



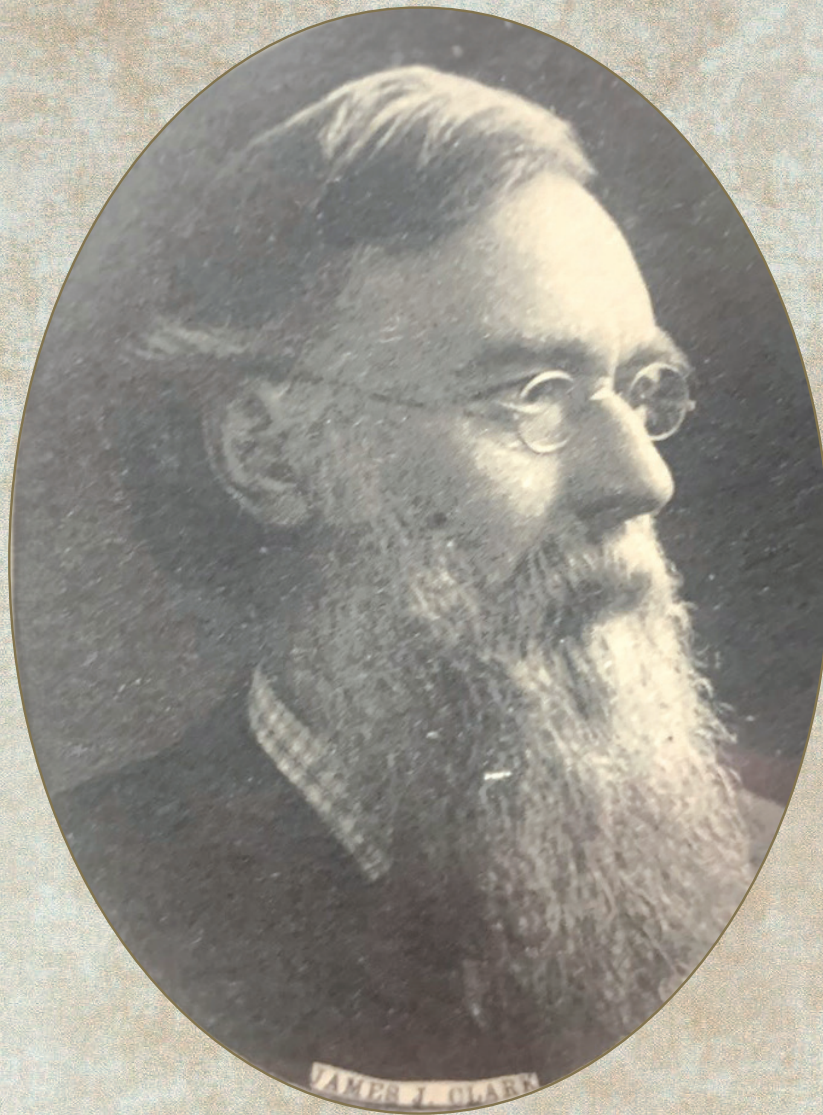
S T A R K C O U N T Y
BAR JOURNAL

VOLUME 31 ■ NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY 2025

Stark County Bar Association

First President
J. J. Clark, Esq.
1900 – 1909



OUR VISION & MISSION

The Stark County Bar Association was founded in 1900 and has proudly served the Stark County Community for 125 years. The purposes of this association shall be to work for the general good of the community, to improve the administration of the law in the interests of the public, to promote good relations among the members of the bar, and to further generally the professional interests of its members.

SCBA February 2025 Office Schedule

Feb. 3 rd	12:00 NOON	Technology Committee Meeting
Feb. 4 th	12:00 NOON	Social Committee Meeting
Feb. 5 th	11:30 AM	Family Law Committee Meeting at Bender's Tavern
Feb. 6 th	12:00 NOON	Community Involvement Committee Meeting
Feb. 10 th	4:00 PM	Disputed Fee Committee Meeting
Feb. 17 th	OFFICE CLOSED IN OBSERVANCE OF PRESIDENTS' DAY	
Feb. 18 th	3:45 PM	Grievance Committee Meeting
Feb. 19 th	12:00 NOON	Law Day Committee Meeting
Feb. 19 th	4:00 PM	Executive Committee Meeting
Feb. 20 th	12:00 NOON	Referral Service Committee Meeting
Feb. 24 th	3:45 PM	SCBA "125th" Planning Meeting
Feb. 26 th	3:30 PM	Judiciary Committee Meeting

