to answer those questions for you and look forward to speaking with you.

We encourage you to read through this manual, check out our website: www.nysba.org/lap, and join our mailing list to learn all you can about the LAP and its services and how you can help! To join the weekly mailing, email LAP Director, Stacey Whiteley at swhiteley@nysba.org. Any questions, email Stacey or call/ text the office, 518.487.5688. Thank you again for volunteering, we look forward to working with you!

The LAP Staff, Volunteers, and Participants

A large, stylized, handwritten-style graphic of the words "Thank you!" in black ink. The letters are thick and slightly irregular, giving it a personal, hand-drawn feel. The exclamation point is large and prominent.

LAP Goals & Guiding Principles

Goals

- To assist in the identification of lawyers who may benefit from LAP services.
- To assist those individuals in their personal recovery from substance use and/or mental health conditions that impact competent practice of their profession and/or their quality of life.
- To educate the legal community on the identification, assessment, referral, treatment, and community-based resources available to meet the needs of affected judges, lawyers and law students.
- To provide a network of trained volunteers who are available to respond to the needs of New York State lawyers, judges, and law students through peer assistance.
- To provide monitoring for lawyers when indicated.
- To maintain a cooperative relationship with the Office of Court Administration, the Board of Bar Examiners, Grievance Committee staff, and Law School Student Services personnel, along with the legal community at large.

Guiding Principles

- The program is motivated by a humanitarian concern for and commitment to the legal community and protection of the public.
- Substance use disorder and mental health problems are treatable conditions that should not be ignored.
- Impaired lawyers and judges are obligated to seek assistance and to participate in services necessary to renew their effectiveness as a lawyer or judge.
- All lawyers and judges should be able to recognize the signs and symptoms of a colleague who may be impaired, should have a willingness to act, and be able to assist the colleague in accessing appropriate services.

NYS Judiciary Law §499

Confidentiality and Immunity

1. Confidential information is privileged. The confidential relations and communications between a member or an authorized agent of a Participant assistance committee sponsored by a state or local bar association and any person, firm or corporation communicating with such a committee, its members or authorized agents, shall be deemed to be privileged on the same basis as those provided by law between Participant and client. Such privileges shall be waived only by the person, firm or corporation that has furnished information to the committee.

2. Immunity from liability. Any person, firm or corporation in good faith providing information to, or in any other way participating in the affairs of, any of the committees referred to in subdivision (1) of this section, shall be immune from civil liability that might otherwise result by reason of such conduct. For the purpose of any proceeding, the good faith of any such person, firm or corporation shall be presumed.

New York State LAPs

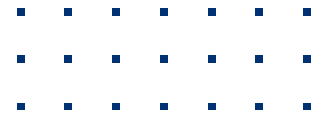
Not surprisingly, New York is not typical regarding Lawyer Assistance Programs. Whereas many states have a single entity that licenses lawyers, oversees discipline, and supports lawyer assistance efforts, in New York State, the Office of Court Administration serves as the licensing entity, the Board of Examiners handles the Bar application and exam, and the Grievance Committee attends to disciplinary matters. Providing support services to New York lawyers, judges, and law students there are three separately operated LAPs.

The New York State Bar Association (NYSBA), the New York City Bar Association (NYC Bar), and the Nassau County Bar Association (NCBA) each have independent LAPs that are staffed and supported by their respective bar associations. Each have associated Lawyer Assistance Committees made of bar members that support, facilitate, and implement the LAP work. Additionally, across New York, many local bars support volunteer Lawyers Helping Lawyers groups. In Erie and Onondaga Counties, their Lawyer Assistance efforts include no-cost counseling services and professionally facilitated support group meetings.

Although the three LAPs are independent and have their own associated committees, staff, and operating procedures, the LAPs work collaboratively to reach the more than 200,000 legal professionals in New York State. To cover the state most effectively, NYSBA LAP although statewide, focuses its support services to upstate counties north of Westchester. The NYC LAP focuses their services on Westchester and the five counties comprising the NYC area. The Nassau LAP provides support for the counties on Long Island. The three LAPs share information, referrals, and volunteers to ensure needs are being met.

