

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

Minutes – May 21, 2018 Telephone Conference

Present: Samara Anderson, Teri Corsones, Andrew Delaney, Jennifer Emens-Butler, Kyle Landis-Marinello, Michael Kiey and Rachel Strecker. The April 23, 2018 minutes were approved with one typographical error corrected.

Review of Educational Materials: Recommendation 36.2 recommends creating educational materials to support individual well-being and “Best Practice” model policies on well-being related topics for legal organizations. Examples of “best practice” model policies that were cited include practices for responding to lawyers in distress, succession planning, diversity and inclusion, mentoring practices, and work-life balance policies.

With respect to educational materials, Teri circulated a 14-page “Reading Resource List” that the New Hampshire Lawyers Assistance Program offers that includes titles and short summaries for a variety of reading resources. Categories for the resources include “Inspirational Reading”, “Alcohol”, “Aging”, “Drugs”, “Eating Disorders”, “Grief”, “Mental Health”, and “Trauma”. Other educational materials that were circulated for review included a “Desk Reference”, that lists “Signs and Symptoms of Depression and Substance Abuse”, with contact information for different providers. Members thought that each type of educational material would be helpful to lawyers, and could be included on the VBA website, as well as on the LAP website

Review of “Best Practices” Policies: With respect to “Best Practices” policies, Teri provided links to several examples of policies in the categories suggested, including “The Essentials of Law Office Management”, published by the Louisiana Bar Association; “A Short Course in Succession Planning”, offered by the American Bar Association; “Ten Tips for Lawyers Dealing with Stress”, offered by the Texas Bar Association; and “Work-Life Balance for Attorneys”, published by Hire an Esquire. There appear to be a variety of similar policies available through other bar associations and lawyer assistance programs. Members discussed various ways to make such resources available. One possibility would be through VBA Connect, if a Lawyer Well-Being Committee is created. The archiving and searchability features of VBA Connect would facilitate access to the materials.

Vermont Mentoring Program: Mentoring is one of the recommended means for assisting lawyers, especially newly admitted lawyers. Teri reviewed the present mentoring requirement for new admittees in Vermont. Upon admission to the bar in Vermont, applicants have one year to certify completion of at least 40 hours of specified activities. According to Andy Strauss from Attorney Licensing, his office could use many more names of lawyers willing to serve as mentors. The VBA could assist with enlisting lawyers willing to serve as mentors for the licensing program. Another possibility is helping to enlist lawyers who could serve as mentors for lawyers who connect with LAP, and indicate a need for assistance.

Committee Recommendations: Members recommend that the VBA gather and make available, either through the VBA website, VBA Connect in connection with a Lawyer Well-Being Committee, or through an LAP website, educational materials and “Best Practice” model policies on well-being topics. Members also recommend that the VBA consider enlisting mentor lawyers for the new mentorship program through Attorney Licensing, and/or enlist lawyer mentors in conjunction with VT LAP.

The next telephone conference meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 8 at 3:00 p.m. The call-in number is 1-877-27-420 and the conference room is 566-656-878. The topic will be “Member Surveys”. Jen will send materials in advance of the meeting.

Teri Corsones