NOTARY EDUCATION CLASS & TESTING

Classes and Testing offered every 2nd & 4th Tuesday
Stark County Bar Association Office

By Appointment Only

1 Hour Renewal Education Class • 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

3 Hour New Notary Public Education Class
12:00 Noon – 3:00 PM

TESTING 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Online classes and testing

available at our website: www.StarkCtyBar.com

2025 CLE Seminars

March 19, 2025	2025 Municipal Court Seminar SCBA Conference Room See Pg. 3
April 4, 2025	29th Annual White-Williams Bankruptcy Institute Hartville Kitchen See Pgs. 4 & 5
Mark Your Calendars - Details to Come	
March 2025	2025 VALID License Seminar SCBA Conference Room
April 2, 2025	2025 Family Law Seminar SCBA Conference Room
April 30, 2025	2025 Law Day Seminar "The Constitution's Promise: Out of Many, One" Kent State Professional Conference Ctr.



Reminder: A - I!
Complete your CLE by Dec. 31, 2025

Did You Know?

As a member of the Stark County Bar Association you may request for your review our annual Budget or our Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Assets. These financial documents are available upon request made to Tina McCort, our Executive Director.

The Bar Office E-Mail Addresses:

Tina@StarkCtyBar.com

SCBAReferral@StarkCtyBar.com

CLE@StarkCtyBar.com

SCBANotary@StarkCtyBar.com

Visit us at www.StarkCtyBar.com

THE BAR JOURNAL

Official Publication of the Stark County Bar Association

FOUNDED IN 1900

Suite 400, Courtyard Centre
116 Cleveland Ave., N.W. • Canton, Ohio 44702

Angela T. Vagotis, Bar President
Tina McCort, Executive Director & Editor
Chris Diaz, Bookkeeper & Editor

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www.StarkCtyBar.com

The Bar Journal is published monthly for all bar members. Free to members, \$20.00 per year to others.

All communications and editorial material should be directed to the Bar Association office by the fifteenth day of the month preceding publication.

Opinions and positions expressed in the signed material are those of the author and may not necessarily reflect those of the Stark County Bar Association, its officers, staff or board of editors.

From Our President

What a great surprise for Tina and I to open our emails from Attorney John Clark. Having read my January newsletter, he answered the call as to whether anyone knew who J. J. Clark was, the founder of the Stark County Bar Association 125 years ago. J. J. Clark was John Clark's great-great grandfather. Wow. Not too many organizations can trace their founding members to a current living member. John has provided us with a wonderful history of J. J. Clark. Please take a moment and enjoy it. If anyone else has any additional information about J. J. Clark or any of the members from back in the early 1900's we would appreciate if you would contact us.

J. J. Clark (first name was James and middle name may have been John?) Clark B. 1839 D. 1924) was my great-great-grandfather. He was the son of Abigail and James Clark who came to the United States from England in the 1820-30s (via as an Orangeman in Ireland.) J. J. Clark had his law office on Market Street in Canton, but now it is in the McKinley Museum village. J. J. Clark was the father of attorney George H. Clark (B. 1872 - D. 1943), who had his office on Market Street in Canton, but did accept a short-term appointment to the Ohio Supreme Court in 1922. George H. Clark had two sons, Thomas moved to New Jersey and son John James Clark (B. 1902 - D. 1972) escaped the law and worked as a carpenter and started the mobile library in Canton. John James Clark had three sons; Attorney James Clark (B. 1926 - D. 1996 "Big Jim" was a partner with Amerman, Burt & Jones, but did not stick around for BDB for long; Tom Clark (B. 1928 - D. 1998 and he worked for Conley Trucking), and the third child was my father Attorney David G. Clark (B. 1937 - D. 1984) who was a partner with Brouse McDowell law firm in Akron.

What other historic Stark County organization did J. J. Clark also help found? I am pretty sure that he was a founding member of Congress Lake Country Club in 1896.

We are pleased to announce that on September 13th and 14th, an Exhibit will open at Cyrus Custom Framing and Art Gallery, exhibiting art/photogra-



Angela T. Vagotis
President, Stark County Bar Association

phy/mixed media from member attorneys, along with local Canton artists. We are grateful to Todd Bergert and David Dingwell for organizing this event and of course to Christian Harwell, owner of Cyrus Gallery. You will be hearing more about this event in the months to come so please save the dates.

