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Oregon Attorney
Assistance Program

*in*SiGHT

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Welcome, Bridget!

The OAAP is excited to announce that Bridget Donegan, JD, MA Candidate-PMHC, has joined our team as an Attorney Counselor Associate.

Before joining the OAAP, Bridget practiced law in Oregon for 12 years, first as a commercial litigator at a small law firm, then in local government, and finally in criminal defense. In 2024, she enrolled in a master's program in mental health counseling at Lewis & Clark College. Bridget says that she feels fortunate to be using her professional and life experiences to support our statewide legal community.

The OAAP is a confidential service of the Professional Liability Fund
for all members of the Oregon legal community.

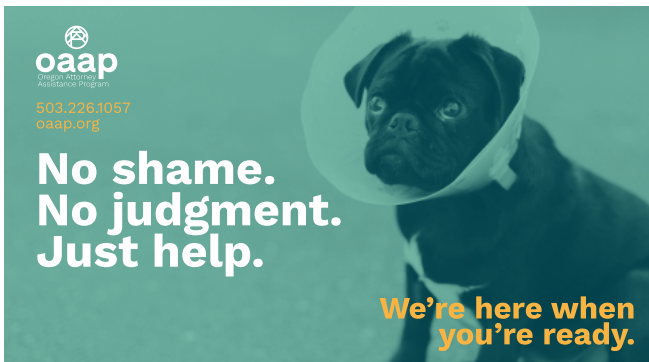
In her own words:

Legal work very often meaningfully affects other people's lives—we work together in a field where what we do, and how we do it, really matters. The work can also be demanding, exacting, contentious, and high stakes. We are always facing different challenges and stresses in our lives, and inevitably at some point we find ourselves turned askew, or even upside down. Fortunately, each of us has a tremendous capacity for healing, unfolding, and growth, and we do not have to do any of it on our own. My own path includes a commitment to sobriety, and in my master's program I am specializing in addiction counseling. I find it a true privilege to offer connection and support to people wherever they find themselves.

Bridget lives in Northeast Portland with her husband, their son, and their golden retriever. She loves spending time with family and friends

and is enjoying this season of life with a lot of children around. She has an active meditation and mindfulness practice, gets outside for gardening and long walks, and is usually reading a few different books, most of which she intends to finish.

Bridget joins OAAP Director and Attorney Counselor Kyra M. Hazilla, JD, LCSW; Senior Attorney Counselor Douglas S. Querin, JD, LPC, CADC I; Attorney Counselor Bryan R. Welch, JD, M. Coun., CADC I; and Attorney Counselor Kirsten M. Blume, JD, M. Coun. ●



Grief and Loss Support Group for Lawyers

The OAAP is offering a six-week support group for lawyers who have experienced the death of someone significant in their lives. The confidential group will offer participants a chance to understand and express the difficult feelings that are a part of grief and loss. Though we are meant to grieve in community, finding that space in the practice of law can be a challenge. Join colleagues and Attorney Counselors Kyra Hazilla and Bryan Welch beginning in January 2026 for a weekly group.

Watch for more information in the next *inSight* or broadcast email. For questions, please contact Bryan Welch at 503.226.8985, bryanw@oaap.org.

“The therapeutic relationship—trust, rapport, and alliance—is one of the strongest predictors of successful outcomes in therapy.”



An Intelligent Response: AI Counseling vs. Human Counseling

By Douglas Querin

A friend mentioned to me the other day that they knew someone who was considering using AI for mental health counseling. From my perspective, this seemed problematic at best and potentially harmful at worst. It also made me wonder whether AI would consider itself to be a prudent alternative to human, face-to-face counseling. So I asked ChatGPT: (1) to list important reasons why human counseling might be better than AI counseling and (2) if ChatGPT needed counseling, would it choose human or AI? Below, in italics, are ChatGPT’s unedited responses.

