oaap Oregon Attorney Assistance Program

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A Well-Being Update: How Is Our Profession Doing?

by Douglas S. Querin

The Oregon Attorney Assistance Program (OAAP) is pleased to announce the results of the largest study to date examining mental health and well-being in the U.S. legal profession. The new study, titled, "When Demands Equal Distress: An Updated Understanding of Lawyer Mental Health and Well-Being"[1] was authored by Patrick R. Krill, JD, LLM, MA, and Justin J. Janker, PhD. This groundbreaking research is the product of an active collaboration between the ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs (CoLAP)[2]—including Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP) Directors from Oregon and other states—and Krill Strategies.[3]

The September 10, 2026, report analyzes survey data collected from a random sample of approximately 37,000 actively licensed lawyers. The survey's broad jurisdictional and demographic representation—including responses from 935 Oregon lawyers—provides a substantial body of data from which meaningful observations can be drawn about longstanding concerns regarding mental health and well-being in the legal profession.

The 2026 study is the second national study of its kind in the past decade. The first national study of lawyer behavioral health, the 2016 ABA-Hazelden Betty Ford Study,[4] surveyed nearly 13,000 lawyers. It documented substantial rates of depression, anxiety, stress, and problem drinking within the legal profession. Those findings contributed to the creation of the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being[5] and its 2017 publication, "The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change."[6] The OAAP was a national leader among LAPs in encouraging and facilitating the adoption of many of the National Task Force's well-being recommendations within Oregon's legal community.

The 2026 study builds on the earlier research while significantly expanding its scope. In addition to examining the behavioral health issues addressed in 2016—including depression, anxiety, stress, and problem drinking—the current study examines additional aspects of the practice of law, including work-related burnout, work-family conflict, and the psychological consequences associated with work demands and different law practice settings.

The December issue of the OSB Bulletin will feature an article by the attorney counselors about the study and its implications for the Oregon legal community. The OAAP will be presenting the data at locations around the state in the coming months, as well as offering groups and workshops targeting the areas implicated by the findings. Keep an eye on oaap.org and your email for upcoming opportunities to learn more.

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OTHER WORKS BY DOUG QUERIN AT OAAP.ORG

***in*Sight**

- Expanding Lawyer Well-Being: Neurodiversity in the Legal Profession (Summer 2026)
- Myth vs Reality: Neurodiversity in the Legal Workplace (Summer 2026)
- The Language of Neurodiversity (Summer 2026)

ENDNOTES

1. Krill, Patrick R., and Justin J. Anker. 2026. "When Demands Equal Distress: An Updated Understanding of Lawyer Mental Health and Well-Being." Journal of Affective Disorders 415 (December): 122479. **https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2026.122479**.
2. American Bar Association. "Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs." Accessed October 21, 2026. **https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/**.
3. Krill Strategies. "Krill Strategies," n.d. **https://www.prkrill.com/**.
4. Krill, Patrick R., Ryan Johnson, and Linda Albert. 2016. "The Prevalence of Substance Use and Other Mental Health Concerns Among American Attorneys." Journal of Addiction Medicine 10 (1): 46–52. **https://doi.org/10.1097/adm.0000000000000182**.
5. American Bar Association. "National Task Force on Lawyer Well Being." Accessed October 21, 2026. **https://www.americanbar.org/groups/professional_responsibility/task_force_lawyer_wellbeing/**.
6. Buchanan, Bree, James Coyle, Anne Brafford, Don Campbell, Josh Camson, Charles Gruber, Terry Harrell, et al. 2017. "National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being: Creating a Movement to Improve Well-Being in the Legal Profession." **https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/professional_responsibility/lawyer_well_being_report_final.pdf**.