



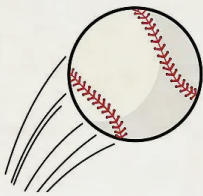
STARK COUNTY BAR JOURNAL

VOLUME 31 ■ NUMBER 8

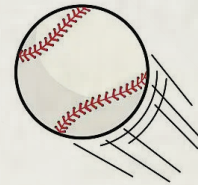
AUGUST 2025



STARK COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

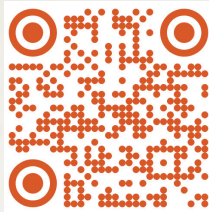


SUMMER SOCIAL AT CANAL PARK



FRIDAY, AUGUST 8, 2025

GATES OPEN @ 5:30 P.M. • GAME BEGINS @ 7:05 P.M.



REGISTER HERE!

Or mail your check made payable to Stark County Bar Association,
116 Cleveland Ave., N.W., Suite 400, Canton, Ohio 44702.

Register by August 1st.

**RUBBERDUCKS
VS.
CHESAPEAKE BAYSOX**

**Fireworks after game!
Bring your staff,
family and friends!**



SCBA August 2025 Office Schedule

Aug 7 th	12:00 NOON	Community Involvement Committee Meeting
Aug 11 th	11:00 AM	Technology Committee Meeting
Aug 11 th	4:00PM	Disputed Fee Committee Meeting
Aug 14 th	12:00 NOON	Legal Aid/Pro Bono Committee Meeting
Aug 19 th	3:30PM	Grievance Committee Meeting
Aug 20 th	4:00PM	Executive Committee Meeting
Aug 25 th	3:30PM	SCBA 125th Celebration Committee Meeting

The Bar Office E-Mail Addresses:

Tina@StarkCtyBar.com
SCBAReferral@StarkCtyBar.com
CLE@StarkCtyBar.com
SCBANotary@StarkCtyBar.com

Visit us at www.StarkCtyBar.com

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

August 28, 2025	2025 Professional Conduct Seminar Video Replay SCBA Conference Room See Pg. 4
September 25, 2025	2025 Estate Planning & Elder Law Symposium Kent State Stark Conference Center See Pgs. 5-6



On-Line CLE

Take advantage of the Stark County
Bar Association's **SELF-STUDY** courses
through our website:
www.StarkCtyBar.com.



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

THE STARK COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION



- Save The Date -

SCBA's 125th Anniversary Celebration

Saturday, September 13, 2025	Exhibit at Cyrus Custom Framing "Lawyers Do More Than Practice Law" Featuring art/photography/mixed media/reception included
Friday, November 7, 2025	12 Angry Women Play with Reception
Saturday, November 8, 2025	12 Angry Women Play

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

Beverly P. Proctor-Donald, Bar President
Tina McCort, Executive Director & Editor
Chris Diaz, Bookkeeper & Editor

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www.StarkCtyBar.com

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All communications and editorial material should be
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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

During my years of private practice, I enjoyed traveling to various jurisdictions. There were some beautiful drives through Mahoning and Tuscarawas Counties during the fall and some treacherous ones on the twisting and narrow ice-covered backroads on snowy days in Coshocton, Ravenna, and other towns. Out in Holmes County you need to watch carefully to avoid stepping into what the horse-drawn buggies leave behind as you journey into the courthouse past the hitching posts. Our state has many impressive and breathtaking courthouses - including our own Stark County Court of Common Pleas - rich with history and being enriched daily with brand new stories. I recall my first time at a Courthouse in one of our more rural counties. I took a little extra time to acclimate myself prior to my hearing and stumbled upon a sign posted in the basement that read "No spitting on the Floor" and thought, who - at any point in the history of the existence of that stately courthouse - has to be told a thing like that? Basic etiquette and decorum are things that many of us find intrinsic while others are oblivious. Or, perhaps, it is relative? This brings me to my subject - Untucked Attorneys.