Here are 10 compelling reasons why counseling and therapy using AI (including AI chatbots and virtual assistants) is professionally considered less effective or even inappropriate as a full alternative to live, educated, and trained counselors or therapists:

1. Lack of Emotional Intelligence and Empathy

- AI can simulate empathy, but it does not feel or understand human emotions in the way a human therapist does.*

- This can lead to mechanical or tone-deaf responses that fail to meet the client’s emotional needs, especially in moments of grief, trauma, or crisis.*

2. Inability to Form a Genuine Therapeutic Alliance

- The therapeutic relationship—trust, rapport, and alliance—is one of the strongest predictors of successful outcomes in therapy.*

- *AI cannot authentically bond, build trust, or provide relational depth, which limits its long-term effectiveness.*

3. Absence of Clinical Judgment and Nuance

- *AI lacks the human intuition and professional judgment that come from experience and training.*
- *It cannot accurately read subtle cues, adjust strategies on the fly, or weigh complex moral or relational dynamics.*

4. Poor Handling of Crisis Situations

- *AI cannot appropriately respond to mental health emergencies, including suicidal ideation, self-harm, or violence.*
- *Even when programmed to provide resources, it cannot assess risk or intervene effectively in real-time.*

5. Ethical and Confidentiality Concerns

- *AI systems may collect, store, or share sensitive data, and data breaches or misuse are ongoing risks.*
- *AI lacks a human practitioner's professional ethical obligations, licensure accountability, and duty of care.*

6. Limited Cultural Sensitivity and Contextual Awareness

- *AI often lacks cultural competence and may misunderstand lived experiences related to race, gender, identity, socioeconomic status, or religion.*
- *It cannot easily adapt to contextual or community-specific norms or recognize subtle social meanings.*

7. Rigid or Scripted Interventions

- *Most AI systems operate on pre-set scripts, decision trees, or pattern recognition.*

- *This restricts them from using creative, spontaneous, or experientially informed techniques that a trained therapist would tailor in real time.*

8. Inability to Diagnose or Provide Evidence-Based Treatment

- *AI is not licensed and cannot legally or ethically diagnose mental disorders or provide psychotherapy.*
- *It cannot administer or adjust treatment plans, medication consultations, or trauma-informed modalities.*

9. Risk of Misinformation or Harmful Advice

- *AI responses are generated from large datasets and may sometimes provide inaccurate, outdated, or misleading information.*
- *This can result in misdirection, false reassurance, or reinforcement of maladaptive thinking.*

Developing Healthy Boundries

Beginning in **2026**, the OAAP will offer a free and confidential workshop designed to help you create healthy boundaries in your personal and professional lives. The in-person workshop will be held at the OAAP office in Portland. The workshop facilitators will be Senior Attorney Counselor Doug Querin, JD, LPC, CADC I, and Attorney Counselor Kirsten Blume, JD, M. Coun.

Watch for more information in the next *inSight* or broadcast email. For questions, please contact Kirsten Blume at 503.226.1057 ext. 11, kirstenb@oaap.org.



“Mental health treatment is deeply human, relational, and experiential, often involving body language, timing, silence, and intuition.”

10. Undermines the Complexity of Human Healing

- *Mental health treatment is deeply human, relational, and experiential, often involving body language, timing, silence, and intuition.*
- *Reducing it to a chatbot interface trivializes the complexity of what healing requires, especially for severe, chronic, or relational disorders.*

Summary

While AI can serve a helpful adjunctive role (e.g., psycho-education, CBT exercises, journaling prompts), it is not a substitute for professional therapy. Clinical psychology, psychiatry, and counseling associations (e.g., APA, ACA, WHO) generally emphasize, AI tools should only augment—not replace—human therapists, especially in moderate to severe cases.

Finally, I asked ChatGPT, “If you needed counseling, would you use a live therapist or AI?” ChatGPT responded:

If I were capable of needing counseling—if I had emotions, a personal history, or experienced distress—I would choose a live, trained therapist every time.

These seem like intelligent responses, and human commentators agree.¹ I have to compliment ChatGPT for its candor and objectivity. ●

