

Mental Health First Aid: The Life Saving Tool Addressing Mental Health Stigma



By D. Victoria Abercrombie

Mental health and substance abuse awareness in the legal community has greatly expanded in the past decade. Specifically, I remember learning about these topics at my law school orientation. In recent years, the South Carolina Bar has placed an emphasis on mental health awareness. Notably, effective May 1, attorneys are required to attend one hour of substance abuse/mental health CLE every two years. The previous rule required one hour every three years.

With the implementation of a more demanding rule, it appears the Bar is placing an even greater emphasis on this area and with good reason. In October 2018, the *ABA Journal* published an article on millennial attorneys' alcoholism. The article detailed the results of a 2017 survey examining the substance abuse and mental health problem differentials between the generations of attorneys. Some of the most shocking conclusions were that millennials tend to drink more than previous generations, but they also prefer stronger alcoholic beverages.

Based on my personal knowledge of the drinking culture and mental health struggles brought on by the stress of law school and as a new attorney, I immediately signed up upon learning the Wellness Committee and the Lawyers Helping Lawyers program were offering a free Mental Health First Aid training that qualified for CLE credits.

When I entered the room for the training, I expected to listen to a lecture for a few hours, get my credit, and leave. This training ended up being so much more than that. To start, there was some lecture, introducing different mental health conditions, symptoms associated with them, as well as how to help someone having

an episode of that mental condition. Next, came an exercise none of us expected. Our instructor asked us to start listing off names we call people with mental illness. Crazy, insane, special and psycho were just a few of the terms we came up with. Looking around the room, I could tell that the other attendees had the same reaction as I did. It was startling to consider how it must feel to be called these words.

Our next exercise put us in the other person's shoes again. This time we went through the alphabet A-Z and listed words that describe how it feels to have mental illness. Some words we listed include exhausted, confused, frustrated, and stressed. Considering how mental health conditions affect a person's day-to-day life is not something explored enough when discussing mental health. This exercise showed how important it is for us to understand and empathize with people suffering from mental health conditions.

In the afternoon session of the training, we discussed how substance abuse and mental health looks when it is our coworker, boss or friend. Many of us think we know what to look for, but other training participants listed possible symptoms that I would not have thought to look for. For example, things that could be classified as a nervous tick could really be a manifestation of a person's mental health struggle.

To end the training, we practiced how to handle mental health crises for various mental health conditions and settings. This truly brought everything learned throughout the day full circle. Discussing how to handle situations reinforced the information and helped make the stakes real. It helped me to feel confident enough to do or say something should an incident arise.

In light of the study stating millennials are at greater risk of substance abuse and mental health conditions, I think it



A REPORT TO MEMBERS OF
THE SOUTH CAROLINA BAR
YOUNG LAWYERS DIVISION

South Carolina Young Lawyer is published quarterly by the Young Lawyers Division of the South Carolina Bar, 950 Taylor St., P.O. Box 608, Columbia, SC 29202-0608. www.scbars.org. Copyright © 2018 South Carolina Bar. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent the opinions or policies of the Young Lawyers Division or the South Carolina Bar. Unauthorized reproduction or use of the materials contained herein is prohibited.

Letter from the President



Dear Young Lawyers:
Happy New Year...Happy New BAR Year that is! July 1 marked the start of the 2019-2020 Bar Year. I am excited to serve as your YLD President

this year, alongside Perry MacLennan (President-Elect) and Jeanmarie Tankersley (Secretary-Treasurer). Your YLD leaders have been working diligently to develop programs and events that are certain to benefit you both personally and professionally this year. I cannot wait to see the ways our members will grow and develop from our offerings this year.

Starting a new Bar year in the middle of the traditional year can be awkward sometimes, but I am consistently impressed by how well our organization handles this change over. While not technically in this new Bar year, I would be remiss if I did not mention the excellent work of our Community Law Week Committee, which executed our first ever Legal Feeding Frenzy. Through their efforts, the SC Bar collected over 2,000 pounds of food that will help provide over 40,000 meals in South Carolina. We look forward to increasing this number this Bar year.

We are continuing to serve our



communities through our school supply drive with the Backpack Drive Committee and the necessities drive put on by our Voices Against Violence Committee to benefit our state's domestic violence shelters. Great job to all who have participated and will continue to participate!

I am also excited to share that during the recent American Bar Association Annual Meeting in San Francisco, the SC Bar YLD was presented with several ABA YLD Awards of Achievement! The ABA Awards of Achievement recognize state and local bar programs that contribute significantly to the public and the betterment of the legal profession. The SC Bar YLD's programming received awards in the Service to the Public (for the Bridge Project Statewide Clothing Drive), Diversity (for to Kneel or Not to Kneel – A Discussion on the Protest Against Police Violence), Newsletter (for The Young Lawyer), and Comprehensive (for overall best programming) award categories. Special thanks to the YLD leaders who were responsible for the award-winning programming and to Perry MacLennan for his hard work

and diligence in preparing our award applications.