On December 21, 2024, I had the honor to present Judge Matt Kreitzer, with his robe as he began his term as a Family Court Judge. I must say there are many things you do as President of SCBA that you have no idea about as you approach your term. Presenting a judge with their robe, in the presence of their family, friends, and colleagues is very special. For me, I reflected on all we went through to become an attorney and then what a judge goes through to obtain that office. It really was awesome. Good luck Judge Kreitzer.

Even in these frigid months, as I am drafting this with a -9° windchill, there are committees meeting monthly and performing many functions on behalf of our organization. The Legal Aid/Pro Bono Com-

(continued on next page)



mittee, chaired by David Butz is certainly no exception. They are currently scheduling a VALID License Training "Assisting Clients with Driving License Reinstatement" Seminar in March, in preparation for the upcoming clinic. Any attorney who volunteers at the VALID Clinic on Saturday, April 5, 2025 at St.

Paul's Episcopal Church from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 Noon will receive free CLE. This event is sponsored by the SCBA and Krugliak, Wilkins, Griffiths & Dougherty, Co., LPA. Volunteers are needed to help staff this event. If you are interested, please contact Chairman David Butz at 330-497-0700 (dbutz@kwgd.com) or Tina at the Bar Office.

The Law Day Committee is looking for volunteers to help with the Justice Bus during Law Week to give free legal advice in all areas of law, but particularly Family Law on Monday, April 28th in Downtown Canton. If you are interested, please contact Tina at the Bar Office.

2025 Dues Bills Have Been Mailed ... What Is The Value of SCBA Membership?

CLE Seminars	\$360 Annual Savings
• Reduced Rates for Members! (12 hrs/yr.)	
• Annual Savings can Exceed Dues	
Stark County Bar Journal	\$20.00 Value
• FREE to Members	
• FREE Business Card Size Ad for Three Months (business related)	
Mailing Labels	\$150.00 Value
• Member and Non-member labels in alphabetical or zip code order.	
Conference Room	Up to a \$60.00 Value
• Members may use a conference room once a month at no charge.	
	Total Savings \$590.00!!
On-Line Legal Directory	Marketing Your Membership
Lawyer Referral Service.....	Grow Your Practice
• Client Referrals	
Public Speaking Opportunities	Great Value
Member Committees	Substantive & Service Oriented
Networking & Congeniality	Professional & Social Events
Professional Growth.....	PRICELESS!



Stark County Bar Association 2025 MUNICIPAL COURT SEMINAR

Wednesday, March 19, 2025 • SCBA Conference Room

- 12:45 P.M. REGISTRATION - Coffee & Water provided.
- 1:00 P.M. CANTON MUNICIPAL COURT
Honorable Kristen D. Guardado
Introduction; Specialized Docket Updates; Municipal Court Bond Schedule Changes
Magistrate Jeremy Foltz
Zoom Civil Hearings, Eviction Sealing Updates
Magistrate Derek McClowry
Texting While Driving Cases, Clerk's Office Tips
Magistrate Christy Pierson
OVI law changes, Driver's license suspension changes
- 1:50 P.M. MASSILLON MUNICIPAL COURT
Honorable Edward J. Elum
Honorable Joel C. Fichter
Magistrate Andrea M. Scassa
 - 1. Basic Forms to Survive and Updates/Changes to the Law
 - 2. Landlord/Tenant Current Issues, Hearings, and Mediations
 - 3. Coordinated Probation/Community Control Orders
- 2:40 P.M. BREAK
- 2:55 P.M. ALLIANCE MUNICIPAL COURT
Honorable Andrew L. Zumbar
 - 1. Landlord Tenant Issues (Including land installment contracts)
 - 2. Criminal Forms and Practices
 - 3. Applications to Seal/Expunge
 - 4. Driver's License Issues/Getting valid/limited privileges
- 3:45 P.M. SUPREME COURT RULES AND BEST PRACTICES ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION
Monica Benavides, *Interpreters XP*
- 4:15 P.M. ADJOURN



*Members: \$90.00 Associate Members: \$75.00 Non-Members: \$165.00

Name _____ Atty. Reg. No. _____

Address _____

Email _____

***PLEASE NOTE:** If you are currently a member of any local bar association, you may attend at our members' price.

Do you prefer to receive the seminar materials via Email or Hard Copy on the day of the seminar? Circle One.

Please mail checks to: Stark County Bar Association
116 Cleveland Avenue, N.W., Suite 400, Canton, Ohio 44702-1728

NO REFUNDS UNLESS RESERVATION CANCELLATION IS RECEIVED 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF SEMINAR.
Application has been submitted for 2.50 General CLE Credit Hours and .50 Professional Conduct Hours.