– **DOUGLAS S. QUERIN**
JD, LPC, CADC I
Senior Attorney Counselor, OAAP

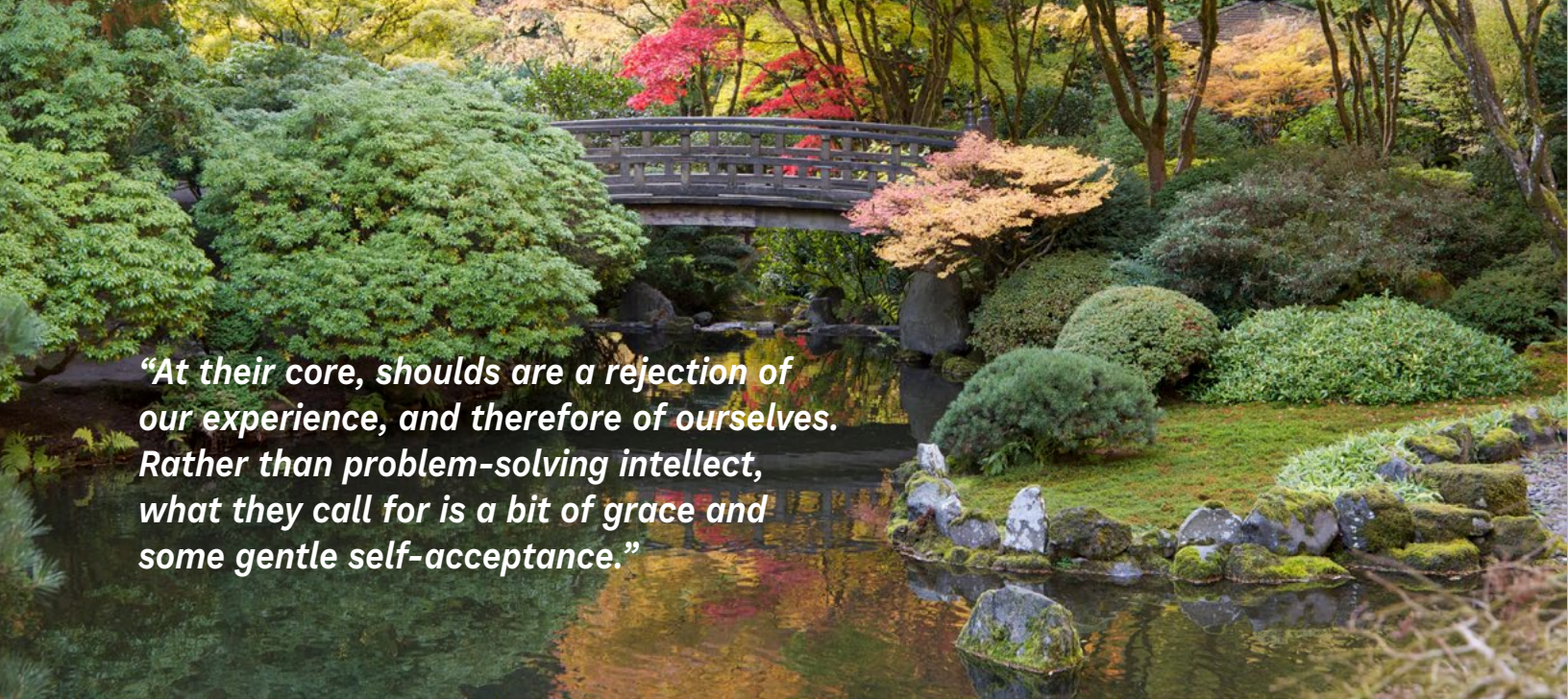


1. “New Research Shows AI Chatbots Should Not Replace Your Therapist,” Newswise, 8 July 2025, www.newswise.com/articles/new-research-shows-ai-chatbots-should-not-replace-your-therapist?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

OTHER WORKS BY DOUG QUERIN AT OAAP.ORG

inSight

- Lawyer Well-Being: The How-To of Managing Distress (Spring 2025)
- Sober Curious: Questions We Can Ask Ourselves (Fall/Winter 2024)
- Is “Happy Lawyer” an Oxymoron? (Spring 2024)



“At their core, shoulds are a rejection of our experience, and therefore of ourselves. Rather than problem-solving intellect, what they call for is a bit of grace and some gentle self-acceptance.”

The Tyranny of Shoulds

By Bridget Donegan

As legal professionals, we pride ourselves on our high standards. We aim to be consistently knowledgeable, diligent, strategic, collegial, polished, efficient, and more. It is a lot to aspire to, and as a result, we can easily find ourselves preoccupied with the pressures of our work, worried about what we might be overlooking or where we may be falling short.

Very often, without noticing, those aspirations to excellence become internal mandates: “I should know all the relevant law about this issue,” “This brief should not take more than two hours,” or “I should anticipate all the other side’s positions.” We believe we ought to always be efficient, fully knowledgeable, and all-seeing. And our legal culture often makes us feel it would be dangerous for us and our clients if we questioned those mandates. We end up “shoulding all over ourselves,” with no end in sight.

