

TENNESSEE **LAWYERS ASSISTANCE** PROGRAM

TLAP

*July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025
Annual Report*

**Protect.
Assist.
Educate.**



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Contents



04	Message from the Commission Chair
06	Message from the Executive Director
08	Message from the Clinical Director
10	New Client Statistics
16	Travel and Presentation History
20	TLAP Board of Commissioners and Staff
22	2024-2025 Fiscal Year Highlights
32	Conclusion
33	References

Message from the Commission Chair

Commissioners: as I write this message, I am pushed to reflect on the last several years of the emergence of the Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program under the authority of the Tennessee Supreme Court and its liaison, Chief Justice Jeff Bivins. I recall with great frustration the struggling program in 2019 through the start of 2020. As many of you will recall, we went through several “Directors” with a sense of floundering to the point where our credibility and usefulness was questioned. Quite frankly, and with great deference to Chief Justice Bivins, whose support can never be diminished, but for the one constant, Emily Lacey, our program would have lost all its great tradition and history. With everyone “leaving,” Emily provided the historical thread that kept the program alive. Therefore, I want to thank Emily, and I hope each of you will take the time to thank her personally. I have never seen anyone who was able to be more flexible to change, many times drastic, and yet remain loyal to the mission and provide a sense of stability. Thank you, Emily.

In late 2019 and early 2020 with extensive efforts, interviews, investigations and prayer, a Cajun named Buddy Stockwell was found directing the Louisiana Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program and was asked to consider a move to Tennessee to take over the helm of our Tennessee program. Despite some malicious rumors of being requested to leave by the powers that be in Louisiana, I can assure you that Buddy and his wife agreed to move to Tennessee, with great sacrifice to their “water loving lifestyle.” Buddy accepted the new position in Tennessee and on July 1, 2020, he was appointed by the Tennessee Supreme Court as the new Executive Director of the Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program.

My comment about his hiring through the Administrative Office of Courts was: “We are delighted to bring Buddy onboard at such an important moment for the TLAP program and are confident he will bring a fresh perspective and new energy to help the program develop and evolve.” Even after extensive interviews and consideration of Buddy for the position, little did I realize the expertise, motivation, wisdom and vision of Buddy Stockwell.

As each of you are aware, Buddy has announced his retirement and seeks to return to the salt water that apparently flows through his veins. He and his wonderful wife are returning to the Pelican State, craving the creole culture, gumbo, bayous and the waves that lead to more adventures for them both. We fully support his endeavors and stand in awe of his achievements, here in Tennessee and around the country.

Buddy came to us just after the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, declared Covid-19 as a world-wide pandemic. His job was therefore cut out for him. Yet it was that same year that the Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program Foundation was given tax exempt status by the IRS thanks to significant efforts by TLAP Advisory Members Chris Hall and Mark Vorder-Bruegge. I must also remember the appointment of Andy Branham as the first Director of the TLAP Foundation and in his memory, I recall a discussion with Chief Justice Bivins where we both considered an appointment and said: “We must have someone with excellent character, recognized as the consummate professional and with the wisdom to direct the program.” We both thought of and recruited Andy Branham who dedicated his life to helping others and his kindness was pervasive. After Andy passed away, that void could only be filled by our very own Jacqueline Dixon and to her we owe a great sense of gratitude.

There is no way I can possibly recite all the accomplishments of our Executive Director Buddy Stockwell as he moves toward retirement. I can tell you that he has continually kept me, as TLAP Chair, in the loop on each and every move he has made; he has continually sent me monthly reports on the status of the TLAP Commission, as well as an overview of each of the TLAP employees. We have had continual and extensive discussions about the direction of TLAP. With his retirement on the horizon of the waters of the Gulf of “America”, Buddy has initiated a comprehensive infrastructure program to develop procedures, plans and formats that will support TLAP’s stable operations going forward under the direction of a new Executive Director. He has initiated and will complete a clinical protocol and monitoring manual “to document and codify institutional knowledge with a mission to ensure TLAP’s monitoring and programming remains at gold standard clinical levels under the new director.”

I do want to note his last monthly report to me when he stated that Lauren Castor, Erin Lynch, Emily Lacey and Sarah Burden are all doing a great job, all of whom, except Emily, were hired at the recommendation of Buddy. Lauren has become fully licensed as an LPC MHSP and Erin, an LPC Associate, is on the path to complete supervision and become fully licensed LPC in the summer of 2026. Our staff at TLAP is exceptional and I am so proud of the accomplishments and loyalty of our clinicians Lauren and Erin as well as the continued work of Emily and Sarah. Please take the time to thank each of them for their valuable contributions to the program.

I want to personally thank Buddy for his friendship and the camaraderie that we have shared during his tenure as Executive Director. As our Executive Director he has transformed our program from a sinking ship to the grandest vessel. Today, the Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program is known nationally as a gold standard top-tier program, and its stability is without question. More than that, however, I have found Buddy to be kind, compassionate, and a visionary. His absence will create a void that will require significant consideration as a new Executive Director is hired. As a human being, Buddy is a disciplined, loyal, dedicated, professional and he understands that the smallest movement in life is either at the hand of God or by his acquiescence. I am proud to have served as Chair of the TLAP Commission alongside Buddy Stockwell and I wish him the very best in his retirement.

As I close this message, I want to also give memory to my predecessor TLAP Chair, John Everett Williams, a man words cannot capture. Thankfully I have been humbled sufficient times in the past to know that I could never replace John Everett and yet, I think of him often and what he meant to the Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program. I hope you all think of him as well.

God bless you all and I look forward to seeing you in late February.

Judge Michael Spitzer
Commission Chairman,
Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program



Message from the Executive Director

It is with great gratitude and determined dedication that TLAP continues to establish its program as one of the top-tier monitoring providers in the nation. In the last several years, TLAP has implemented clinical best practices for licensed professionals, developed by leading, national medical authorities, such as the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) and the Federation of State Physicians Health Programs (FSPHP).

Also, on national level, TLAP has been instrumental in supporting the new ABA Model Rule on Conditional Admission crafted by the ABA Commission on Lawyers Assistance Programs (ABA CoLAP) and unanimously adopted by the ABA in 2025.

TLAP's no-relapse recovery rates objectively confirm that TLAP's "Gold Standard" clinical programming supports reliable recovery and produces objective, clear and convincing evidence of fitness to practice. The amazing recovery rates at TLAP are indicative of a system that virtually defeats the disease of addiction.