THE 29TH ANNUAL WHITE-WILLIAMS BANKRUPTCY INSTITUTE

April 4, 2025

The Hartville Kitchen

1015 Edison Street NW, Hartville, OH 44632

6.75 CLEs applied for (5.75 general hrs. & 1 professional conduct hr.)



akron bar
association



- 7:45 A.M. REGISTRATION WITH CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST
- 8:10 A.M. WELCOME
Anthony J. DeGirolamo, Esq. *Chair, Bankruptcy Committee, Stark County Bar Association*
Michael Steel, Esq., *Chair, Bankruptcy & Commercial Law Section, Akron Bar Association*
- 8:15 A.M. U.S. TRUSTEE UPDATE
Angela Abreu, Esq., *Office of the U.S. Trustee*
- 8:45 A.M. CHAPTER 7 PANEL
Anthony J. DeGiralamo, Esq., *Chair, Bankruptcy Committee, Stark County Bar Association*
Julie Zurn, Esq., *Roetzel & Andress*
- 9:15 A.M. CASE LAW UPDATE
The Hon. John P. Gustafson, *U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Northern District of Ohio*
Thomas D. DeCarlo, Esq., *Osipov Bigel, P.C.*
- 10:30 A.M. BREAK
- 10:45 A.M. ECONOMIC UPDATE
Dr. William Rule, Sr., *Economist, Administrative Office of the United States Courts, Washington, D.C.*
- 11:45 A.M. TAX LIENS AND CERTIFICATES
Austin Barns, Esq., *Sandhu Law Group*
- 12:15 P.M. LUNCH
- 1:15 P.M. PREPARING FOR WAR! AN EVIDENTIARY HEARING MODULE
James Galehouse, Esq. *Office of the Chapter 13 Trustee*
Mike Moran, Esq., *Gibson & Moran, LLC*
- 2:15 P.M. DIVORCE AND BANKRUPTCY MODULE
Gary Rosen, Esq., *Gertz & Rosen, LTD*
Keith Rucinski, Esq., *Chapter 13 Trustee*
Peter Tsarnas, Esq., *Gertz & Rosen, Ltd*
- 3:15 P.M. PIE BREAK Sponsored by Vance P. Trueman, Esq. & Nicole Metzger
- 3:30 P.M. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT UPDATE
Jay Wampler, Esq., *Office of Disciplinary Counsel*
- 4:30 P.M. CLOSING REMARKS
Drawing for the Dean Wyman Scholarship

FRIDAY, APRIL 04, 2025- THE 29TH ANNUAL WHITE-WILLIAMS BANKRUPTCY INSTITUTE

Register online at www.akronbar.org/events. Register by phone Akron Bar Association **330-436-0112**,
 OR Register online and choose "Payment at Later Time," then mail this form with your check to:
 Akron Bar Association, 57 S. Broadway St., Akron, OH 44308.

NAME: _____

FIRM: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

PHONE: (____) _____ - _____ **E-MAIL:** _____

(must provide in order to receive registration confirmation/receipt/link to materials)

OHIO REG. # _____

LUNCH CHOICE:

Baked Boneless Chicken _____ **OR** **Baked Fish** _____ **OR** **Vegetarian Pasta** _____ **No Lunch** _____