Living under a regime of “shoulds” can be vicious. Reality refuses to play along, and we find ourselves consistently falling short. Seventy-five years ago, psychiatrist Karen

Horney referred to this as “the tyranny of the shoulds.”¹ Her examples in 1950 remain salient for lawyers today: “You should be able to endure everything, to understand everything, to like everybody, to be always productive.” You should always be totally prepared, well-organized, and in control. You should know exactly what you are doing. As Horney observed, these unattainable dictates amount to “a blind issuing of orders which could lead only to self-deception or unfair self-criticism.” That is, either we deny to ourselves that we ever fall short or we castigate ourselves for each mistake, questioning our capacity or worthiness to practice law. Neither path helps us practice more skillfully and ethically, and both lead to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and chronic stress.

A tricky thing for legal professionals is that our fantastic analytical minds do not help us with the shoulds. We might see that it is patently unreasonable to expect to always perform flawlessly, but the dictates remain. In fact, they often grow stronger from our intellectual grasp of their irrationality. Now we not only beat ourselves up for making a mistake, but we find further fault in our persistent habit of self-castigation—because we “know” we “should not be so hard on ourselves.” Intellectually, we know that perfection is an unfair standard, but in navigating our daily lives, we have a hard time believing that is true. The shoulds do not arise from rational thinking, and rational thinking will not help them go away.

At their core, shoulds are a rejection of our experience, and therefore of ourselves. Rather than problem-solving intellect, what they call for is a bit of grace and some gentle self-acceptance.

When we’re so accustomed to relying on analytical thought, a suggestion like “offer yourself compassion” or “welcome your feelings” can sound trite, insubstantial, or even untrustworthy. But setting aside rational analysis does not mean engaging in irrational analysis. Instead, this is an invitation to pause for a moment and consciously allow—without judgment—the reality of your current experience. That might mean, for example, allowing it to be true that you feel embarrassed and worried about the way you answered someone’s question. You do not need to come to any conclusions, figure anything out, or fix anything. Right now, you are simply allowing your experience to be what it is. You might find that when you stop wrestling with your distress, it dissipates.

Whether we find relief or not, that moment of honesty gives us the freedom to choose a realistic, authentic path forward. We can begin to take responsibility for ourselves in a manner that trying to adhere to a set of unattainable mandates will never allow. Punishing ourselves for every mistake does not stop us from erring. It undermines confidence, makes us afraid of our next step, saps our creativity, and discourages us from clear-eyed efforts to ask for help and to learn.

It is natural and inevitable for every lawyer to fall short of aspirations and to make mistakes. Only when we give ourselves permission to admit that “every lawyer” includes ourselves can we be realistic about where we are and where we are going. Experimenting with self-acceptance can help us maintain our integrity as we move forward, and worlds of possibility open up when we get out of our own way. In the words of author Tara Brach, “The boundary to what we can accept is the boundary to our freedom.”² ●

— **BRIDGET DONEGAN**
JD, MA Candidate-PMHC
Attorney Counselor Associate, OAAP



1. Horney, Karen (1950), *Neurosis and Human Growth: The Struggle Toward Self-Realization*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. (1991 ed.).
2. Brach, Tara (2003), *Radical Acceptance: Embracing Your Life with the Heart of a Buddha*. New York; Toronto, Brantam Dell.

A large hot air balloon with a yellow and orange checkered pattern is floating in a clear blue sky. Below it, a small basket is visible. The background shows a landscape with green trees and a body of water under a clear sky.

**Even in
uncertain
times, we can
help you find
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ABA Well-Being Pledge Campaign

Challenging the Status Quo: A Campaign of Innovation to Improve the Substance Use and Mental Health Landscape in the Legal Community

To better support the vital role that judges and lawyers play in the proper functioning of society, the economy, and government, and to ensure the long-term health and well-being of those in the legal community (including judges, lawyers, staff, and students), our mission is to reduce the incidence of problematic substance use and mental health distress, challenge the stigma surrounding those issues, and improve the overall well-being of the legal community.

