



## INDIANA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

One Indiana Square, Suite 530  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

800/266-2581 • 317/266-2588 fax

<http://www.inbar.org>

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**Administrative Assistant**  
Kimberly D. Latimore • [klatimore@inbar.org](mailto:klatimore@inbar.org)  
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Paje E. Felts • [pfelts@inbar.org](mailto:pfelts@inbar.org)  
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Barbara L. Mann • [bmenn@inbar.org](mailto:bmenn@inbar.org)  
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**CLE Coordinator**  
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**Bookkeeper & Convention Registrar**  
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**Receptionist**  
Chauncey L. Lipscomb • [clipscomb@inbar.org](mailto:clipscomb@inbar.org)

# JLAP is here to help!

A new study of 12,825 licensed, employed attorneys by the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation and the ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs has found that “[l]evels of depression, anxiety and stress among attorneys were significant, with 28 percent, 19 percent and 23 percent experiencing symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress, respectively.” This study is significant not only because of what it shows about our profession but also because it is the most comprehensive study ever done regarding attorneys’ mental health.

When I read the statistics cited above, I wasn’t surprised, and I’m guessing you weren’t either. We work in a high-stress environment as attorneys. But what is surprising is that our profession engages in harmful drinking at a higher rate than other professional populations. Twenty-one percent of attorneys reported hazardous, harmful and potentially dependent drinking compared to 12 percent of a highly educated workforce. Even more surprising is that the most significant drinking problems and mental illnesses are seen in attorneys who have practiced 10 years or less.

The study wasn’t designed to tell us *why* attorneys have more problems with drinking and mental health issues, but it’s telling that attorneys in law firms were more likely to have problems than those in other work environments. I’m confident that we all can cite the reasons attorneys have these problems. Many of us are suffering from these problems as you read this.

The positive thing about this study is that it now gives us concrete evidence that these problems are pervasive in our profession. I hope this means that we will allocate more funding to our Judges & Lawyers Assistance Program (JLAP) and be more aware and less ashamed of

these problems. In Indiana, we have an amazing JLAP executive director, Terry Harrell. I’m sure many of you know Terry, and I can tell you that I personally love talking to her because her demeanor immediately calms me down. Terry and the JLAP staff work tirelessly to promote JLAP throughout the state. Both self-referrals and third-party referrals are entirely confidential. The Disciplinary Commission cannot be notified that you asked JLAP for help. In addition, if you call JLAP because you know an attorney is in trouble and needs help, your name and the impaired attorney’s name will be kept confidential.

Based on the statistics from the recent study, we aren’t using JLAP enough. Many in our profession need help. JLAP can provide assistance with many types of problems, not just substance abuse and mental health issues. The professionals at JLAP can help with physical health issues, age impairment and retirement-related matters. We need to help each other, and everyone needs help at some time in their lives. If you or an attorney or judge you know needs help, please call JLAP at 866/428-5527. There’s also a peer-to-peer judges’ hotline: 800/219-6474. Of course, for more information, visit [www.in.gov/judiciary/ijlap](http://www.in.gov/judiciary/ijlap). Finally, if you want to help, you can become a JLAP volunteer by contacting Terry Harrell at the Judges & Lawyers Assistance Program, 320 N. Meridian St., Suite 606, Indianapolis, IN 46204. 🍷



**PRESIDENT’S PERSPECTIVE**  
**CAROL M. ADINAMIS**  
[carol@adinamis.com](mailto:carol@adinamis.com)  
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