SEMINAR FEE <small>(includes continental breakfast, lunch and electronic materials)</small>	GENERAL SEMINAR INFORMATION:																						
<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Stark County Bar Members, Advance Registration (Early Bird)</td> <td align="right">\$239.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stark County Bar Members, At the Door Registration</td> <td align="right">\$264.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Associate Members/Associate Guests Registration (Early bird)</td> <td align="right">\$139.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Associate Members/ Associate Guests At the Door Registration</td> <td align="right">\$165.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A+kron Members</td> <td align="right">\$60.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Akron Classic Members, Advance Registration (Early bird)</td> <td align="right">\$239.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Akron Classic Members, At the Door Registration</td> <td align="right">\$264.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Attorney Guests (Early Bird)</td> <td align="right">\$389.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Attorney Guests, At Door Registration</td> <td align="right">\$404.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Judiciary & Law Clerk will attend for free</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>TOTAL FEE</td> <td align="right">\$ _____</td> </tr> </table>	Stark County Bar Members, Advance Registration (Early Bird)	\$239.00	Stark County Bar Members, At the Door Registration	\$264.00	Associate Members/Associate Guests Registration (Early bird)	\$139.00	Associate Members/ Associate Guests At the Door Registration	\$165.00	A+kron Members	\$60.00	Akron Classic Members, Advance Registration (Early bird)	\$239.00	Akron Classic Members, At the Door Registration	\$264.00	Attorney Guests (Early Bird)	\$389.00	Attorney Guests, At Door Registration	\$404.00	Judiciary & Law Clerk will attend for free		TOTAL FEE	\$ _____	<p>MATERIALS: Handouts for this program will be provided to all attendees in electronic, rather than hard copy format. When you register, be sure to include your email address so that we can notify you when the electronic materials are available. WI-FI access may be interrupted at the Hartville Kitchen; Attendees are encouraged to download the handouts to their devices and ensure that the device is fully charged before arriving at the seminar or print materials prior to the seminar. The materials will be available at www.akronbar.org (under CLE heading, click on "Seminar Materials").</p> <p>CANCELLATION POLICY: Cancellations must be submitted in writing via email: cle@akronbar.org. Refunds will be made with the following charge: a \$45.00 cancellation fee. If no cancellation is received PRIOR to 12:00 p.m. the day before the seminar, no refund will be issued. The Akron Bar Association reserves the right to change or cancel the program if circumstances warrant.</p> <p>ACCREDITATION: The Akron Bar Association is an approved sponsor of Continuing Legal Education seminars. Under Rule X (Ohio CLE) we will request credit for this program.</p> <p>SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: If special arrangements are required for individuals to attend this seminar, please contact the CLE Department at 330-436-0112 at least one week prior to the seminar.</p> <p>DIRECTIONS TO HARTVILLE KITCHEN: FROM AKRON: Take I-77 S to OH-241 Exit (Exit #118) toward OH 619/Massillon. Turn LEFT on Massillon Rd/OH-241. Turn RIGHT on E. Turkeyfoot Lake Rd./OH-619. Follow OH-619 past Cleveland Ave. The Hartville Kitchen is on the left side of the street. FROM CANTON: Take I-77 N to OH-241 Exit (Exit #118). Turn RIGHT on Massillon Rd/OH-241. Turn RIGHT on E. Turkeyfoot Lake Rd./OH-619. Follow OH-619 past Cleveland Ave. The Hartville Kitchen is on the left side of the street.</p>
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Judiciary & Law Clerk will attend for free																							
TOTAL FEE	\$ _____																						
<p>Registration Options:</p> <p>Online: www.akronbar.org with credit card payment Phone: Akron Bar Association 330-436-0112</p> <p>Register online, choose "Payment at a later Time", and mail this form with your check to: Akron Bar Association 57 S. Broadway Street Akron, Ohio 44308</p> <p>Registration Info: Registration fee includes CLE electronic materials, continental breakfast & lunch. Registration received after 3/26/2025 will ensure an additional \$25 fee.</p>																							

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: DRIVER'S LICENSE REINSTATEMENT CLINIC

Saturday, April 5, 2025

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
425 Cleveland Ave. SW, Canton, OH 44702

9:00am - 12:00pm

Find out:

- What you need to do to get your license back.
- If you are eligible for the Bureau of Motor Vehicles Reinstatement Fee Amnesty Initiative and how much BMV fees can be reduced.
- How to arrange payment plans for court fines and fees.



FAQ:

Do I need to bring anything?

It is helpful if you would bring your driver's license.

Do I need to make an appointment?

Walk in any time between 9-12.

Do I have to live in Stark County?

No, everyone is welcome.

Stark County Bar Association
and Krugliak, Wilkins, Griffiths & Dougherty, Co., L.P.A.

Any Additional Questions:
330-497-0700

NEW MEMBERS

Jennifer L. Brown, Esq.
Bixler Moore
4505 Stephen Circle, N.W.
Suite 101
Canton, OH 44718
Phone: (330) 491-2222
Email: jbrown@bixlermoore.com

Kyle Johnson, Esq.
Brennan, Manna & Diamond, LLC
4518 Fulton Road
Suite 202
Canton, OH 44718
Phone: (330) 374-7475
Email: kajohnson@bmdllc.com

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

Shaunna Lincoln Dobbs, Esq.
Delaware County Court of Common Pleas
Domestic Relations Division
117 North Union Street - Level 400
Delaware, OH 43015
Phone: (740) 833-2025
Email: sdobbs@co.delaware.oh.us

James R. Galehouse, Esq.
Office of the Chapter 13 Trustee
200 Market Ave. N.
Suite 30
Canton, OH 44702
Phone: (330) 455-2222 Ext: 106
Email: jgalehouse@Chapter13Canton.com