Regardless of where you live and work in New York, the NYSBA LAP is grateful to have you provide your time and experiences as a volunteer. If you wish to volunteer with more than one LAP, you are welcome to do that as well, although the NYC and Nassau LAPs may have slightly different requirements of their volunteers, so be sure to reach out to them regarding your interest.

Volunteer Roles



COMMITTEE MEMBER

The Lawyer Assistance Committee is comprised of NSYBA members who have been appointed to the Committee by the Bar President. LAC members must have at least two years of continuous recovery from substance use or a mental health challenge in order to apply to be an LAC member. Committee appointments are made in the spring of each year, and once appointed a committee appointment term is three years. Most committee members renew their terms after the three years.

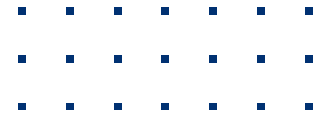
TIME COMMITMENT

The LAC holds four hybrid committee meetings each year, member attendance is encouraged for every meeting. LAC members are also asked to participate on sub-committees that are tasked with outreach, programming, and planning the annual Spring Retreat. The LAC is led by two co-chairpersons that are responsible for leading meetings, minute taking, budget decisions, and guiding the work of the LAC.

HOW TO VOLUNTEER

Make sure your NYSBA membership is current and notify the co-chairs or the LAP Director of your interest through an email. Include information regarding your background and why you wish to join the Committee. Committee appointments are made in the spring, but you may be asked to join the LAC community prior to your appointment which will keep you updated as to LAC activity and meetings.

Volunteer Roles



VOLUNTEER MONITOR

The LAP supervises the Lawyer Monitoring Program, which provides monitoring services to lawyers, judges, bar applicants who are involved with Grievance due to an impairment due to alcohol or substance use, or other mental or physical health issue. Monitoring allows the Monitored Attorney an opportunity to receive the assistance and support they need to address their impairment, repair the harm, and continue to practice. The LAP utilizes trained volunteers as Monitors.

TIME COMMITMENT

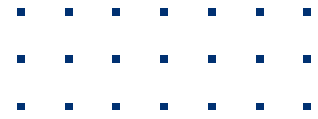
A Volunteer Monitor can expect to be involved for at least one year with the assigned Monitored Attorney. This includes weekly meetings with the Monitored Attorney and preparing monthly reports to the Monitoring Supervisor. There are also bi-monthly Monitor Meetings that Volunteer Monitors are encouraged to attend.

HOW TO VOLUNTEER

To participate as a Volunteer Monitor, the Volunteer must be in good standing and admitted to practice in NY, with no disciplinary complaints filed against them in the last two years. Additionally, the Volunteer must complete the Monitor Training course, which is a one hour webinar. If the Volunteer is in recovery from a substance use disorder or mental health condition, the Volunteer must have three years of continuous recovery.

Contact the LAP Director to indicate your interest in becoming a Volunteer Monitor. You will be provided the Monitor Training Program and Handbook. Once completed, the LAP Director will review the Monitoring Program with you, to ensure your questions are answered and you are ready to Monitor.

Volunteer Roles



PEER SUPPORT VOLUNTEER

Peer Support is the most widely utilized service LAP offers. Peer Support is offered to nearly everyone who reaches out to the LAP seeking assistance. Callers (Participants) are matched with a Peer Support Volunteer who shares a similar background as the Participant. For example, if a Participant is expressing difficulty managing their depression, they would be connected with an available Peer Support Volunteer who has had success managing their depression over a period of time.

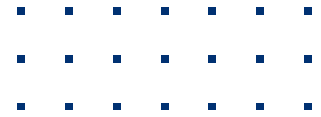
TIME COMMITMENT

Short term, usually a few phone contacts with the Participant.

HOW TO VOLUNTEER

To participate as a Peer Support Volunteer the Volunteer must be in good standing in New York or has retired in good standing. The Peer Support Volunteer must have at least two years of recovery from a substance use disorder or mental health condition. Contact the LAP Director with an email regarding interest and your background/qualifications. Demonstrating an understanding of the concepts of Peer Support will be required.

Volunteer Roles



PRESENTER /OUTREACH VOLUNTEER

Volunteers, who have an interest in outreach or programming, are also encouraged to develop programs for the LAP based on their skills and experiences. Program topics range from recovery in the profession to stress management to the ethics of substance use and receiving treatment. Career and life transitions, aging in the profession, and managing home and professional lives are also topics of interest. Volunteers are also needed to assist with outreach and promotion of the LAP/LAC/LHL at local bar events and law schools.