The Pledge: Recognizing that high levels of problematic substance use and mental health distress present a significant challenge for the legal community, and acknowledging that more can and should be done to improve the health and well-being of those in the legal community (including judges, lawyers, staff, and students), we, _____, hereby pledge our support for this innovative campaign and will work to adopt and prioritize its seven-point framework for building a better future. ●

Read more at www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/well-being-in-the-legal-profession/well-being-pledge-campaign/.

The Well-Being Pledge for Legal Employers

Stepping Toward Well-Being: A Seven Point Framework to Reduce Substance Use Disorders and Mental Health Distress in the Legal Community



@2022 American Bar Association Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs (CoLAP)



“The best way to get started on well-being initiatives is to set a narrow set of priorities and to accumulate quick ‘small wins’ that can build credibility and momentum.”

8-Step Well-Being Action Plan for Legal Employers

By Anne M. Brafford

Many legal employers have already started well-being initiatives and are looking for more guidance on where to go next. Others are unsure how to begin. Below are strategies and resources for both getting started and developing existing well-being initiatives.

1. Enlist Leaders

No organizational change effort will succeed without leader commitment, support, and role modeling of desired behaviors. Communicating the business case for well-being can help build leader buy-in.

2. Launch a Well-Being Committee

As a first step, recruit a champion or launch a committee to lead your well-being agenda. The committee should include a high-level leader who has the credibility and influence to make things happen. Your organization’s Employee Assistance Program, health insurance carrier, and/or a local Lawyer Assistance Program may be interested in participating and contributing resources.

3. Define Well-Being

It will be important to define well-being as a guide for your agenda. This subject may mean very different things to different people. The multi-dimensional definition of well-being proposed by the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being¹ is an excellent option.

4. Conduct a Needs Assessment

Among the first things a well-being committee should do after defining well-being is to conduct a needs assessment. Any organizational change effort is more likely to succeed if it grows out of an analysis of the gap between the desired and current state. A number of needs assessment templates created for other contexts are available on the Internet and can be adapted for legal employer well-being programs.

The assessment might include stakeholder interviews or surveys to understand the challenges to well-being that dominate in your organization.

The assessment also should include an audit of policies and practices that influence lawyers' well-being. The Policies & Practices Audit section of the ABA Well-Being "Toolkit"² provides recommendations and online resources to guide an audit. The list includes topics that are not routinely encompassed in discussions of well-being, such as on-boarding, diversity, work-life conflict, 24/7-availability expectations, billing practices, performance appraisals, compensation systems, and fairness. Research shows that these often overlooked practices substantially contribute to cultures that can support or harm well-being.

5. Identify Priorities

The best way to get started on well-being initiatives is to set a narrow set of priorities and to accumulate quick "small wins" that can build credibility and momentum. Too many change efforts try to do too much too soon. The result is paralysis and lack of progress. To avoid this fate, selectively choose priorities that are manageable and achievable.

6. Create & Execute an Action Plan

Next, the committee should begin to prepare and execute an action plan. This phase should include a discussion of concrete goals, obstacles to achieving them, and pathways for overcoming obstacles. It also should consider how the well-being program will be sustained over the long-term. Ideas for activities and events to be included in the action plan are discussed in the Toolkit.

7. Create a Well-Being Policy

As part of the action plan, consider creating a formal well-being policy. It will help convey that the organization prioritizes and values lawyers as people and will establish expectations and intentions. Ideally, legal employers would invite broad review and comment on a draft of the policy.

Employers should incorporate impairment provisions into their policies but will also want to convey that the initiative broadly seeks to advance well-being and is not focused solely on detecting and treating mental health and substance use disorders.

8. Continually Measure, Evaluate, & Improve

To develop, improve, and justify your organization's well-being program, it will be important to continually evaluate the success of individual program elements (e.g., attendance/participation) and measure overall progress on well-being indicators (e.g., engagement). The Kirkpatrick model (and related models) is most often used to evaluate development programs. It recommends evaluating multiple factors as indicators of success. Possible measures include:

Mindfulness Group

Beginning **Winter 2026**, the OAAP will be forming a group for lawyers who want to learn how to implement mindfulness-based practices in their lives. The group will be held remotely and facilitated by Attorney Counselors Kyra Hazilla, JD, LCSW, and Kirsten Blume, JD, M. Coun.

If you are interested in this group or for more information, please contact Kirsten Blume at 503.226.1057 ext. 11, kirstenb@oap.org.