Despite these remarkable recovery successes at TLAP, and overwhelming support from the Tennessee Supreme Court and the profession, two bar applicants took issue with TLAP's clinical programming and lodged complaints with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), resulting in allegations of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) violations. The Tennessee Attorney General, however, demonstrated that these allegations were misguided and baseless. The DOJ ultimately closed its investigation and TLAP was fully vindicated.

A newsletter with additional information on the New Model Rule on Conditional Admission and the DOJ matter is available on TLAP's website.¹

In other news, we are very excited about other TLAP milestones and professional accomplishments in 2025. TLAP's clinical team continues to excel. Our Clinical Director, Lauren Castor, has completed supervision and is now fully licensed as a Licensed Professional Counselor with a Mental Health Service Provider designation (LPC/MHSP). Clinical Case Manager, Erin Lynch, an Associate LPC/MHSP, is finishing her supervision hours and will soon be fully licensed.

With two professional counselors on staff, TLAP is empowered to provide truly comprehensive mental health support to the profession. This is critically important because less than half of TLAP's case load involves alcohol and drug issues. Increasingly, other mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, are significantly impacting the legal profession.

TLAP continues to maintain working relationships with national leaders in the ABA CoLAP, FSPHP, and other state monitoring programs to keep abreast of new developments in diagnosing, treating, and monitoring licensed professionals.

None of these accomplishments would be possible without the support of the Tennessee Supreme Court, TLAP Commission and Advisory Committee, TLAP volunteer peer monitors, and lawyers in recovery. TLAP is very grateful for the opportunity to help save lives and careers and help protect the public from harm that can result from impaired professionals.

Finally, I have announced my retirement, and this is my final Annual Report contribution. I look forward to new adventures on the high seas and otherwise with my wonderful wife. At this point, I have now been in Recovery from alcoholism and addiction since 1982, involved as a LAP volunteer and peer monitor since 1993, and LAP Executive Director (Louisiana and Tennessee) since 2010. For over three decades, I have been professionally active on the battlefield and frontlines within LAPs that wage effective war against the cruel and complex diseases of addiction. It takes courage and “tough love” to set boundaries and support programming that renders reliable and durable recovery outcomes for licensed professionals.

To that end, I cannot overstate the leadership and courage of the Tennessee Supreme Court, the TLAP Commission and TLAP Advisory Members, and TLAP Peer Monitors for their unified support and endorsement of today’s TLAP as a fully formed stable top-tier LAP. It has also been my honor and privilege to work with TLAP’s current staff, and I will greatly miss them. Lauren, Erin, Emily, and Sarah are an outstanding team that we can all be very proud of. It has been my humble honor to serve the legal profession and be a part of LAP organizations that have literally saved hundreds of lives and careers.

Buddy Stockwell

Executive Director,
Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program



Message from the Clinical Director

The clinical team has been busy here at TLAP! As you will see reflected in our statistics, we are providing a full spectrum of mental health services to folks with a wide variety of mental health concerns. With regards to the folks who are calling with no reported substance use concerns, we are beginning to see an increase in higher acuity mental health concerns including various personality stylings, bipolar and schizophrenia spectrum disorders. While diagnoses like these can sound scary, they can be very effectively treated with the correct combination of therapy and medications. In our substance use concern population, we have been seeing an increase in reports of polysubstance use concerns, meaning that individuals are using multiple substances concurrently, especially with the use of stimulants like cocaine. Erin and I have been working diligently with our third-party, TLAP-approved providers to ensure that all our clients are being cared for at levels we would expect for safety sensitive workers. Because of our relentless pursuit to hold our clients to the highest standards, TLAP participants have enjoyed a no-relapse rate of 92% this fiscal year.

We have also seen many requests for presentations from TLAP this year. The legal community has received the TLAP Clinical Team's presentation on The Art of Self-Care astoundingly well, with groups outside of Tennessee also requesting this presentation at their conferences. I accepted an invitation to speak about the New Model Rule at the National Conference of Bar Examiner's Annual Bar Admissions Conference this year and was so honored to provide education about the new model rule, as well as to listen and better understand the struggles that the Board of Law Examiners are up against. The TLAP Clinical staff also partnered with the TN Bar Association's Attorney Wellbeing Committee to deliver a Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention training this year on World Suicide Prevention Day. We have continued our passion for educating the bench and bar and look forward to new presentation opportunities in the future.

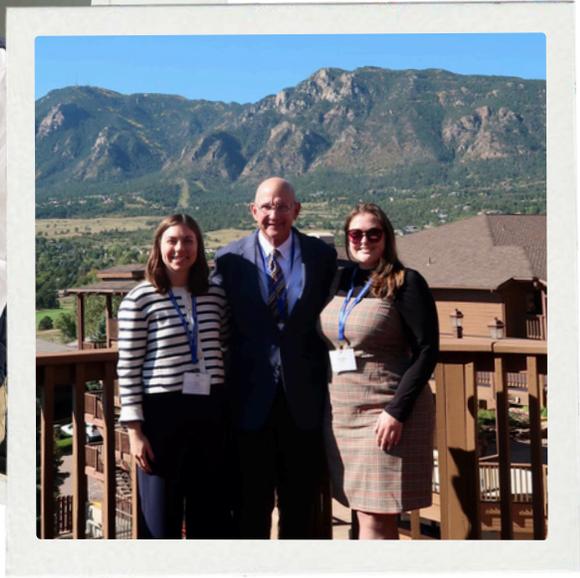
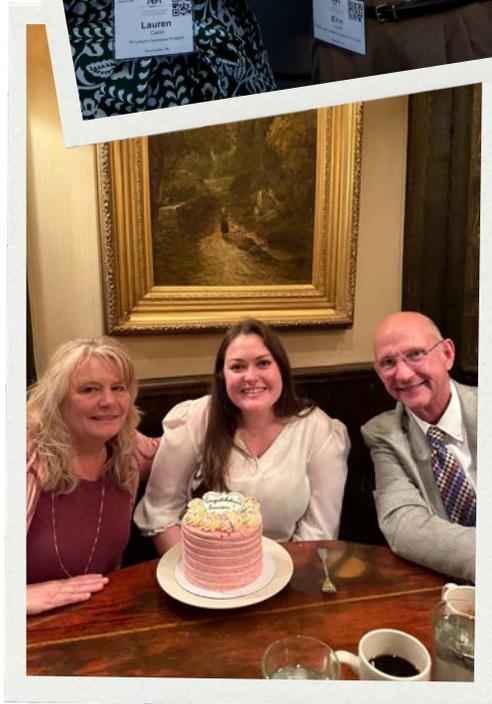
I am also very happy to announce that this year, I moved from a temporary LPC-MHSP license to full licensure upon passing the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Exam (NCMHCE) and the Tennessee Jurisprudence Exam, which evaluates understanding of Tennessee's counseling laws and the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics and completion of my supervised clinical hours. This was a years' long process that was made possible by the unwavering support of Buddy and the entire TLAP staff. The importance of having competent, well-rounded counselors on staff here cannot be overstated. The clinical department is constantly working toward making sure that we have access to the best internal and external mental health support for our clients through attendance at national conferences, professional development workshops, and vetting third-party providers.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not thank the TN Supreme Court, Commissioners, Advisory, and volunteers who have given their time and talents to helping our clients over the last year. You all are truly important to us as a team, our clients, and our mission of saving lives, protecting the public, and providing education to the bench and bar.