NOTICE

The Wayne County Juvenile and Probate Court is seeking experienced candidates for its current job openings for Part-Time and Full-Time Magistrates. If you, or someone you know, is interested in a career with the Wayne County Juvenile and Probate Court, please contact Deborah Watkins, Court Administrator/Magistrate, Wayne County Probate and Juvenile Court, 330.287.5695, courtadmin@waynecourts.org

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LAW OFFICES**

Practice Areas:
Labor & Employment Law
Workers Compensation
Wills, Living Wills, & Powers of Attorney

330.492.0550
rreight@bmcclawfirm.com
baastenmckinleyattyy.com
4150 Belden Village St.
Ste. 604
Canton, OH 44718



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO PUBLIC NOTICE

APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT PANEL OF THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO

The Criminal Justice Act (“CJA”) Plan of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio sets forth provisions for furnishing representation in federal court for any person financially unable to obtain representation in accordance with the Criminal Justice Act, 18 U.S.C. § 3006A. Pursuant to Section X(A)(1)-(2) of the CJA Plan, “[t]he existing, previously established panel of attorneys who are eligible and willing to be appointed to provide representation under the CJA is hereby recognized; and [t]he court will approve attorneys for membership on the CJA Panel after receiving recommendations from the CJA Committee.”

Pursuant to Section X(C)(3)(a)-(e) of the CJA Plan, to be considered for appointment to the CJA Panel:

“Applicants ... must be members in good standing of the federal bar of this district and the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals; ... must maintain a primary, satellite, or shared office in this district; ... must possess strong litigation skills and demonstrate proficiency with the federal sentencing guidelines, federal sentencing procedures, the Bail Reform Act, the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, and the Federal Rules of Evidence; ... must have significant experience representing persons charged with serious criminal offenses and demonstrate a commitment to the defense of people who lack the financial means to hire an attorney; and [a] ttorneys who do not possess the experience set forth above but believe they have equivalent other experience are encouraged to apply and set forth in writing the details of that experience for the CJA Committee’s consideration.”

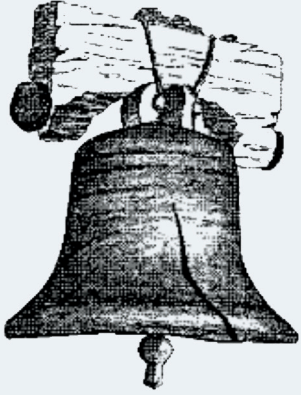
Attorneys wishing to be considered for membership on a CJA Panel who meet the eligibility requirements may submit an application no later than March 31, 2025, to cjaapplication@ohnd.uscourts.gov.

The application for membership on the Criminal Justice Act Panel may be obtained through the Court’s website at <https://www.ohnd.uscourts.gov/appointment-counsel-cja>.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

The Liberty Bell Award

In Celebration of Law Day
April 28, 2025 – May 2, 2025



The Liberty Bell Award is presented annually by the Stark County Bar Association to individual(s), particularly non-lawyers, who have rendered outstanding service to the community. All fields of endeavor are intended for promoting a better understanding of our Constitution and the Bill of Rights; encouraging a better respect of the law and the courts; stimulating a deeper sense of individual responsibility so that citizens recognize their duties as well as their rights; contributing to the effective functioning of our institutions of government; and fostering a better understanding and appreciation of the rule of law.

For further information, please contact Teresa P. Cusma, Liberty Bell Award Committee Chairman at 330-324-3982. Nominations will close Friday, March 28, 2025.

Stark County Bar Association

400 Courtyard Centre Building
116 Cleveland Avenue NW
Canton, Ohio 44702-1728
330-453-0685 • SCB@StarkCtyBar.com

Law Day Sponsorship

2025 Law Week April 28 – May 2

The Law Day Committee is asking local attorneys and law firms if they would be willing to make a donation in the amount of \$400.00 to help sponsor our Law Day Events. As you may know, we offer various events during this week:

- Essay and Poster Contests
- Moot Court Competition
- Tour de Courts
- Televised Ask-a-Lawyer
- CLE Seminar
- Ohio Justice Bus
- Law Day Luncheon
- “Why I Want to Become A Lawyer” Essay

In return for your valuable sponsorship, you will receive four tickets to the Law Day Luncheon on Wednesday, April 30, 2025 and will also receive recognition in the Law Day Program and in the Stark County Bar Journal. Don't miss out on what is an important event for our bar association.

