

OREGON ATTORNEY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Statement of Mission

The Oregon Attorney Assistance Program (OAAP) has been established:

1. To provide assistance to Oregon lawyers and judges who experience alcoholism, chemical dependency, burnout, career transition, depression, anxiety, compulsive disorders (including Internet, sex, and gambling addictions), time management issues, relationship issues, stress, or other distress that impairs ability to function;
2. To aid in the curtailment of malpractice claims and disciplinary complaints;
3. To educate the legal community about the diseases of alcoholism, chemical dependency, depression, and other distress; and
4. To educate the legal community and the families of Oregon lawyers and judges about the scope of services offered by the OAAP.

Philosophy

The OAAP is based on the concept of lawyers helping lawyers. The OAAP philosophy is that lawyers are able to provide a unique rapport and support to members of the legal community and, as a result, are very effective in encouraging the acceptance of assistance.

The OAAP encourages the involvement of family members, coworkers, partners, friends, and others who are concerned about a lawyer, judge, or other member of the legal community who is experiencing distress. In some situations (alcoholism, chemical dependency, addiction, depression), the person with the disease may deny that he or she has a problem and is unlikely to seek assistance as the disease progresses. Involvement of others who are aware of the problem can break the denial barrier and lead to effective assistance. In other instances, the person's illness may be interfering with his or her ability to seek help. Calling the OAAP for information will begin the process of confidential assistance.

Scope of Program

The OAAP is available to all Oregon lawyers and judges. In addition, to the extent permitted by available resources, the OAAP is also available to law office staff, court staff, families of lawyers, families of judges, and law students in Oregon law schools. The OAAP provides assistance in the following areas:

1. Alcoholism
2. Chemical dependency
3. Recovery support
4. Career change and satisfaction
5. Depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues
6. Compulsive disorders (including gambling, sex, and Internet addictions)
7. Procrastination and time management
8. Relationship issues
9. Stress management
10. Retirement transitions

The OAAP provides initial assistance, intervention, support, and referrals to resources and community services. OAAP is not a treatment program or a mental health facility.

Confidentiality

All communications with the OAAP are completely confidential and will not affect a person's standing with the Professional Liability Fund or the Oregon State Bar. No information will be disclosed to any person, agency, or organization outside the OAAP without the consent of the person accessing the program. Contacts with us are kept strictly confidential pursuant to ORS 9.568; PLF Policies 6.150 - 6.300; OSB Bylaws, Article 24; and ORPC 8.3(c)(3). The only exceptions are: (1) to avert a serious, imminent threat to the lawyer's health or safety or that of another person; and (2) to comply with legal obligations such as ORS 419B.010 and ORS 124.060 (child abuse and elder abuse).

All confidentiality protections and privileges provided under state, federal, Oregon State Bar, and Professional Liability Fund rules and regulations, and all other available protections, shall be asserted to the utmost against any attempts to obtain information. Individuals who access the OAAP are exempt from the reporting requirements of ORPC 8.3, provided that they obtained the information while participating in an OAAP program. Communications with the OAAP staff can be anonymous, if the person accessing the program prefers.

Physical Location of OAAP

OAAP services are provided at a physical location that is separate from the Oregon State Bar and the OSB Professional Liability Fund offices to maintain the program's commitment to confidentiality and anonymity and to encourage participation in the programs.

Record Keeping

The OAAP maintains statistical data, including the number of people accessing the OAAP and the type of services provided. Statistical reports are produced periodically as requested by the program executive director. The statistical reports do not disclose the identity of any person who has received assistance from the OAAP, and in all cases the confidentiality of program participants will be maintained consistent with the provisions of ORS 9.568 and applicable Bar and PLF policies.

Qualifications of OAAP staff

The OAAP attorney counselors are trained to provide problem identification, assessment, and referral to appropriate services. All OAAP attorney counselors: (1) are licensed attorneys; (2) have experience or training in alcohol and chemical dependency, intervention, mental health issues, group dynamics, and public speaking; (3) have an understanding of or experience with 12-step programs; and (4) if in recovery, have at least five consecutive years of recovery. OAAP attorney counselors attain CEAP (Certified Employee Assistance Professional), CADC (Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor), or other comparable counseling credentials within four years of employment at the OAAP and maintain the certification or credentials in addition to other appropriate continuing education.

Referral Service

The OAAP attorney counselors provide referrals to community, public, and private resources for diagnostic and/or treatment services, including therapists, treatment centers, or other appropriate community resources. The OAAP attorney counselors also refer individuals to the support networks of the OAAP and other available organizations, agencies, or resources.

Cost of Services

Involvement in the OAAP is at no or low cost to the program participant.