Lauren Castor, LPC/MHSP, MS

Clinical Director,
Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program

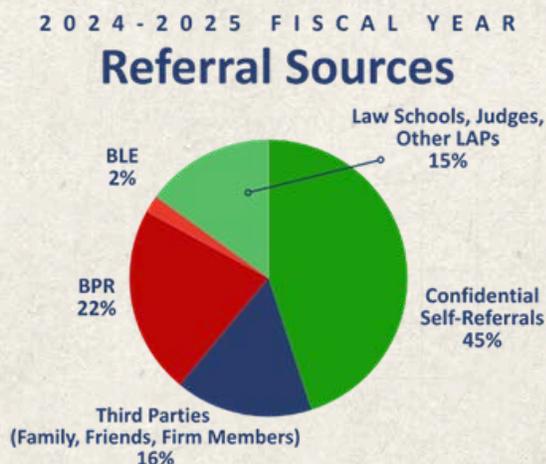


2024 - 2025 Fiscal Year New Client Statistics Overview

Since 1999, TLAP has served and supported more than 3,700 clients. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025, TLAP opened 94 new client files and reopened 46 client files, for a total of 140 cases—in addition to its ongoing client cases and monitoring files. This section provides an overview of new client cases opened during the reporting year and the data highlights key characteristics of individuals served. Together, these insights help illustrate emerging service trends and the scope of needs among new clients.

Referral Sources

In FY 2024-2025, forty-five percent (45%) of TLAP's new cases were confidential self-referrals, sixteen percent (16%) were from concerned third parties (such as friends, family, or firm members), two percent (2%) were from the Board of Law Examiners, twenty-two percent (22%) were from the Board of Professional Responsibility and fifteen percent (15%) were from Law School Deans, Judges, Board of Judicial Conduct, and other LAPs.

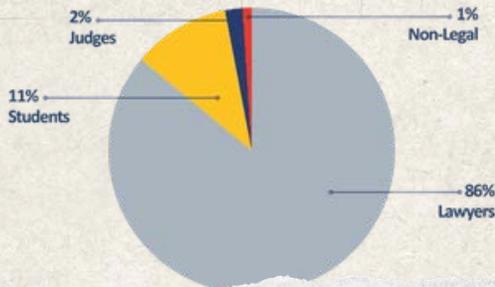


2024 - 2025 Fiscal Year New Client Statistics

Category Assisted

2024 - 2025 FISCAL YEAR

Referrals



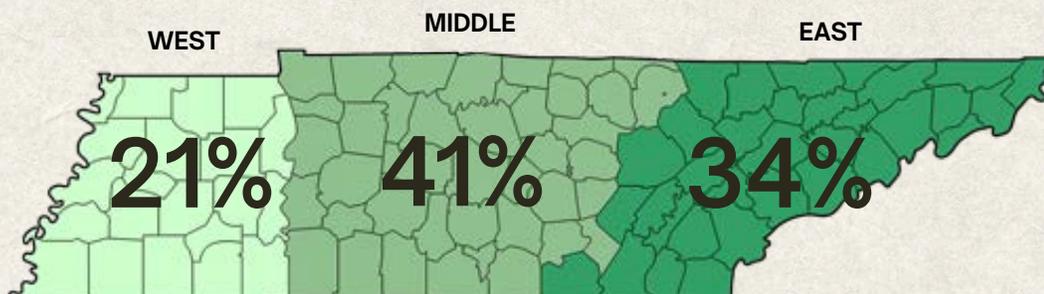
In FY 2024-2025, eighty-six percent (86%) of TLAP cases involved lawyers, eleven percent (11%) involved law students or bar applicants, and two percent (2%) involved members of the judiciary. One percent (1%) of referrals did not concern a member of the legal profession.

Presenting Clinical Issue

In FY 2024-2025, forty-four percent (44%) of intake calls pertained to substance use disorders, and thirty-nine percent (39%) pertained to mental health issues that did not involve alcohol or drug issues, such as depression and anxiety. The other seventeen percent (17%) of intake calls presented with issues such as marital conflict, financial distress, decreased productivity, testing accommodations, cognitive impairment, stress, eating disorders, domestic abuse, and compulsive behaviors. These statistics reflect TLAP's success as a full-spectrum service provider.

Geographic Regions

In FY 2024-2025, forty-one percent (41%) of new referrals were from Middle Tennessee, thirty-four percent (34%) from East Tennessee, twenty-one percent (21%) from West Tennessee, and four percent (4%) were from out-of-state.



2024 - 2025 Fiscal Year New Client Statistics

Gender

In FY 2024-2025, sixty-two percent (62%) of TLAP referrals were male, and thirty-eight percent (38%) were female.

TLAP Recommendations

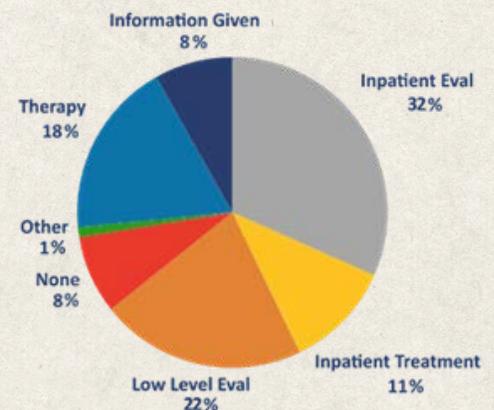
When a person seeks TLAP's help or is referred to TLAP, the first step is to determine the appropriate level of independent evaluation or assessment that is needed to objectively and reliably rule out or diagnose mental health and/or substance use issues.

