



# *“What’s Next”* The New Mexico Well-Being Committee’s 2022 CAMPAIGN

From its inception in 2020, the New Mexico Well-Being Committee has maintained that it’s time for a culture change in the legal community; one that supports, encourages, and provides resources for its members’ well-being. But it’s not a one-size-fits-all; not at the individual lawyer level, nor at the community level. Indeed, there are many different sub-communities within the larger legal community, each with its own needs and perspectives on well-being. Thus, the Committee is pleased to announce its “What a Healthy Legal Community Looks Like” campaign. Starting next month, February, 2022, the Committee will air monthly podcasts and publish related articles featuring different “communities” within the larger legal community.

What “communities” are we talking about? At a minimum, solos and small firm practitioners, large firms, public defenders, district attorneys and other prosecutors, in-house counsel, lawyers for state agencies, judges, lawyers who are new to practice, lawyers who have practiced for decades, law students, paralegals and legal assistants. Undoubtedly there are others not listed here but from whom the Committee wants to hear. The plan is to showcase what each community is doing to create and promote well-being for its constituent members, and discover what additional resources and services might be pursued in the future.

We will be tapping into state and national legal community well-being sources in an effort to highlight the movers and shakers in this space. These are the firms, organizations, agencies and individuals that are changing the historical landscape of how the legal community performs or works. To be blunt, these are the legal communities that are choosing to pay attention to and take action to put in place guidelines, rules, policies, and recommendations that lead to a

healthier work environment. Some of those actions might be mandatory regular vacation, reducing yearly billable hour limit, inviting families to company events, onsite physical exercise area, onsite therapist/counselor, encouraging away from desk lunch breaks, PM time limit on checking/responding to e-mails/texts, daily guided meditation resource, contact information for mental and behavioral health services/resources, a top-down regular conversation on the importance of taking care of oneself, and, most importantly,.... leaders role modeling the behavior.

Yes, this is a tall order that will require us to redefine what it means to be a healthy, vibrant legal community. It will require that we make fundamental changes in the way we think about practicing law, in the way we actually practice law, and in the way we prioritize our own well-being and the well-being of others while practicing. And it will require purposeful hard work. On the surface it might appear easier to just leave things well enough alone; after all, haven’t we been doing things the same way for decades? Yes, and perhaps that is why ‘36% of lawyers qualify as problem drinkers, 28% report mild or higher depression symptoms, 23% report mild or higher stress symptoms, 19% report mild or higher anxiety symptoms, and lawyers are ranked #8 in a top ten study of suicide by occupation. Turns out that “doing things the way we always have” results in a high probability that lawyering might be hazardous to your health. Again it is time for a culture change.

As we embark on this overdue legal well-being culture change wave, we want to hear from you. What actions does your firm, organization, agency....basically, your work environment, currently have in place to take care of your mental, emotional and physical health? What improvements could be made? Maybe you feel your

work environment is a model for other state and national legal communities? Does your work organization/firm have an identified Health and Wellness Director/Leader? Does your work environment need one? In your legal community (i.e. SSF, law school, law firm, AG, DA, LOPD, etc.), do you know what other like state communities are doing to support their work force in the well-being area? Should you find out?

You know what is next....yes, we want to hear from you regarding these questions. Whether you are a five-star role model or “we have nothing in place, but are willing to learn”, we want to hear from you. It is through connection and the sharing of information that we can and will be a healthier New Mexico legal community. It takes a few to start the conversation, but it takes a majority to force a shift, break down barriers, de-stigmatize, and cause change that is for the good of the whole. Would you like to write an article about your work environment? Would you like to have a discussion in a podcast? Please email us at [well@sbnm.org](mailto:well@sbnm.org).

As always, if you want more information, please visit [www.sbnm.org/wellbeing](http://www.sbnm.org/wellbeing). If you want to get involved or have questions, email us at [well@sbnm.org](mailto:well@sbnm.org). Regardless, we hope that each of you will join us in a commitment to well-being individually and as a community.

#### Authors:

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#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> National Task Force On Lawyer Well-Being Report, Aug. 14, 2017, Institute For Well-Being In Law, [lawyerwellbeing.net](http://lawyerwellbeing.net).



#### Resources Shared by SBNM:



**The  
Solutions  
Group**

#### **The Solutions Group**

Employee Assistance Program: Free Service for Members!  
Get help and support for yourself, your family and your employees.

**FREE** service offered by NMJLAP. Services include up to four FREE counseling sessions per issue per year for ANY mental health, addiction, relationship conflict, anxiety and/or depression issue. Counseling sessions are with a professionally licensed therapist. Other FREE services include management consultation, stress management education, critical incident stress debriefing, video counseling, and 24X7 call center. Providers are located throughout the state.

To access this service call 866-254-3555 and identify with NMJLAP.

**All calls are CONFIDENTIAL.**



State Bar of New Mexico  
**Judges and Lawyers  
Assistance Program**

#### **The New Mexico Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program**

The New Mexico Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program (NMJLAP) is a free service for all members of the New Mexico bench and bar and law students. NMJLAP offers confidential professional and peer assistance to help individuals identify and address problems with alcohol and other drugs, depression, and other mental health/emotional disorders, as well as with issues related to cognitive impairment. NMJLAP endeavors to improve the well-being of its members through support and early intervention, and to help reduce the public harm caused by impaired members of the legal profession.

To learn more about NMJLAP call 505-228-1948 or visit [www.sbnm.org/jlap](http://www.sbnm.org/jlap)