TIME COMMITMENT

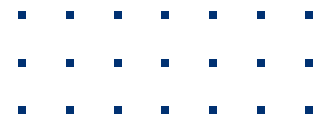
Will depend on scope of programming or outreach event.

HOW TO VOLUNTEER

To volunteer as a presenter, contact the LAP Director. You will be asked to complete the following application: [Speaker Form](#) . Once completed, it will be reviewed and you will be contacted regarding next steps.

Note: the LAP does not pay speakers/presenters for their time or programming.

Peer Support



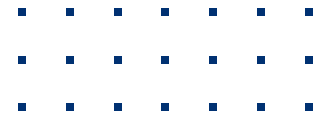
Definitions

Peer Support Volunteers: attorneys who have lived experience with substance use disorder and/or mental health issues, are in long-term recovery (two (2) years or more), have the requisite desire and ability to use their personal recovery experience to support attorneys in need, and have reviewed the LAP Volunteer Handbook and have been approved by the LAP Director. Peer Support Volunteers are NOT professional therapists, counselors, or Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) sponsors. They are attorneys who are willing to be matched with a LAP Participant and share their own lived experience and personal recovery journey.

Participants are LAP clients who have been matched with Peer Support Volunteer. Participants need the support, help and assistance offered by Peer Support Volunteers to navigate an active substance use disorder and/or mental health issue(s).

Recovery is a state of remission and/or well-being in a person who has lived experience with substance use disorder and/or mental health issues. The recovery community is the collection of people in recovery who provide mutual aid and support to each other with a common purpose of achieving and maintaining recovery.

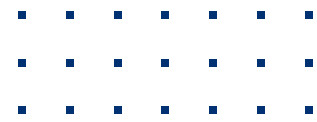
Peer Support



The Process

- LAP staff receives the initial call from a Participant seeking assistance.
- The LAP staff will do an assessment of issues presented and explore legal and/or disciplinary problems.
- The LAP staff will review and offer support services, including Peer Support, if appropriate.
- If the Participant is interested in Peer Support, LAP staff will contact a Peer Support Volunteer that shares similar life experiences as the Participant to ask if they are able to provide Peer Support at that time.
- If yes, LAP staff will inform the Volunteer of the Participant's name and provide contact information.
- Depending on the Participant's preference, either the Participant will reach out to the Volunteer or the Volunteer will be asked to contact the Participant.
- Meeting in person is not required, support via phone is sufficient.
- Volunteers should inform the LAP immediately if:
 1. the Participant and the Volunteer do not connect.
 2. the Volunteer discovers there is a conflict of interest.
 3. the Participant presents in a manner that is threatening or aggressive.
 4. the Participant is not respecting the Volunteer's boundaries.
 5. the Participant's needs present greater than general support can meet.
 - 6. the Participant talks of self-harm or harming others.**

Peer Support



Best Practices

Do

- Focus on what the Participant sees as the problem and what they would like to change.
- Actively listen and share your own experience (if/when appropriate).
- Avoid discussions pertaining to diagnoses. Instead, offer a specific solution such as making an appointment with a treatment professional, attending a meeting, seeing a primary care physician, or reviewing what changes in behavior may help.
- Abide by the confidentiality rule and do not share information regarding the Participant with anyone other than LAP staff.
- Encourage the use of the referrals provided to the Participant by the LAP.
- Be consistent. Follow through with resources you offer or meetings you agree to attend.
- Feel free to refer the Participant back to LAP staff for additional support services.
- Contact LAP staff with any questions or concerns you may have.

Don't

- Continue to engage with the Participant if you discover there is a conflict, the Participant is hostile or aggressive towards you or dismissing boundaries you have set.
- Act in the role of counselor, sponsor, or therapist.
- Engage in business relationships with the Participant.
- Engage in a romantic or sexual relationship with the Participant.
- Engage in any financial entanglement or accept gifts, monetary or otherwise, from the Participant.

Active Listening Skills

Listening to someone as a LAP volunteer is quite different from listening as a lawyer. As a lawyer, one is trained to take a direct or confrontational approach. As a Peer Support Volunteer, active listening is a better approach.