Via clinical intake, TLAP's professional clinical staff determines if there appears to be an issue at all, and if so, TLAP recommends the clinically indicated level of TLAP-facilitated independent evaluation or assessment needed to move forward in TLAP within clinical best practices to support licensed professionals.

The client is provided choices of several TLAP-approved providers for completing diagnostics, and also several choices of TLAP-approved treatment facilities if treatment is indicated. This all generates a high level of objective reliability in establishing recovery and fitness to practice that can be supported and monitored by TLAP. The following chart indicates TLAP's clinical referrals and responses for new cases in FY 2024 - 2025:

2024 - 2025 FISCAL YEAR

Recommendations



2024 - 2025 Fiscal Year New Client Statistics

Low-Level Evaluations

There was a total of twenty-one (21) participants initially referred for low-level evaluations with outcomes as follows:

- Not scheduled - 43%
- No recommendations - 29%
- TLAP Monitoring – 9%
- Psychiatric Stabilization – 5%
- Residential Treatment – 9%
- Retirement – 5%

Multidisciplinary Inpatient Professional Assessments

Thirty-one (31) participants were directly referred to an inpatient assessment by TLAP clinical staff. The following demonstrates the outcomes of those referrals:

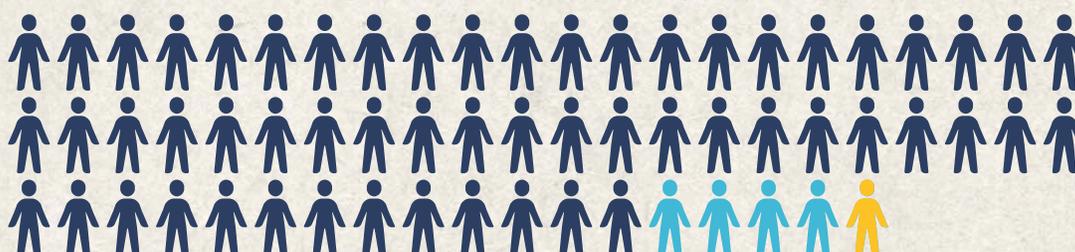
- Completed the inpatient assessment – 37%
- Declined to participate in the inpatient assessment – 63%

Of the 12 participants that attended the evaluation; 9 were referred to inpatient treatment and 3 were referred directly to TLAP monitoring. Of the 9 participants referred to inpatient treatment, 4 have completed treatment.

2024 - 2025 Fiscal Year New Client Statistics

2024 - 2025 FISCAL YEAR

Relapse & Recovery Rates



Of the 62 individuals being supported by TLAP monitoring, only 5 relapsed. As such, TLAP's programming generated a **no-relapse rate of 92%**. 4 of the 5 who relapsed immediately addressed the issues via TLAP's support and they remained successfully under monitoring with no further relapses. Thus, TLAP's programming generated a **recovery retention rate of 98%**.

Conversion Rates

The internal status of cases at TLAP can and does change depending on what circumstances and events are concurrently developing externally and independently from TLAP participation. A voluntary participant may reach out confidentially to TLAP and receive TLAP's support in total privacy and establish TLAP compliance and fitness to practice. But, at some certain moment and wholly unrelated to confidential TLAP participation, some third party may unilaterally enter the picture and place independent, external demands upon the TLAP participant.

Outside pressure may come to bear after confidential TLAP participation is already underway. One of the lawyer's past or current clients may file a complaint with the BPR. A bar applicant might be referred to TLAP by the BLE. Or perhaps some other third-party demand may arise in the form of an employer discovering a malpractice problem that emanated from the prior impairment of an associate/employee and that predated employee's involvement in confidential assessment, treatment, and recovery monitoring in TLAP.

2024 - 2025 Fiscal Year New Client Statistics

Conversion Rates (cont.)

The following are conversions in TLAP case classification in FY 2024-2025:

- Voluntary to BLE: 1
- Voluntary to BPR: 12
- Voluntary to Law School: 2
- BLE to BPR: 1
- Judge to BPR: 2
- BOJC to BPR: 1
- BLE to Law Firm: 1

When such issues arise, the totally confidential TLAP participant may decide it is in his or her best interest to waive confidentiality so that TLAP can advocate for them and report their compliance to the interested third party. This constitutes a conversion of the case from totally confidential to the participant instructing TLAP to report monitoring compliance to a third party.

Conversely, in the fullness of time, cases can also convert from reporting to confidential. An individual may have completed TLAP monitoring in the past with reporting or regulatory authorities involved, and then relapse or develop new issues months or years later. They can and do come back to TLAP for help again in some cases. At that point, it is a new, totally confidential effort despite the prior history of reporting.

Client Feedback on TLAP Services

TLAP developed and launched several surveys this fiscal year to better understand client experiences and evaluate the effectiveness of TLAP's services. In a survey of TLAP monitoring participants, 100% of respondents indicated that they found TLAP staff helpful and that staff communicated appropriately, explaining things in a way clients could understand.

Overall, clients shared that their experiences with TLAP were highly supportive, noting meaningful growth in professional boundaries, strong advocacy during BPR hearings, and deep appreciation for the value of TLAP's services.

2024-2025 Fiscal Year TLAP Presentations

Since its founding, TLAP has been a cornerstone in providing educational services to thousands of law students, attorneys, and judges across the state of Tennessee. TLAP has also been instrumental in providing consulting services to local and national partners to support the mission of lawyer mental health, recovery, and well-being. This fiscal year, TLAP staff have participated in over 20 committee meetings and have presented at over 20 events.



