

Bar Association Committee – VT Commission on the Well-Being of the Legal Profession

Minutes – July 23, 2018 Telephone Conference

Present: Samara Anderson, Teri Corsones, Andrew Delaney, Jennifer Emens-Butler, Kyle Landis-Marinello, Michael Kiey and Rachel Strecker. Micaela Tucker was also present. The June 14, 2018 minutes were approved as written.

Review of Lawyer-Well-Being Committee Materials: Recommendation 38 recommends that bar associations consider forming Lawyer Well-Being Committees, focusing not only on addressing disorders and ensuring competence to practice law, but also on optimal functioning and full engagement in the profession. Samara distributed a proposed agenda in advance of the meeting, with the three topics described below:

Topic 1: Proposed Focus of the Well-Being Committee. Topic 1 listed eight goals of such a committee, including addressing attorney dysfunctions, ensuring competence, cultivating optimal functioning, creating a supportive community, compiling wellness resources, creating a series of high-quality speakers, serving as a clearinghouse, and partnering with lawyer assistance programs to advocate for lawyer well-being initiatives. The last goal was discussed in some detail, in the context of a well-being committee being a liaison and resource for the new Lawyers Assistance Program that the Commission envisions for the future. A Lawyer Well-Being Committee could ideally provide the on-going connection between the bar and a Lawyers Assistance Program, to ensure on-going relevance, connectivity and accountability.

Topic 2: Example of a Functioning Lawyer Well-Being Committee. Samara provided a link to the website for an Attorney Wellness Committee in South Carolina, which Samara commended to the Bar Association Committee. The South Carolina Attorney Wellness Committee began as a Task Force to “promote all aspects of lawyer wellness by attempting to identify factors that impact both the emotional and physical well-being of attorneys and educate members of the Bench and Bar about wellness issues and resources”. It evolved in to a bar committee, and maintains a website and blog covering three sections of interest: mental health, physical health and social well-being. Members discussed the possibility of a similar resource that could be tied in to VBA Connect and linked through the VBA website.

Topic 3: Next Steps to Create the VBA Lawyer Well-Being Committee. The VBA Constitution provides that the “Board of Managers shall establish and disband such committees and sections of the Association as it, from time to time, deems necessary and appropriate.” Samara and Micaela will e-mail Teri a short statement expressing their request for approval of a Lawyer Well-Being Committee, and indicating their willingness to serve as co-chairs. The statement will reference the proposed focus of the Committee. Teri will place the request on the agenda at the next ensuing Board meeting.

Lawyer Well-Being at Bar Association Events: Teri and Jen will lead the discussion during the next committee call that will focus on Lawyer Well-Being at Bar Association Events.

Committee Recommendations: Members recommend that the VBA approve a Lawyer Well-Being Committee chaired by Samara and by Micaela, and that the Committee develop goals similar to those outlined in Topic 1 above. It also recommended that the Committee explore a presence through VBA Connect with materials similar to those outlined in Topic 2 above, accessed through a link on the VBA website. Lastly, members recommend that the Committee be an on-going liaison to the future Vermont Lawyers Assistance Program that will hopefully result from the Commission's state action plan.

The next telephone conference meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 20 at 3:00 p.m. The call-in number is 1-877-273-4202 and the conference room is 566-656-878. The topic will be "Best Practices Related to Lawyer Well-Being at Bar Association Events".

Teri Corsones