I was raised up amongst a generation of folks who dressed up to go just about everywhere. Pretty much everything to do with church - weddings, funerals, baptisms, regular service - required a full suit with a tie for men and boys or your best dress for ladies and girls. People wore dress shirts and ties to school and dances and even dressed up to travel on trains, buses and airplanes. As a child, I remember my mother ironing on various colored patches to match the colors of the worn and torn knees of my brother's dress uniform pants. We dressed to the nines to go out to dinner at a nice restaurant and even dressed to impress to hang out at the mall back in the 1980s. Anyone who worked as a professional - doctors, business people and especially lawyers - always appeared to work dressed impeccably in your finest set of clothes and shoes. Attorneys commanded respect and exuded professionalism through their attire. Most, if not all of us, have a best navy blue, charcoal gray or black power suit reserved for meetings with corporate boards, high conflict litigation and big trials. The history of our justice system dictated



Magistrate Beverly Proctor-Donald
President, Stark County Bar Association

that we lawyers assume the garb to match our grand ornate and illustrious courthouses. Typically, the attorney would set the tone for clients with courtroom decorum and attire. As with anything, you gauge your audience and dress accordingly - of course, some jurisdictions are more buttoned up than other rural communities where the locals rarely wear a shirt and tie.

Then came the transformative era of post COVID-19 - the untucked generation - where dress shirts are branded and designed to be "untucked." While litigating a case in Mahoning County about a year or two after COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, I was beckoned to the Judge's bench after a hearing. It had been many years since I visited that court and I had not had much interaction with the long sitting Judge. My client was an elderly gentleman who was not very mobile and not at all technologically inclined. The court had been kind enough to grant our Motion for him to attend by Zoom; however, the connection was never made. To my surprise, instead of being admonished for my elderly client not being able to figure out the Zoom link, the Judge wanted to thank me for wearing professional attire - a suit

(continued on next page)

- to court. She explained that the self-imposed dress code for attorneys and litigants had drastically declined after COVID, and many attorneys chose more casual attire. These days, it is common for people to wear jeans to all things – weddings, funerals, fancy restaurants, concerts and court appearances. I definitely did not see the day coming where litigants – who presumably often desire to also make good first impressions – arrive to our prestigious courts of law wearing pajama pants, sleep bonnets, fuzzy slippers, belly bearing tank tops, ripped and intentionally distressed/tattered jeans showing undergarments and pants that show the entirety of a man's underpants as well as a myriad of other appalling variations. I suppose these are fashion statements but to me it is a clear statement about the diminished respect for our courts.

Recently, a nearby municipal court was compelled to issue an Administrative Order effective July 1, 2025 implementing a dress code, with a statement at the top of the list of unacceptable clothing items: "Attorneys/licensed counsel MUST be dressed in professional attire." The Order goes on to list numerous very succinct items of clothing that

are prohibited and notifies litigants that failing to comply with the dress code will result in immediate removal from the court. Although the litigants in our Stark County Courts could stand some firm admonishment, I am certain our Stark County Bar members will continue to serve as good examples of what acceptable post-COVID untucked, but professional, attire should be.

Save the completely relaxed attire for our many upcoming social events! Our First Bar Review was on July 15, 2025 at the Winking Lizard Tavern and hopefully will be the beginning of the revival of quarterly gatherings. Please join us for the Stark County Bar Association Summer Social at Canal Park on Friday, August 8, 2025. The gate opens at 5:30 p.m. and the game begins at 7:05 p.m. Be sure to bring your staff, family and friends if you wish- there will be fireworks after the game. Also, as we continue with the SCBA's 125th Anniversary Celebration – please be sure to include in your schedule the Exhibit at Cyrus Custom Framing "Lawyers Do More Than Practice Law" on Saturday, September 13, 2025 and a production of 12 Angry Women at the McKinley Museum on November 7th and 8th, 2025.