2024-2025 Fiscal Year TLAP Presentations



July '24 Events

- CoLAP Planning Committee
- Attorney Well Being Meeting



August '24 Events

- CoLAP Planning Committee
- Attorney Well Being Meeting
- Cumberland Heights Annual Fundraiser



September '24 Events

- CoLAP Annual Conference in Colorado
- TBA YLD Rookie's Guide to TLAP CLE
- Self-Care & Wellness Event in Nashville
- Attorney Well Being Meeting
- Law Student Presentation at NSL
- Buck Lewis Leadership Class in Knoxville



October '24 Events

- Attorney Well Being Meeting
- CoLAP Commission Meeting



November '24 Events

- Attorney Well Being Meeting
- CoLAP Commission Meeting
- BPR Annual Ethics Workshop at Belmont
- John Dice Annual Wellness Seminar in Memphis



December '24 Events

- TBA Raising the Bar CLE
- CoLAP Commission Meeting
- TBA Bar Buzz Podcast



January '25 Events

- Attorney Well Being Meeting
- CoLAP Commission Meeting



February '25 Events

- Attorney Well Being Meeting
- CoLAP Commission Meeting



March '25 Events

- Attorney Well Being Meeting
- TACDL Annual Seminar in Memphis

2024-2025 Fiscal Year TLAP Presentations



April '25 Events

- Camp TLAP
- Attorney Well Being Meeting
- LAP Directors Workshop in Chicago
- Cumberland Heights Annual Reaching New Heights Luncheon
- FSPHP Annual Conference in Seattle
- TN Healthcare Liability Seminar in Nashville



May '25 Events

- NCBE Annual Bar Admissions Conference in Seattle
- Rhode Island Bar Association CLE
- CoLAP Commission Meeting
- DRI for Life Presentation
- Attorney Well Being Meeting
- BPR New Member Training in Nashville



June '25 Events

- TBA Annual Conference in Franklin
- TLPCA Annual Counseling & Therapy Summit
- CoLAP Commission Meeting

Popular Presentations

Rule 8.3 Duty to Report Unethical Conduct and TLAP Interventions

This presentation explains how TLAP confidentiality and compliance can be an alternative under the Rules to reporting a peer to discipline when impairment is the central issue, explains what TLAP Interventions can provide, and debunks Myths of Addiction.

The Art of Self-Care

This presentation focuses on wellness and mindfulness, mental health challenges lawyers experience while offering real solutions on strategies to lower the risk of developing mental health issues.

QPR: Question, Persuade, Refer

This presentation introduces QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer), a practical, evidence-based intervention to suicide prevention. Participants will learn how to recognize warning signs, identify common risk factors, and respond effectively to someone in crisis by questioning, persuading, and referring them to appropriate help.

2024-2025 Fiscal Year TLAP Presentations

Presentation Feedback

From 47 survey respondents who attended TLAP presentations, 91% reported that they are either “likely” or “very likely” to recommend TLAP workshops to another legal professional. TLAP also received open-ended feedback from attendees that highlighted the quality and impact of its presentations:

“I’ve had a LOT of “compassion fatigue” training...this was the BEST that I’ve ever had. It was ALL excellent!”

“Very resourceful information and information that will absolutely be shared for anyone I encounter who could use the services.”

“Your kind insistence on self-care [has been the most valuable]. I hope that some of my colleagues who really need to hear this are listening. Thank you.”

TLAP is grateful to all survey respondents for their feedback, as it helps continuously refine and improve content, ensuring each session is as engaging, practical, and impactful as possible for the legal community.

TLAP Commission



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TLAP Staff

Under the leadership of our Executive Director, Buddy Stockwell, our highly-trained staff competently serves the Tennessee legal community with specialized clinical services. Learn more about our staff at tlap.org/staff/



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Lauren Castor, LPC/MHSP, MS
CLINICAL DIRECTOR



Erin Lynch, A-LPC/MHSP, MEd, MA
CLINICAL CASE MANAGER



Emily Lacey, CRS
OUTREACH & CLINICAL COORDINATOR



Sarah Burden
OFFICE & MARKETING COORDINATOR

2024-2025 Fiscal Year Highlights



- I.** New ABA Model Rule
- II.** DOJ Closes Investigation
- III.** ABA CoLAP
- IV.** FSPHP
- V.** NCBE
- VI.** Camp TLAP 2025
- VII.** “The Buddy System” TBA Journal Articles
- VIII.** TLAP Foundation
- IX.** Social Media

New ABA Model Rule on Conditional Admission Confirms Best Practices by TLAP

At its February 2025 Mid-Year Meeting, the ABA Board of Governors unanimously adopted Resolution 608, creating a brand-new ABA Model Rule on Conditional Admission.² This new Model Rule supplants the prior Rule from 2008, and it also represents 17 years of medical advances in diagnostics, treatment, and monitoring to support fitness to practice law.

This ABA project spanned three years and was spearheaded by the ABA CoLAP's Law School Committee with Tennessee Judge Robert L. "Butch" Childers (ret.) serving as a member and former Chair of the organization.

To ensure accurate and uniform support, Resolution 608 was distributed to ABA Sections, Divisions, and Forums, as well as their staff counsel/directors. It was also distributed to all ABA Committees, Commissions, and Task Forces, and their staff directors/counsel.

Prior to enactment, Resolution 608 was reviewed by the following ABA entities:

ABA Commission on Disability Rights
ABA Commission on Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts
ABA Standing Committee on Ethics and Professional Regulation
ABA Standing Committee on Lawyer Referral & Information Service
ABA Standing Committee on Lawyer's Professional Liability
ABA Standing Committee on Professional Regulation
ABA Standing Committee on Professionalism
ABA Standing Committee on Public Protection; Law Practice Division
ABA Section of Civil Rights and Social Justice
ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar
ABA Law Student Division
ABA Young Lawyers Division

Supporters and co-sponsors of Resolution 608 included the Disability Rights Commission, the Section of Legal Education and Admissions, the Standing Committee on Professional Regulation, the Section on Civil Rights and Social Justice, the New York City Bar, and the Young Lawyers Division.

The result is a cutting-edge Model Rule that is fully compliant with the ADA in that it focuses on identifying and addressing problematic conduct and behavior that may require conditional admission or denial, as opposed to disability or diagnoses.

Tennessee and many other jurisdictions already complied with the ADA long ago by eliminating all mental health questions during the bar application process. In fact, Resolution 608 specifically credits the leadership of Tennessee and Tennessee Supreme Court Justice Janice Holder (ret.) with foreshadowing the level of ADA protection now confirmed by the new Model Rule:

"In 2011, Justice Janice Holder, a former member of CoLAP, authored a law review article discussing her concerns with the rule including its possible infringement on the ADA. The purpose of the ADA is to prevent discrimination in employment and other endeavors based on a disability. Justice Holder surveyed the approaches in various states. Her findings led her to advocate for the Conditional Admission Rule adopted in Tennessee. In Tennessee, they successfully created a system of discipline that focused on "previous conduct or behavior" of the applicant and provided "the conditions shall be tailored to detect and deter conduct, conditions or behavior." ²

New ABA Model Rule, continued...

