

LAWYERS Assistance

By J.E. (Buddy) Stockwell

JLAP'S CONFIDENTIAL SERVICES

More and more people are taking advantage of the Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program, Inc.'s (JLAP) totally confidential mental health services. JLAP has discretely assisted hundreds of bar members (and some of their family members) in matters that have nothing to do with formal JLAP monitoring or disciplinary and bar admissions referrals.

In fact, confidential cases coming to JLAP cover the entire spectrum of mental health issues — from those who simply feel burned out and need to reduce stress in their lives, to cases involving serious mental health issues and threats of suicide. No matter what the wellness or mental health issues are, JLAP's professional clinical staff can provide real help.

Most people who JLAP confidentially assists must overcome: 1) fears about the reliability of confidentiality at JLAP; and 2) fears about stigmas associated with mental health issues.

As to the issue of confidentiality, JLAP's services are 100 percent privileged and confidential as a matter of law. Pursuant to La. R.S. 37:221, no one outside of JLAP will ever know anything about any of these confidential cases unless the person JLAP is assisting decides to reveal it. *JLAP never reports cases to discipline or anyone else.*

Here's some actual feedback from people who reached out to JLAP:

"I have complete confidence that the service JLAP provides is 100 percent confidential. Simply put, JLAP is unquestionably a trustworthy program."

"Today, I am indebted to JLAP for all of those good things that recovery brought to my life, and there are many."



JUDGES AND LAWYERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, INC. (JLAP)

Your call is absolutely confidential as a matter of law.

Toll-free (866)354-9334 • Email: jlap@louisianajlap.com

"JLAP showed exemplary professionalism, kindness, excellence and dedication throughout all of my interaction with the program."

"JLAP saved my life and career. JLAP holds a very special place in my heart."

A person coming proactively to JLAP receives totally confidential assistance from JLAP and they decide if anyone else will ever know that they called JLAP. They also decide to follow or decline JLAP's advice and support.

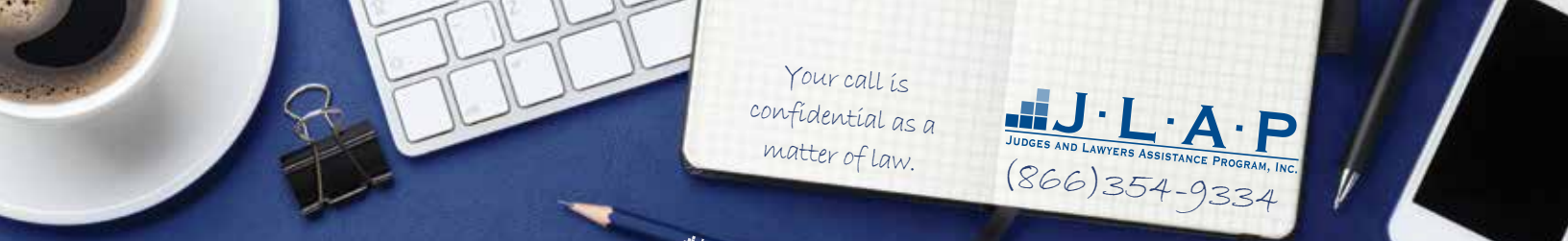
As to the issue of stigmas surrounding mental health, the Mayo Clinic offers the following advice:¹

Get treatment. You may be reluctant to admit you need treatment. Don't let the fear of being labeled with a mental illness prevent you from seeking

help. Treatment can provide relief by identifying what's wrong and reducing symptoms that interfere with your work and personal life.

Don't let stigma create self-doubt and shame. Stigma doesn't just come from others. You may mistakenly believe that your condition is a sign of personal weakness or that you should be able to control it without help. Seeking counseling, educating yourself about your condition and connecting with others who have mental illness can help you gain self-esteem and overcome destructive self-judgment.

Don't isolate yourself. If you have a mental illness, you may be reluctant to tell anyone about it. Your family, friends, clergy or members of your community can offer you support if they know about your mental illness. Reach out to people



JLAP OFFERS REAL WAYS TO COMBAT STIGMA AROUND MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES:

- Licensed Professional Counselors on staff
- Appropriate referrals to individuals experienced in working with professionals
- *Love First* certified clinical interventionist on staff
- Helping individuals demonstrate a good record of recovery through monitoring
- Lawyer-only recovery support groups throughout the state
- MCLE Opportunities offered throughout the year

you trust for the compassion, support and understanding you need.

Don't equate yourself with your illness. You are not an illness. So instead of saying "I'm bipolar," say "I have bipolar disorder." Instead of calling yourself "a schizophrenic," say "I have schizophrenia."

Join a support group. Some local and national groups, such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness, offer local programs and Internet resources that help reduce stigma by educating people who have mental illness, their families and the general public. Some state and federal agencies and programs, such as those that focus on vocational rehabilitation and the Department of Veterans Affairs, offer support for people with mental illness.

Get help at school. If you or your

child has a mental illness that affects learning, find out what plans and programs might help. Discrimination against students because of a mental illness is against the law, and educators at primary, secondary and college levels are required to accommodate students as best they can. Talk to teachers, professors or administrators about the best approach and resources. If a teacher doesn't know about a student's disability, it can lead to discrimination, barriers to learning and poor grades.

Speak out against stigma. Consider expressing your opinions at events, in letters to the editor or on the Internet. It can help instill courage in others facing similar challenges and educate the public about mental illness.

At JLAP, we understand and acknowledge that fears about confidentiality and mental health stigmas are

difficult barriers that can trap someone in a secret state of mental health suffering. All JLAP can do is encourage folks to break through the barriers and trust JLAP. If you or someone you know needs JLAP's help, reach out to JLAP! Call the helpline at (866)354-9334, email JLAP@louisianajlap.com, or visit the website at: www.louisianajlap.com.

FOOTNOTE

1. www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/mental-illness/in-depth/mental-health/art-20046477.

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