

Legal Assistants of
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NEWSLETTER

SPRING
2022

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A Message from Our President

Hello everyone! I hope everyone is doing well and having a great 2022 so far. We had a great seminar in the fall in Cheyenne and we have another one coming up in April in Cody! Don't forget, we will have our annual meeting at the Cody seminar! We have a great list of nominees for the upcoming board. So, I hope you can be there to vote for your board members.

Legal Assistants of Wyoming is an amazing organization and our board has been working hard this year to make this organization even better for our members! If you have any comments or suggestions for the board, please shoot me an email at srezanina@wpdn.net. I would love to hear from you!



Shannon Rezanina, ACP

President - Legal Assistants of Wyoming

SPRING SEMINAR

Please join us for LAW's upcoming Spring Seminar on April 22-23, 2022 in Cody, Wyoming! The conference will be held at the beautiful Cody Hotel and we have some wonderful speakers lined up. Ever wonder how police officers are trained, what they look for when responding to calls or when filling out incident reports? Sergeant Johnson with the Park County Sheriff's Department will be giving a presentation on police training and will cover all of these topics. Mary Kubichek will be bringing her usual flare and knowledge to give an ethics presentation. We also have a special guest, Patra Lindenthal, Clerk of Park County District Court, giving a presentation on how clerks and paralegals can work together to be more efficient and to better their work product. Beginning Saturday morning, Scott Ortiz will be giving a highly requested presentation on billing practices and guidelines. Finally, Elizabeth Grill will be giving a presentation on administrative law. Please let us know if there are any specific topics or questions you would like Ms. Grill to address during her presentation!

We have a very exciting social hour planned at the Cody Country Art League on Friday night where we will have a private beginner's watercolor class. LAW will be providing pizza and non-alcoholic drinks as well. Also, stick around after the presentations on April 23 for LAW's annual meeting.

This year's seminar will also be offered virtually. We have recently made efforts to improve the quality of the presentations for our virtual viewers as well. Please reference our brochure for more details on the Spring Seminar, and we look forward to seeing you there!

Brooke Brown, CP
1st Vice President



for Paralegals

Anne Murphy Brown, J.D.,
Associate Professor and Director of
Legal Studies at Ursuline College

This article first appeared on Americanbar.org, dated April 05, 2021. <https://www.americanbar.org/groups/paralegals/blog/mental-health-for-paralegals/> Reprinted with express permission from the author and from the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Paralegals. Our sincerest thanks to you both!

Mental health is always a relevant topic, but the current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of self-care, support and awareness needed to maintain good mental health. The ABA's Commission on Lawyer's Assistance Programs has provided a number of [mental health resources for legal professionals](#) that may be helpful during these challenging and unpredictable times.

Even during relatively normal times, the law is a profession that requires extensive "brain power" for critical thinking, analytical reasoning, logic, focus, attention and recall. As professionals, the "output" or "product" that we create is the documentation of our ideas and advice. None of this work can be done at its best without taking care of our mental health.

What is mental health? Simply stated, it is our emotional, psychological and social well-being. It comprises how we feel and how we react to the world. To be sure, we all have "good" days and "bad" days, but compromised mental health, in the form of depression, anxiety or other mental disorders, can take an enormous toll on our lives and careers.

Lawyers, paralegals and support staff may face greater mental health challenges because of the nature of our work. Clients bring legal professionals the most difficult problems of their lives and demand they be resolved favorably. Expectations are high and deadlines are ever-looming. In 2018, the American Bar Association, in conjunction with the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, completed a study titled, *The Prevalence of Substance Use and Other Mental Health Concerns Among American Attorneys*, which concluded,

"Attorneys experience problematic drinking that is hazardous, harmful, or otherwise consistent with alcohol use disorders at a higher rate than other professional populations. Mental health distress is also significant. These data underscore the need for greater resources for lawyer assistance programs, and also the expansion of available attorney-specific prevention and treatment interventions."

How do paralegals fit in to the legal profession's mental health movement? Although there is no specific data on paralegals, if the attorneys with whom we work are experiencing mental health issues at a greater rate, it would stand to reason that paralegals and legal support staff are subject to the same concerns.

According to an August 12, 2019 article from ALM Media (formerly, American Lawyer Media), law firm staffers feel left behind in the legal profession's mental health movement.