Law students and bar applicants have benefited from Tennessee’s long-standing ADA-compliant system that does not impinge whatsoever upon their totally confidential space to seek immediate intervention for a current mental health situation or discretely maintain care for a managed mental health issue. Early intervention and effective mental health care are key to fostering a healthier legal profession. The vast majority of TLAP’s cases are totally confidential pursuant to T.C.A. 23-4-105 and Supreme Court Rule 33.

However, when a history of conduct (arrests, discipline, lack of candor, etc.) calls into question a bar applicant’s mental health fitness to practice law, the TBLE may, at its sole discretion, officially refer the applicant to TLAP (the Court’s designated monitoring authority) for an independent evaluation.

If TLAP accepts the BLE’s referral, and if the person cooperates with TLAP, the mission shifts from the legal framework of the BLE to the clinical and medical framework of TLAP and its facilitation of specialized clinical support for licensed professionals.

On a case-by-case basis, TLAP facilitates reliable clinical steps to either rule out, or identify and address, any current clinical situation impacting fitness to practice.

When active alcoholism or drug addiction is involved, the question then becomes what level of diagnostics, treatment, and monitoring must be applied to both protect the public and objectively support and confirm long-term recovery by the conditionally admitted lawyer.

Fortunately, the new Model Rule specifically recognizes modern clinical guidelines developed for licensed professionals, including lawyers, by the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM):

“Terms of the Conditional Admission Agreement should be based upon best practices for supporting the fitness of the attorney to practice law. A resource for Admissions Authorities relating to such best practices is the American Society of Addiction Medicine Treatment Criteria for Addictive, Substance-Related and Co-occurring Conditions, Fourth Edition (‘ASAM Criteria’).”²

The Report supporting the new Rule opines further about ASAM’s clinical guidelines:

“The American Society of Addiction Medicine’s Treatment Criteria for Addictive, Substance-Related and Co-Occurring Conditions, Fourth Edition (ASAM Criteria) was published (December 2023) . . . [many] issues are resolved in Chapter 23 of that publication through acknowledging the medical framework for best practices in the monitoring and treatment for legal professionals including lawyers and judges.”²

The ABA’s specific endorsement of ASAM’s Chapter 23 confirms the complex clinical framework of best medical practices applicable to lawyers and other licensed professionals medically deemed “safety sensitive workers.” The ASAM Criteria can help uninformed members of the bar, legal scholars, and legal pundits acquire an accurate medical understanding of the best practices provided by TLAP’s programming and monitoring. TLAP’s article on ASAM’s clinical recommendations for lawyers can be accessed on the TLAP website.³

There is no “cookie cutter” or “one-size-fits-all” clinical response at TLAP. One bar applicant may have active, multiple, severe substance-use disorders and need immediate detoxification and residential treatment at a facility skilled in supporting licensed professionals, followed by TLAP monitoring. Another bar applicant, despite a serious history of conduct, may not meet any diagnostic criteria such that TLAP makes no clinical recommendations. TLAP’s response is always based upon individualized and narrowly tailored recommendations to medically address each person’s precise clinical situation.

Of course, the cost of TLAP compliance and adhering to the ASAM Criteria level of care can be expensive. Diagnostic outcomes and appropriately treating the severity of clinical issues drive the treatment response in any given case. Insurance often helps to cover treatment costs. In cases where the bar applicant is under financial hardship to afford treatment, the TLAP Foundation (a stand-alone 501 (c)(3) that is independent of TLAP) can offer low interest loans.

By every measure, TLAP is a full-service “gold standard” monitoring program and already fully attuned to the new ABA Model Rule. In the last four years while utilizing ASAM best practices, TLAP’s monitoring program generated no-relapse rates of 85%, 88%, 89%, and 92%. As such, “TLAP compliance” objectively establishes clear and convincing evidence of fitness to practice at levels that protect the public and support conditional admission. If you would like more information about TLAP’s statistics and operations, please visit www.tlap.org to see TLAP’s past Annual Reports. Also, please visit TLAP’s “FAQ” page to view extensive information about TLAP’s clinical programming.

Before TLAP was created in 1999, a history of past conduct entangled with substance use disorders or other mental health issues could preclude any hope of obtaining a law license. Citing previous Court opinions, the Court in *Board of Professional Responsibility of the Supreme Court of Tennessee v. Barry* (2018) emphasized that Tennessee jurisprudence states that a “license to practice law in this state is not a right, but a privilege.”⁴ The Court continued that it must “protect the public from the misconduct or unfitness of members of the legal profession and preserve the confidence of the public in the integrity and trustworthiness of lawyers in general.”⁴ It would disserve the public and the legal profession—and applicants themselves—to provide law licenses in disregard of potentially disqualifying conduct on the ground that obtaining help for a related substance-use disorder may be too “burdensome.”

Against the backdrop of all the above, it is important to maintain sharp focus. State Supreme Courts are not required to offer Conditional Admission at all. TLAP monitoring to support fitness to practice provides an opportunity supplied by the Tennessee Supreme Court to those who have histories of conduct and could otherwise be simply denied admission to the practice of law.

Under the leadership and informed directives of the Tennessee Supreme Court and the TLAP Commission, and in full alignment with the new ABA Model Rule on Conditional Admission, TLAP remains committed to excellence, integrity, and objective reliability. TLAP provides the very best clinical support to bar applicants who are referred due to past or current conduct, have a current clinical situation, and seek conditional admission with TLAP’s monitoring support.



AMERICAN **BAR** ASSOCIATION

DOJ Closes its Baseless Investigation of TLAP and TBLE

Over the course of two years, the DOJ investigated allegations by two bar applicants that TBLE and TLAP violated the ADA. These allegations were eventually determined to be wholly baseless and the TBLE and TLAP were totally vindicated. The following summary provides accurate information:

December 17, 2024: the DOJ published a “Letter of Findings” with allegations that the TBLE and TLAP violated the ADA by discriminating against two bar applicants “due to a substance use disorder or mental health disorder.”

January 16, 2025: the Tennessee Supreme Court issued the following Press Release in response to the DOJ’s Letter of Findings and can be accessed directly on its website:

Nashville, Tenn- Today the Tennessee Supreme Court addressed public findings from the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) claiming that the Tennessee Board of Law Examiners (TBLE) and the Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program (TLAP), which operate under the authority of the Tennessee Supreme Court, violated the ADA by discriminating against two bar applicants “due to a substance use disorder or mental health disorder.” “The Court strongly disagrees with DOJ’s assertion that either TBLE or TLAP discriminated against the applicants based on health status or disability. Both TBLE and TLAP follow well-established administrative processes that are designed to avoid discrimination against any applicant. The Court, TBLE, and TLAP have been and remain committed to treating persons with disabilities, including bar applicants with disabilities, with dignity and respect, and in compliance with all legal rights afforded to such applicants.”⁵

The Attorney General for the State of Tennessee subsequently responded directly to the DOJ’s Letter of Findings, providing complete and accurate information about the two cases at issue.