I am looking forward to building upon the excellent work of these programs. One of my personal mantras is, "Good is not good enough if better is possible," and I cannot wait to see how we, as a Division, build upon the excellent work of these, and our other outstanding programs, to bring about even better and stronger content for our members. Keep an eye out in the YLD Announcements for more information!

Lastly, if you haven't already, sign up for a YLD committee today! The work of our YLD committee leaders and members is what allows the YLD to provide its award-winning programs and benefits to its members. Cheers to enjoying the last little bits of summer and the start of another wonderful Bar year!

Warmest Regards,

Sheila M. Willis
YLD President

Mental Health First Aid *(continued from Front Cover)*

is important that the Bar continue to increase awareness in this area. With that in mind, I hope that this training is continued in the future because it could help one lawyer save another lawyer's life.

For more information on substance abuse or mental health concerns, please visit www.sobar.org/LHL. The Lawyers Helping Lawyers toll-free helpline number is (866) 545-9590, and the toll-free number for free counseling services through Corp-Care is (855) 321-4384.

D. Victoria Abercrombie is a staff attorney at Genesis Health Care, where she focuses on employment law.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month: Know the Statistics



Nation

- On average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. During one year, this equates to more than 10 million women and men.
- In the U.S., over one in three (36.4% or 43.6 million) women experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime.
- About one in four women (25.1% or 30.0 million) in the U.S. experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime and reported some form of IPV-related impact.
 - Regarding specific subtypes of intimate partner violence, about 18.3% of women experienced contact sexual violence, 30.6% experienced physical violence (21.4% experienced severe physical violence), and 10.4% experienced stalking during their lifetime.
- In the U.S., about one in three (33.6% or 37.3 million) men experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime.
- Nearly one in 10 (10.9% or 12.1 million) men in the U.S. experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime and reported some form of IPV-related impact.
 - Regarding specific subtypes of intimate partner violence, 8.2% of men experienced contact sexual violence, 31.0% experienced physical violence (14.9% experienced severe physical violence), and 2.2% experienced stalking during their lifetime.
- Among victims, about 11 million women and 5 million men who reported experiencing contact sexual violence, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime also indicated that they first experienced these or other forms of violence by that partner before the age of 18.
 - There is a common link between domestic violence and child abuse. Among victims of child abuse, 40% report domestic violence in the home
- A nationally representative survey of U.S. high school students also indicates high levels of teen dating violence, a risk factor for IPV in adulthood.
 - Among students who reported dating, 9% of girls and 7% of boys had experienced physical dating violence and 11% of girls

and 3% of boys had experienced sexual dating violence in the past 12 months.

South Carolina

- An estimated 19% of South Carolina women will experience stalking in their lifetimes.
- A recent report by the state Domestic Violence Advisory Committee ranks South Carolina as the nation's sixth-worst state among rates of women murdered by men. The report adds that the state's domestic-violence homicide rate is more than 1.5 times the national average.
- In 2016, the homicide rate among females murdered by males in South Carolina was 1.88 per 100,000.
 - For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 88 percent (28 out of 32) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 71 percent (20 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

**Be on the lookout for opportunities in October to join the YLD Voices Against Violence Committee during Domestic Violence Awareness Month.*

Sources

Associated Press, South Carolina still near bottom in violence against women (Feb. 2019), <https://www.apnews.com/af9c4ee9c722496398f20d-6e234d172e>.

The State, SC still among worst for domestic violence among states, but slowly improving (Feb. 2019), <https://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/article225600345.html>

Violence Policy Center, When Men Murder Women (2016), <http://vpc.org/studies/wmmw2018.pdf>.

NCADV, National Statistics, <https://ncadv.org/statistics>

NCADV, Domestic Violence in South Carolina, <https://www.speakcdn.com/assets/2497/south-carolina.pdf>.

CDC, Preventing Intimate Partner Violence, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/fastfact.html>.

National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (2015), <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/2015data-brief508.pdf>.



South Carolina Bar

Young Lawyers Division

950 Taylor St. | PO Box 608
Columbia, SC 29202

NONPROFIT
U.S. Postage
PAID
Columbia, SC
Permit No. 599

What's Been Happening



A Bridge event was held May 29 to train current mentors and those interested in becoming mentors. The program focused on substance abuse. Special guests included Judge Lewis, Harrison Saunders and Justin Suddeth.



The 9th Circuit hosted a summer associate event.



12th Circuit YLD members and the Young Bankers Association held a joint event in Florence on June 4.



The 4th Circuit and 6th Circuit held Courthouse Keys events.



Stars of the Quarter

Caroline Ashley Ross
Ashley Wheeling Johnson
M. Paige Chamberlain Ornduff
Paul Michael Burch, Jr.
Cody Tarlton Mitchell

Stay Connected

Make sure you check out the YLD blog, *Caveat Lectorum*, for YLD news and posts written by YLD members. Visit scbaryld.blogspot.com.

Please feel free to contact La'Jessica Stringfellow at lstringfellow@robinsongray.com and Lisle Traywick at ltraywick@robinsongray.com if you have a topic on which you would like to write an article for *SC Young Lawyer* or a blog post for *Caveat Lectorum*.