“[D]espite a plethora of resources available at several large firms today, including on-site mental health professionals and wellness applications, many have not extended their mental health resources firmwide. A survey of 30 AM Law firms found that 36% of firms that say they offer mental health programming do not extend those to programs to their professional staff. This bifurcated mental health treatment is actually symptomatic of one of the most acute stress factors afflicting law firm professionals: a power hierarchy that devalues professional staff.”

In addition to law firm resources, attorneys may be able to turn to their local Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP), but what resources are available for paralegals and support staff? There are places all people who are struggling can turn, both locally through addiction and mental health organizations and crisis hotlines, and nationally from the following organizations:

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Phone: 1-800-950-6264

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Phone: 1-877-726-4727

RehabCenter.Net

An organization that connects people who are seeking treatment to the resources they need. They offer an extensive list of rehab programs and treatment facilities to choose from. They also have a library of educational articles on addiction and recovery, which can benefit residents both in the US and internationally.

Phone: (866) 650-2452

Steps are being taken to address the widespread substance abuse and mental health issues experienced by legal professionals, such as the [ABA's Well-Being Pledge](#) which encourages firms and companies to adopt specific steps in promoting employee well-being. But, while these efforts mention covering legal staff, as do some COLAP mission statements, more needs to be done to ensure that paralegals and other legal support staff are included and supported by these efforts.

Moreover, research shows some simple things we can all do to improve our mental health; exercising, spending time outside, eating a balanced diet, getting enough sleep, and even talking to a friend. Winter can be a particularly challenging time as days are shorter and colder. Taking care of our mental health is an important part of maintaining our careers and having happy, healthy, productive lives. Emotional and psychological well-being must be a priority for all legal professionals, including paralegals.

Please, be well.

MENTAL HEALTH DAY CHECKLIST

○ GET SOME SLEEP

A good night's (and morning's? 😊) sleep is essential.

○ SET GOALS

Even if your goal is simply finishing this checklist.

○ FEED YOURSELF

Make the effort to eat nutritionally well today, but don't forget an indulgence or two...

○ GET IN YOUR HEAD

Identify pressing concerns and create a plan of action. Don't forget to reinforce positive thoughts!

○ REACH OUT!

Odds are, you'll need help with formulating, or acting on, your plan of action. Hard as it is for us to admit, we can't always handle things entirely on our own. There's really, truly, no shame in that. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. Whether it's chatting with a friend or family member, or you're more comfortable asking for help outside of your circle, having that conversation is a big, brave, important step that can make all the difference. Resources near you:

<https://wamhsac.org/resources/>

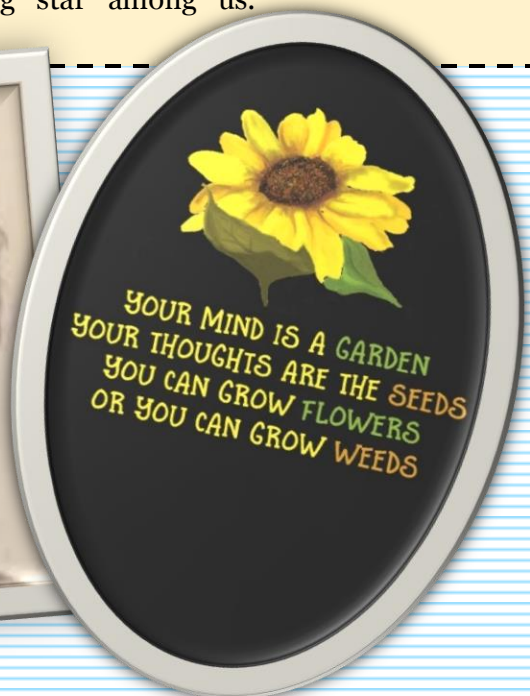
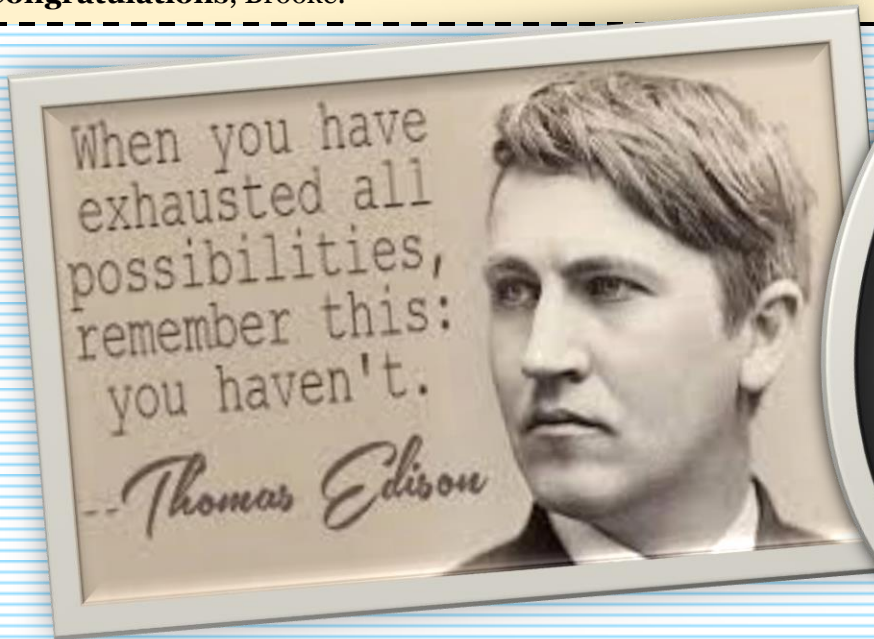
or