August 26, 2025: The Tennessee Attorney General issued a press release stating that, following Tennessee’s comprehensive response to the DOJ demonstrating its longstanding commitment to ADA compliance, on August 22, 2025, the DOJ formally closed the matter via a letter generated by the head of the DOJ Civil Rights Division.

The Tennessee Attorney General’s statement can be read in full, announcing that TLAP has been vindicated in this matter.⁶

The DOJ’s investigation was based upon allegations that had no merit. The applicants in question were referred to TLAP by the TBLE due to their histories of concerning conduct, which required those applicants to comply with reasonable medical assessments and monitoring as conditions for practicing law in Tennessee.



Jonathan Skrmetti

Per Tennessee’s Attorney General, Jonathan Skrmetti:

“We are glad the Department of Justice has closed this misguided matter attacking common-sense guardrails protecting the integrity of the practice of law in Tennessee.”⁶

The press release went on to say that:

“... the [DOJ] investigation and findings were baseless overreach. I’m proud of Tennessee’s track record of upholding the highest professional standards while ensuring that qualified people have equal opportunity to practice law, regardless of disability status.”⁶

In addition to closing its investigation, the DOJ removed its erroneous Letter of Findings from the DOJ’s website, and it is no longer available. This outcome confirms that TLAP’s operations are ADA compliant.

ABA CoLAP

The ABA CoLAP remains active in supporting lawyer assistance programs across the nation. TLAP's Executive Director, Buddy Stockwell, has been re-appointed for another year as a member of the ABA CoLAP Commission and is also Chair of the ABA CoLAP Committee on LAPs that have a duty to protect the public and monitor fitness to practice.

From September 24- 26, 2024, the ABA hosted its CoLAP Conference in Colorado Springs, CO. TLAP staff Buddy Stockwell, Lauren Castor, and Erin Lynch attended the conference, with Stockwell also serving as a presenter. Over the course of the conference, TLAP staff attended 8 presentations related to the theme of "Transformations: Satisfaction, Competence and Well-Being in all Stages of Life, Law and Recovery."

Staying connected with CoLAP is essential for TLAP staff to remain informed on the latest developments, research, and best practices in lawyer assistance programs, ensuring that TLAP's services continues to provide "Gold Standard" clinical services.

FSPHP

FSPHP's Annual conference is the leading event for physicians, healthcare professionals from all specialties, and those committed to health and professional well-being. Over 300 attendees join the conference, including experts involved in the evaluation and treatment of licensed professionals. The conference is an invaluable professional development opportunity for TLAP staff to stay current on emerging research, clinical practices, and monitoring strategies.

TLAP staff Buddy Stockwell, Lauren Castor, and Erin Lynch attended FSPHP's Annual Conference from April 22-26, 2025. The conference included presentations on a range of topics including suicide, neurobiology of addiction, and literature review.

NCBE Annual Conference

This year, TLAP' Clinical Director Lauren Castor was invited to speak at the National Conference of Bar Examiners Annual Bar Admissions Conference in Seattle, Washington, on May 1-4, 2025. All 56 U.S. jurisdictions were represented by the 375 attendees, including 53 justices from jurisdictions' highest courts. Lauren was a part of the panel titled "Verifiable Progress: Monitoring Attorney Rehabilitation and Compliance" and spoke specifically about the ABA Model Rule on Conditional Admission, created by Resolution 608, and about how Tennessee has already adopted these rules for best practice. Lauren was able to coordinate with other panelists to provide education of how the new model rule helps support incoming lawyers and protect the public. This presentation opportunity allowed TLAP to shine and show how we provide support to the TBLE.



CAMP TLAP 2025

Camp TLAP 2025 was held April 4–6, 2025, at Montgomery Bell State Park near Dickson, TN. The conference convened legal professionals and clinical experts from across Tennessee and surrounding regions. The event included 79 attendees, 8 sponsors, and 8 speakers. Camp TLAP was produced in partnership with the TLAP Foundation. All net proceeds from registration fees were donated to the TLAP Foundation. One hundred percent (100%) of net revenue from Camp TLAP supported lawyers, judges, and bar applicants experiencing financial hardship that limits access to TLAP-recommended care.

Robert Briley; Banquet Keynote Speaker:

Camp TLAP was honored to feature Robert “Rob” Briley as the keynote speaker. A native of Nashville, Tennessee, Rob earned his degree in Political Science from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1991 and his J.D. from Vanderbilt Law School in 1997, followed by a judicial clerkship with Judge Thomas Brothers.

Rob served ten years in the Tennessee House of Representatives, representing the 52nd Legislative District from the 101st through 105th General Assemblies. During his tenure, he held several leadership roles, including Majority Floor Leader and Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee.

For the past 25 years, Rob has practiced law in Nashville, and in 2009 he joined Shuttleworth PLLC, focusing on civil litigation as part of a statewide general trial practice. In addition to his professional accomplishments, Rob has volunteered with TLAP for many years and currently serves on the TLAP Commission, demonstrating his longstanding commitment to supporting the well-being of legal professionals across Tennessee.

Camp TLAP CLE Presentations 2025:

- **Identifying and Coping with Major Changes in Life** – Maggie Banger, LPC-S
- **ABA Model Rule Update** – Buddy Stockwell, JD, CCI
- **The Depths of Mercy in Recovery** – Buddy Stockwell, JD, CCI, Yvette Hourigan, JD, CEAP, APSS, Jennifer Angier, MS
- **Legal Integrity: Fitness for Duty & Impairment Risk in Law** – Amy Robertson, PsyD
- **Movement of Grace** – Jennifer Angier, MS
- **The Prevalence of ADHD and Stimulant Use in Safety-Sensitive Professionals** – Dr. Alex Latham, PsyD
- **Key Note Speaker:** Robert Briley, JD
- **The Art of Self Care** – Lauren Castor, LPC-MHSP(t), Erin Lynch, LPC-MHSP(t)



Volunteer of the Year: Jackie Dixon

The Tennessee Lawyer Assistance Program is proud to recognize Jacqueline “Jackie” Dixon as Volunteer of the Year. Jackie has served multiple times on the TLAP Commission since 2000 and brings over 35 years of legal experience. She focuses her practice on all aspects of family law and is a Tennessee Supreme Court listed family law mediator.