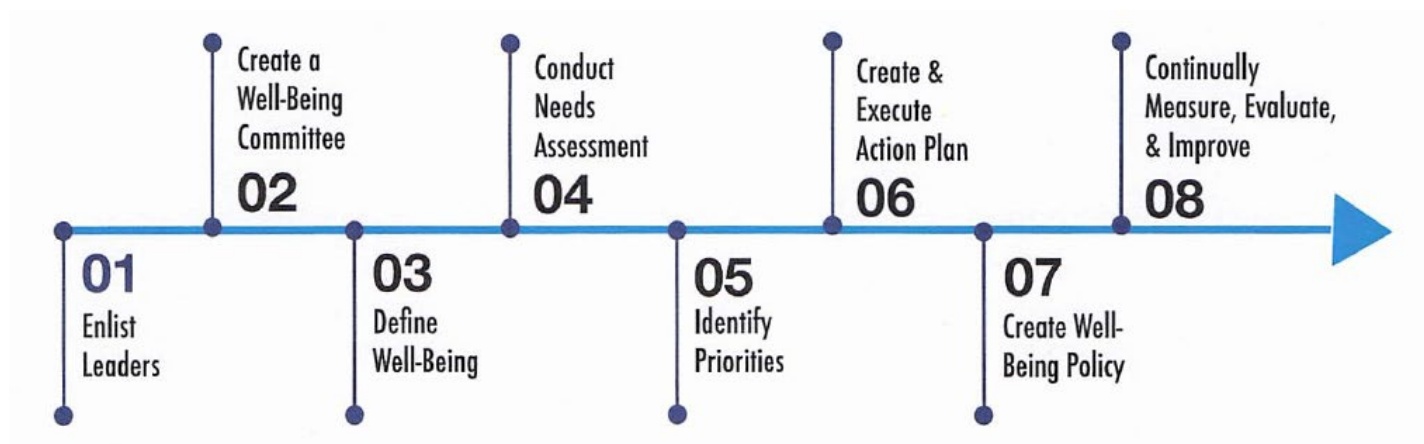
- Satisfaction with and attitudes toward well-being programs;
- Extent of learning new information and skills;
- Behavioral change growing out of the programs;

- Other measures of lawyer well-being and organizational success.

A list of possible measures appears in the Assessments section of the Toolkit.

Source: Excerpted from the Well-Being Toolkit for Lawyers and Legal Employers, created by Anne M. Brafford, August 2018, reprinted with permission. ●

8-Step Well-Being Action Plan



1. “The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practice Recommendations for Positive Change,” report by the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being, available at www.americanbar.org/groups/professional_responsibility/task_force_lawyer_wellbeing/.

2. “Well-Being Toolkit for Lawyers and Legal Employers,” created by Anne M. Brafford for use by the American Bar Association, August 2018, available at www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/lawyer_assistance/ls_colap_well-being_toolkit_for_lawyers_legal_employers.pdf.



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Career Resources from the OAAP

FINDING MEANINGFUL WORK

Beginning in January 2026, the OAAP will hold a 6-session informational and support group for lawyers making or contemplating job or career transitions. The group will assist lawyers in focusing on values and meaning in their professional lives and in honing job search skills. Two groups will be offered this January, one remote and one in person at the OAAP's office in Portland. They will be facilitated by Attorney Counselor Associate Bridget Donegan, JD, MA Candidate-PMHC. To participate or for more information, please contact Bridget at 503.226.4311 ext. 14 or bridgetd@oaap.org.

CAREER SELF-ASSESSMENT

The OAAP attorney counselors can help you assess your career path and career opportunities. If you would like information about self-assessment, contact Senior Attorney Counselor Doug Querin, JD, LPC, CADC I, 503.226.1057 ext. 12, douglasq@oaap.org; Director Kyra Hazilla, JD, LCSW, ext. 13, kyrah@oaap.org; Attorney Counselor Bryan Welch, JD, M. Coun., CADC I, ext. 19, bryanw@oaap.org; Attorney Counselor Kirsten Blume, JD, M. Coun., ext. 11, kirstenb@oaap.org; or Attorney Counselor Associate Bridget Donegan, JD, MA Candidate-PMHC, ext. 14, bridgetd@oaap.org.