If you are able to help sponsor these events, please forward a check in the amount of \$400.00 made payable to the Stark County Bar Association, Attn: Tina McCort.

Thank you in advance for your support. We hope to see you at these events.

Law Day Committee

Report of Bar Applicant Committee

On January 9th the Bar Applicant Committee conducted interviews of 3 candidates.

The breakdown of activity is as follows:

Candidates interviewed and approved for a subsequent bar examination	3
Re-Examination application approved	2
Supplemental applications approved	7
Total approvals granted	12

Committee members present and conducting interviews were Chairman James M. Conley, Scott P. Sandrock, James J. Collum, Anthony Kaplanis, and Magistrate Gretchen Stocker. We thank the members for taking time from their busy schedules to assist in conducting the interviews!

Stark County Bar Association Legal Scholarship

The Stark County Bar Association offers a Legal Scholarship. Consideration is given to the following:

- Students enrolled or accepted as a full or part-time student at an educational institution accredited to award a Juris Doctorate degree;
- Students pursuing a course of study designed to result in a Juris Doctorate degree; and
- Students in good academic standing in Law School or in prior academic work, as determined by the Scholarship Committee.

The Scholarship Committee also gives priority consideration to students with demonstrated financial need; students from the Stark County area; and students likely to pursue a law career in the Stark County area.

Stark Community Foundation administers our Scholarship, and the Scholarship Application may be found on their website at www.starkcf.org. The Application Deadline is April 1, 2025.



Milligan Pusateri
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

We Will Try Your Case
229 Years Combined Trial Experience

Richard S. Milligan
Paul J. Pusateri

Anthony E. Brown
Thomas R. Himmelspach
Merle D. "Trace" Evans

Kimberly K. Wyss
Jack B. Cooper
Jenna M. McKean

Daniel D. Eisenbrei
Brandon O. Trent

4684 Douglas Circle NW | Canton, OH 44718 | (330) 526-0770

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS: HELPING COLLEAGUES STRUGGLING WITH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

By Scott R. Mote, Esq., Executive Director, Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program

At the Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program (OLAP), we frequently receive calls from lawyers, judges, professors, law students, law office staff, and others who are concerned about a colleague. They start recognizing that their colleagues are missing deadlines, withdrawing from social interactions, and showing signs of physical exhaustion. It becomes clear to them that these colleagues are likely battling a mental health or substance use disorder (SUD), and they reach out to OLAP for guidance.

We all know that the legal profession is one of the most demanding career paths, often characterized by long hours, high stress, and immense pressure to succeed. While these challenges can foster professional growth, they can also take a toll on mental health and increase the risk of SUD.

By calling OLAP, the concerned colleagues are taking a step in the right direction to help the person in distress. Recognizing the early warning signs of substance abuse and understanding how to support colleagues in need is critical to fostering a healthy workplace culture. Beyond individual well-being, these efforts strengthen the overall legal profession by promoting a culture of accountability, reducing turnover, and enhancing team performance.

It's important for all of us in the profession to understand substance use disorder, recognize the signs and symptoms, and learn how to help a colleague in need.

Substance Use Disorders

Substance use disorders often develop as a response to chronic stress, trauma, or unmanageable workloads. The legal profession's competitive nature can exacerbate these risks, leading some lawyers to turn to alcohol or drugs as coping mechanisms. The stigma surrounding addiction, combined with fears of professional consequences, often prevents individuals from seeking help, making early recognition and intervention even more essential.

Warning Signs

Substance use disorders rarely emerge overnight. Instead, they often manifest gradually through changes

in behavior, appearance, and performance. While the following signs don't always indicate addiction, they warrant concern and further observation:

Behavioral Changes

- Erratic behavior: Sudden mood swings, irritability, or unexplained anger.
- Social withdrawal: Avoiding colleagues, skipping social events, or isolating themselves in the workplace.
- Increased risk-taking: Reckless decision-making, such as missing deadlines or ignoring ethical guidelines.

Physical Signs

- Changes in appearance: Neglecting personal hygiene, appearing disheveled, or showing signs of fatigue.
- Frequent illness: Repeatedly calling in sick or appearing physically unwell.
- Subtle physical indicators: Bloodshot eyes, slurred speech, or unsteady movements.

Performance Issues

- Declining work quality: Missing deadlines, producing subpar work, or making frequent mistakes.
- Inconsistent attendance: Frequent tardiness, unexplained absences, or disappearing during the workday.
- Over-reliance on excuses: Constantly justifying poor performance or blaming external factors.