Jackie currently serves as Chair of the TLAP Foundation, Treasurer of the Tennessee Bar Foundation, and Vice-Chair of the Tennessee Lawyer Assistance Program Commission. She is past president of both the Tennessee Bar Association and the Tennessee Lawyers Association for Women.

A dedicated community leader, Jackie also serves on the boards of A Step Ahead Middle Tennessee, where she is a founding board member and past president, and First Steps, Inc., which provides education and care for children with special needs alongside their typically developing peers. Her long-standing commitment to TLAP and the broader legal and local community exemplifies the impact of service and volunteerism.



“The Buddy System” Tennessee Bar Journal Column

TLAP remains grateful to the Tennessee Bar Journal for allowing TLAP’s Executive Director to be a regular contributor in its TBJ column dubbed “The Buddy System.” This column appears in every other issue and covers a wide range of timely mental health topics related to various aspects of TLAP’s mission and services.

The following installments were published during FY 2024-2025:

- [Doping with Adderall: A Dangerous Game](#) ⁷
- [Anxiety and Perfectionism in the Legal Field](#) ⁸
- [2025 U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory: Alcohol is the 3rd Leading Cause of Preventable Cancer](#) ⁹



TLAP Foundation

The TLAP Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, continues to provide financial support to a number of TLAP participants each year. This assistance helps with the cost of clinical evaluations and also the cost of any necessary treatment. The TLAP Foundation is delivering on its mission to help ensure that TLAP-approved diagnostics, treatment, and monitoring support are available to all members of the bar and despite financial hardship. With the support of the TLAP Foundation, even more lives and careers are being saved in the profession.

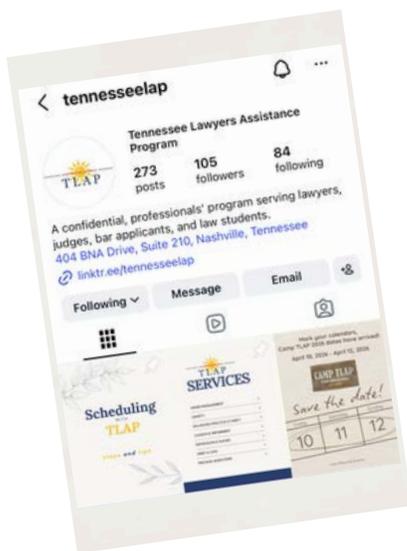
Social Media

TLAP's Marketing Coordinator, Sarah Burden, has strengthened the organization's social media and marketing efforts, dramatically expanding its online presence and engagement across platforms. During FY 2024-2025, TLAP's social media activities focused on increasing awareness of TLAP services, promoting mental wellness tips, and showcasing TLAP's presentations across Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram.

TLAP's Instagram account began at the end of 2023, so this fiscal year marks the first whole fiscal year with the page active. Compared to the months of FY 2023-2024 that statistics are available for, visits for TLAP's Instagram page this year increased 38%. The page's most successful post this year was on September 9, 2024, which helped raise awareness of the warning signs of suicide for National Suicide Prevention Week. The individual post had a reach of 914 individuals and a total of 1,036 views.

Facebook and LinkedIn are the two social pages with the most interaction from followers. Compared to the last fiscal year, Facebook interactions show a 65% increase, along with a 31% increase in link clicks. These interactions were created by a total of 1,300 visits for the fiscal year, which is a 69% increase from the following fiscal year, and the TLAP Facebook account gained 28 new followers.

LinkedIn's performance metrics show in the last 6 months of the fiscal year, the TLAP LinkedIn page gained over 1,700 views and a total of 114 reactions on our posts. April 2025 proved to be the LinkedIn page's best month for content engagement, showing a 48% increase from the previous month, and TLAP's best month for views was October 2025, with individual views peaking at 765, which was a 226% increase from the previous month. Raising awareness is crucial for spreading accurate information about TLAP's mission and services, expanding its reach to lawyers across the state, and ensuring that legal professionals know where to turn for support.



Conclusion

TLAP continues to expand its services and expertise in providing comprehensive professional clinical support to the profession. The majority of TLAP's cases last year involved rendering confidential clinical support that had no disciplinary component whatsoever. Last year, only 23% of TLAP's cases involved the BPR.

Also, the majority of TLAP's cases had nothing to do with alcoholism or drug addiction. This reflects the national trend of increases in the legal profession of mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, while under the pressure of practicing law.

Of course, there are still cases that primarily involve alcohol or other substance use disorders. These cases must be addressed at levels that support recovery without relapse. In these cases, TLAP's participants receive exceptional support. Last year, TLAP's program generated an 92% no-relapse rate and a 98% retention rate of participants remaining in the program and achieving long-term recovery. Unquestionably, TLAP provides top-tier programming that fully delivers on its mission to both save lives and protect the public from the harm that an impaired professional can cause.

TLAP's dedicated and talented staff is to be commended, and we are all very blessed to have Lauren, Erin, Emily, and Sarah on our team at TLAP!

Of course, TLAP is grateful for the strong support and leadership of the Tennessee Supreme Court, the TLAP Commission, TLAP's peer monitors, and its dedicated volunteers.

In the coming year, TLAP will remain focused on educating the profession about TLAP's programming. TLAP will also be undertaking new efforts to help prevent suicide in the profession. TLAP never rests in its mission to develop and provide the best and most effective life and career-saving services possible to the lawyers, judges, law firms, and law students in Tennessee.



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The Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program was established by order of the Tennessee Supreme Court in 1999. The mission and general structure of TLAP are set forth in Rule 33 of the Tennessee Supreme Court Rules.

TLAP is a confidential, professionals' program serving lawyers, judges, bar applicants, and law students who suffer from physical or mental disabilities that result from disease, disorder, trauma or age and that impair their ability to practice or serve. TLAP's services are results-driven and highly specialized to meet the specific needs of legal professionals, and generate exceptional rates of recovery without relapse. This not only helps the individual but also helps protect the public and the profession from the damage that impaired professionals can cause.

The **MISSION of TLAP** is threefold:

To **PROTECT** the interest of clients, litigants and the general public from harm caused by impaired lawyers or judge;

To **ASSIST** impaired members of the legal profession to begin and continue recovery;

To **EDUCATE** the bench and bar to the causes of and remedies for impairments affecting members of the legal profession.