



THE MISSISSIPPI BAR

Well-Being Pledge: Talking Points with Legal Employers

“The benefits of increased lawyer well-being are compelling, and the costs of lawyer impairment are too great to ignore.” [Report of the National Taskforce on Lawyer Well-Being](#)

In a 2016 survey of nearly 13,000 currently-practicing lawyers, between 21 and 36 percent qualified as problem drinkers, and approximately 28 percent, 19 percent, and 23 percent were struggling with some level of depression, anxiety, and stress, respectively. These and other results from the survey signaled a clear, elevated risk in the legal community for mental health and substance abuse disorders. The National Taskforce on Lawyer Well-Being reviewed the available data and developed a report with a call to action.

Part of that call to action is the [Well-Being Pledge for Legal Employers](#). In 2020, The Mississippi Bar’s Board of Commissioners responded by adopting the Pledge as a legal employer and by urging other Mississippi legal employers to become signatories. The Bar’s Professionalism Committee is now engaging in a campaign to that effect.

Why Should You Act?

- **It Is Good for Business:** Lawyer well-being contributes to organizational success in law firms, corporations, government entities, and other organizations. If cognitive functioning is impaired, lawyers are unable to do their best work. Healthy lawyers can provide a competitive advantage, and they tend to have higher job satisfaction rates which in turn leads to retention and better performance.
- **It Is Good for Clients:** Lawyer well-being impacts ethics and professionalism. The Rules of Professional Conduct require that lawyers provide competent representation to their clients, and troubled and/or impaired lawyers can struggle with even minimum competence in their representation. Some clients are even selecting law firms in part because they have demonstrated their commitment to lawyer well-being by signing the Pledge.
- **It Is the Right Thing to Do:** Untreated well-being issues can ruin lives and careers, and they effect far too many lawyers. We all contribute to the collective legal culture, and it is up to us to generate solutions to address these issues. Legal employers are in a unique position to bring about positive change in lawyer well-being.

What Can You Do?

- **Adopt the [Pledge](#) to Show Your Commitment to Your Employees:** Join the 207 current Pledge signatories nationwide (Click [here](#) for list.) Once you decide to sign on, notify the Bar at communications@msbar.org so that you can properly recognized as well as the national representative at Joseph.Bruno@americanbar.org.
- **Enact the Pledge’s Framework:** The Pledge lays out a seven-point framework for actions that legal employers can take. The Bar has developed a Checklist to assist legal employers with how to enact the framework. (Click [here](#) for Checklist.)