



The idea of lawyers and judges struggling with issues of substance abuse and mental illness is not pleasant to think about. But the reality is that these struggles happen every day among legal professionals in NC.

While the affected lawyers suffer directly, the impact of their issues goes much further. Their capacity to practice law is impaired. Their families and those who work alongside them are put in peril, as are their clients. And, without intervention and treatment, things only get worse.

## NC Lawyer Assistance Program

In 1979, a group of lawyers, themselves recovering alcoholics, saw the need to offer assistance voluntarily to other lawyers who were suffering from addiction and alcoholism. Eventually, this effort expanded to include mental health issues and became known as the **NC Lawyer Assistance Program (NC LAP)**.

Today, NC LAP is a vital element of the NC State Bar. Operating with a small staff and a cadre of dedicated, trained lawyer- and judge-volunteers located throughout the state, it provides assistance to lawyers and judges whenever and wherever needed.

NC LAP does not provide direct clinical services to its clients. Its work is accomplished through assessments, referrals, counseling, peer support, interventions and monitoring for lawyers who need these services. This work protects the public from impaired lawyers and judges; supports their on-going recovery process; and educates the legal community about issues of substance abuse and mental health.

*Unfortunately, some lawyers and judges cannot afford the treatment or counseling services they so desperately need.*

Issues of substance abuse and mental illness often require extensive professional assistance that is both costly and time-consuming. One of the collateral results of any form of impairment is severe financial distress as lawyers lose the capacity to administratively manage their practices and lives and make sound financial decisions. By the time they realize they need this level of help, many legal professionals are without the funds to pay for it.

**NC LAP provides free, confidential assistance to more than 400 lawyers and judges each year in addressing substance abuse, mental health issues and other stressors which impair a lawyer's ability to effectively practice law.**

## LAP Foundation of NC, Inc.

The LAP Foundation of NC, Inc. was formed by NC LAP volunteers as an independent, 501(c)(3) organization that exists solely to support NC LAP in its work with lawyers and judges who have issues related to mental illness and substance abuse. The

**At any given time, as many as 30 lawyers in NC are in need of services and treatment they cannot afford for these issues. Timing of treatment is critical.**

Foundation's mission is to assist eligible lawyers who are impaired and to mitigate the impact of their behavior on those around them. This is accomplished by providing financial assistance for the benefit of participants who are unable to afford the level of treatment necessary for their recovery.

Such treatment can be extremely costly. A month-long stay in a treatment facility for drug and alcohol problems or mental illness ranges from **\$16,500 to \$47,000**, fees that are not always covered by insurance. Many need at least 90 days of treatment, at a cost as high as **\$62,000**, which is seldom covered by insurance. Ongoing relapse prevention counseling or general mental health counseling has a lower price tag, but still ranges from **\$5,000-\$8,000** a year per lawyer, and that does not include medication costs.

Since 2007, the Foundation has provided \$92,825 to lawyers and judges who could not afford the appropriate level of care. The Foundation paid for in-patient treatment, therapy appointments, out-patient treatment, and medication with grants and loans mostly in the range of \$1,000 to \$5,000. Funds are provided based on demonstrated need and all funds go directly to treatment providers, not the lawyers or judges. Repayments from loans are returned to the original fund. The identity of beneficiaries of financial assistance from the Foundation is confidential information and is not shared with the Foundation Board.

## **A Campaign to Provide More Help**

The LAP Foundation seeks to raise \$250,000 to support NC LAP with funds to help lawyers with mental health and substance abuse issues obtain the treatment they need. The cost of care continues to rise. NC LAP staff leverage scholarships and matching grants at various treatment centers wherever possible and work with therapists and counselors who are willing to work on a sliding pay scale. The sad reality is that the historic grant and loan amount of \$3,000 to \$5,000 is no longer enough. In addition to providing higher grant and loan amounts, the goal is to triple the number of lawyers and judges receiving financial assistance for services each year.

**Of the 31 attorneys & judges who received loans and grants since 2007, 21 are sober, emotionally stable, and thriving. They have gotten their lives and law practices back on track.**

## **This Benefits All of Us**

Helping lawyers and judges recover from alcohol and drug problems and mental illness issues is an investment in the justice system that benefits everyone. When lawyers and judges get the help they need, the system is strengthened, the risk of tainting the reputation of lawyers in general is thwarted and the entire legal community benefits. Please join us in making sure the help is there for them.

**Thank You for Your Generous Support**