https://health.wyo.gov/behavioralhealth/mhsa/treatment/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=mental_health&gclid=Cj0KCQjwz7uRBhDRARIsAFqjullqc02VGrg4_BexogdSLH6mm3jeqWTcm3kspjDSYTslR5eZmBlcoHkaAuykEALw_wcB



Congratulations!

Our very own 1st Vice President and seminar-planner extraordinaire, Brooke Brown, CP, has been awarded NALA's **RISING STAR AWARD**! This award recognizes exemplary service to the paralegal profession by a person who has been a paralegal for less than five years, and: demonstrates leadership, demonstrates personal commitment, promotes NALA to the legal community, models high ethical conduct, and recognizes leadership/engagement efforts. For all those lucky enough to know her, we are absolutely certain that Brooke is a fabulous choice for this award. We are very proud of her, and honored to have such a shining star among us. **Congratulations**, Brooke!



OUR NEW MEMBERSHIP “YEAR” IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER...

By Tammy Wuertley, ACP – 2nd Vice President

Our new year begins on June 1st of each year, and it is also time to renew your membership or join LAW! Our current number of active memberships is 43, and we would like to raise this number to at least 60 for our 2022-2023 year - and you can help us!

Do you have a friend, acquaintance, fellow student, or coworker in the legal field that is not a member of LAW? Are you a prior member of LAW? When you join or renew your membership with LAW, refer a former member to rejoin, or a non-member to join with you. If that person joins, both you and the new member will be entered into our drawing for a \$50.00 Visa gift card. All current members who renew their membership with LAW for the 2022-2023 year will get a chance as well! The drawing for this gift card will take place at a fun event to be held this summer. All membership fees must be paid in full by June 30, 2022, to be eligible for the drawing.

In our last newsletter, I authored an article entitled, *Why You Should Join the Legal Assistants of Wyoming* and described all of the benefits of a LAW membership. Our initiation fees of \$15 for new members and \$5 for new student members have been waived. A full-year active membership is \$65 and student memberships are only \$25! There are no initiation fees for anyone. Compared to the membership fees of NALA and many other legal-based organizations, our membership fee is a pretty good deal. We also offer associate memberships for \$50.

On the last page of our *Application for Membership* (“All Applicants”) there is a **Referred by** line for the new applicant to complete with the name of your referring member. This application can be downloaded and printed from the Membership tag on our website, www.lawyo.com, or you can apply online. If you have any questions or need more information about membership with LAW, please do not hesitate to contact me at tammy@schwartzbon.com or at 307.277.4834.

HELP MAKE YOUR NEWSLETTER GREAT!

We are always searching for interesting, relevant content, and will gratefully accept and consider any content submissions received. Please feel free to submit self-authored articles, content suggestions, event notices, etc., through email: legalassistantsofwyoming@gmail.com, or through messaging on Facebook. Thank you!

~ Annette Fredrickson, NALA Liaison; Newsletter Committee



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