How to Approach a Colleague in Need

Approaching a colleague you suspect may be struggling with addiction requires tact, empathy, and discretion. The goal is to express concern without judgment and encourage them to seek help.

Initiate the conversation in a private, neutral setting where both parties can speak openly without fear of being overheard. Avoid bringing up the issue during stressful moments or in front of others.

Use nonjudgmental language to express your observations. For example:

- "I've noticed you've seemed stressed lately and wanted to check in. Is everything okay?"

- You've been missing a lot of deadlines, which isn't like you. I'm worried about you."

Avoid accusatory statements like "You're clearly addicted" or "You're not pulling your weight," which may cause defensiveness.

Allow your colleague to share their perspective. Practice active listening by maintaining eye contact, nodding, and avoiding interruptions. Show empathy by acknowledging their feelings and offering reassurance.

Gently suggest resources such as OLAP, mental health counselors, or SUD specialists. Frame the suggestion as an opportunity for support rather than a punitive measure.

If your colleague is receptive, check in periodically to offer continued support. If they're resistant, remain patient and remind them that help is available when they're ready.

How to Be Supportive During Recovery

Once a colleague acknowledges their struggles and seeks help, your role as a supportive ally becomes even more critical. Recovery is a long-term process, and having a compassionate workplace environment can make a significant difference.

Confidentiality is paramount. Avoid discussing their situation with others unless explicitly permitted by the colleague.

Recovery may require time off for treatment or adjustments to workloads. Work with leadership to accommodate these needs without penalizing the individual.

Recognize and celebrate milestones in their recovery journey. Positive reinforcement can boost their confidence and encourage sustained efforts.

Advocate for workplace initiatives that prioritize mental health and well-being, such as stress management workshops or access to counseling services.

How Organizations Can Help

While individual support is essential, systemic changes are equally important in addressing addiction within the legal profession. Here are some steps that judges, law firms and organizations can take:

- Reduce stigma through education: Conduct workshops or seminars to educate staff about addiction as a medical condition rather than a moral failing. Normalize conversations about

mental health and substance use disorders.

- Adopt policies that support well-being: Introduce policies that prioritize work-life balance, such as reasonable billing expectations, flexible schedules, and mandatory vacation days.
- Establish a culture of accountability and care: Encourage leadership to model healthy behaviors and foster an environment where employees feel safe seeking help without fear of judgment or professional repercussions.

Recognizing the signs of substance use disorders and supporting colleagues in need is both a professional and ethical responsibility. By fostering a culture of compassion and understanding, lawyers can help create a healthier, more sustainable workplace. Early intervention not only benefits the individual struggling but also strengthens the entire legal field, ensuring that the profession's demanding nature doesn't come at the cost of personal well-being.

Sidebar:

What Happens If You Call OLAP?

When you call OLAP concerned about a colleague, we do not contact the disciplinary counsel. We are not a policing agency. We do not mandate people to seek help or to take the help that we recommend. We do as much as we can to encourage the person to seek relief.

- We will ask you the reasons for your concern and about other information regarding the attorney, judge or law student.
- We will ask you about others who might provide additional information or corroborate your observations, such as a colleague, a spouse or a friend, and ask you to contact them and ask that they contact us.
- OLAP's professional staff will assess the information to make a provisional determination about what may be happening.
- OLAP will decide what help might be appropriate and how to offer it in the best way.

We require corroborating information on a new client before doing anything. This means that we need to speak with others who are also concerned about the person. If we do not obtain corroboration, we do not move forward to intervene—we open a confidential file and wait. When we have corroboration, we will often set up and facilitate an intervention. Sometimes we provide information to the caller on how to approach the troubled person, and that results in a call from the person who needs help.

(continued on next page)

Recognizing the Signs *(continued from previous page)*

If you are a legal professional who is unhappy, depressed, suffering from substance use disorder, burnout, or stress, and you believe it is affecting your life, the Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program can provide CONFIDENTIAL help. For more information, go to ohiolap.org or call (800) 348-4343.

If you are a judge or magistrate who needs help, contact the Judicial Advisory Group, a peer-based confidential assistance group that helps judges and magistrates with personal and professional issues. For more information, go to www.ohiolap.org/judges or call (800) 348-4343.

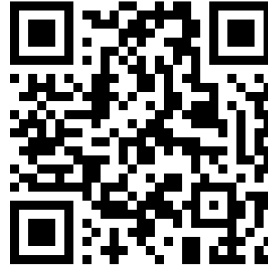
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