Using active listening skills, one can improve communication, build trust, and better understand the other person.

- **Be fully present and attentive.** Give the person speaking your full attention, minimize distractions, and focus on the speaker's words.
- **Avoid interrupting or judging.** Resist the urge to interrupt the person speaking or rush to judgement. Allow the person to complete their thoughts before taking your turn to speak. Don't allow your own opinions disrupt the person's feelings and thoughts.
- **Paraphrase and reflect.** Restate the speaker's main points to make sure you are understanding what is being said. Reflecting on their words demonstrates that you are listening and want to understand.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** This will encourage the speaker to talk more by elaborating on their thoughts and feelings.
- **Show empathy and understanding.** Even if you don't agree with their point of view, acknowledging their opinion and validating their feelings creates trust.
- **Don't offer advice unless asked.** Often times, just allowing the speaker to talk through the issue while having their feelings reflected back through active listening, helps the speaker problem solve their issues.

LAP Staff



LAP Director/Monitoring Supervisor

Stacey Whiteley

518-360-2352 -Best number to use

swhiteley@nysba.org

LAP Intake Coordinator-tx referrals, resources, support group info

Lia Grover

518-487-5629 x5669

lgrover@nysba.org

LAP Attorney Well-Being Program Coordinator

Jennifer Clayton

518-487-5573

jclayton@nysba.org

LAP Program Coordinator

Kim McHargue

518-487-5757

kmchargue@nysba.org

Resources



Lawyer Recovery Groups

Central NY | Mondays at 12:00 pm <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83354706859> Zoom ID: 833 5470 6859 Password: Serenity

Erie County | Thursdays at 5:30 pm This is a hybrid meeting. Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/279958124?pwd=Y3NSZTBUCFFjOSStZR3d0R0oxb3VaQT09> Password: 476374 Contact swhiteley@nysba.org for the in-person location.

Monroe County | In-person meetings once a month. Contact Stacey Whiteley for time and location. swhiteley@nysba.org

Nassau County | First and Third Wednesday of the month at 12:30. Zoom link to join: [Thomas More Recovery Meeting](#) ID: 858 1826 5744 Pswd: 804067

NYC Bar | Participant s AA meeting-Thursdays at 6:30 pm For Zoom link: contact Alan Gray alangrayjr@gmail.com

NYC Bar | Participant s NA Meeting Wednesdays at 6:30 pm To join: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5963609390?pwd=RUREYkdKc0FnSkdWY0JPK0lFVGxSdz09> Meeting ID 596 360 9390 Passcode: FELLOWSHIP

Suffolk County | Tuesdays at 6:00 pm -Hybrid. To join by Zoom: www.zoom.com click on Join button: ID: 5580751056 PW: ReachOut Contact Stacey for the in-person location:swhiteley@nysba.org

Lawyer Mental Health Groups

Lawyers with Depression Support Group: Tuesday and Friday at 12:30 pm. Contact anoble@eriebar.org for the link. This group is open to all with mental health struggles as well, not only depression.

Onondaga County Participant Well-Being Group : In person, first Thursday of the month. Contact Jim McSweeney mcsweeneyjr@gmail.com (315) 451-2161 or Jeff Unaitis junaitis@onbar.org or (315) 579-2581 for more information and to register. New Hampshire's **Lawyer Mental Health Support Group** meets biweekly and is led by a clinician but is peer driven. This NH group is open to all lawyers experiencing mental health concerns. For more information, email Mark Durso at mark@lapnh.org . These groups are free and confidential.

Resources



Online general AA meetings link: <https://aa-intergroup.org/meetings/>

Online secular AA meetings can be found here: <https://www.aasecular.org/online-meetings>

In-person AA meetings: <https://www.aa.org/find-aa>

Narcotics Anonymous meetings: <https://na.org/>

Family member support: <https://www.al-anon.org>

Support for Adult Children of Alcoholics: <https://adultchildren.org/meeting-search/>
ACA is a 12-Step program focusing on emotional sobriety for adults who grew up in alcoholic and other dysfunctional homes.

Suicide and Crisis Life Line: text or call 988



Lawyer Assistance Program

**1 Elk Street
Albany, NY 12077
www.nysba.org/lap**