First SCBA Bar Review was on July 15, 2025 at the Winking Lizard Tavern



The SCBA's CLE Director/Referral Secretary Position is Available

The Stark County Bar Association is currently seeking a full time CLE Director/Referral Secretary/Receptionist.

The applicant must have the collegiality and professionalism necessary to work well serving the public and the members of the bar association.

Primary responsibilities will be applying for CLE with the Supreme Court of Ohio, working with committees to schedule meetings to plan seminars; work with speakers and their equipment requirements, prepare Agendas; prepare and put together hand-out material; handle registration and attend all seminars; and scheduling of the facility. Applicant will also conduct webinars via Zoom.

The Referral Secretary makes referrals to attorneys, works with the Referral Service Committee, prepares and sends reports including the Annual Supreme Court Referral Service Report.

The ideal candidate must have some previous work in the legal field, be organized, manage time effectively, be a self-starter, very dependable, work well independently, be a team player, and enjoys working with the public. The applicant must display a positive attitude and be willing to do such other tasks as assigned.

Proficiency with Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, and Outlook) is a must.

Please send resume to Stark County Bar Association, 116 Cleveland Ave., N.W., Suite 400, Canton, Ohio 44702.



125th Celebration Art Show Gala and Exhibit

The art show gala and exhibit opening for “Lawyers Do More Than Practice Law” to be held at the Cyrus Art Gallery will kick off on the evening of Saturday, September 13, 2025 from 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The show will run after the 13th for a number of weeks. Mark the opening event on all your calendars and please plan on attending. Invite your family, clients and friends. If you have a talent in the arts, photography or writing, furniture making, building or remodeling, music, singing, dancing, etc., contact Attorney David Herbert “Lawyers Do More Than Practice Law” Event Chairman @ herblegal@aol.com and let’s get your talents on display for this celebration of the Bar’s 125th year event! Complimentary refreshments will be provided for the opening event and there will be no admission charge. This should be a really great event!

NOTICE ONLINE MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY PHOTO REQUEST

Members wishing to have their photo posted in our Online Membership Directory on our website, please e-mail your photo to Chris at SCBANotary@StarkCtyBar.com.

Stark County Bar Association



2025 PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT SEMINAR VIDEO REPLAY

Thursday, August 28, 2025
SCBA Conference Room

12:45 P.M.	REGISTRATION
1:00 P.M.	<u>ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS IT RELATES TO ETHICS</u> Joseph M. Caligiuru, Esq., <i>Disciplinary Counsel</i>
2:30 P.M.	BREAK
2:45 P.M.	<u>BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT & CASE LAW UPDATE</u> Aletha M. Carver, Esq., <i>Mediator, Fifth District Court of Appeals</i>
3:45 P.M.	ADJOURN



2025 Professional Conduct Seminar Video Replay

*Members: \$75.00 Associate Members: \$62.50 Non-Members: \$137.50

Name _____ Atty. Reg. No. _____

Address _____

Email _____

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

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

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 approved for 2.50 Professional Conduct CLE Credit Hours.



Stark County Bar Association

2025 ESTATE PLANNING AND ELDER LAW SYMPOSIUM

Thursday, September 25, 2025-Kent State Stark Conference Center

LIVE SEMINAR

***Sponsored by: Judge Curt Werren and the Probate Practice and
Elder Law Committees of the Stark County Bar Association***

- 8:00 A.M. REGISTRATION & CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST
- 8:30 A.M. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE
Mary Augsburger, Esq., OSBA Chief Executive Officer & Corporate Secretary
- 9:30 A.M. DRAFTING BEST PRACTICES
John D. Clark, Esq., Law Office of John D. Clark
- 10:15 A.M. BREAK
- 10:30 A.M. SURVIVING SPOUSE'S RIGHTS UNDER THE PROBATE CODE
Ralph E. Lehman, Esq., Logee, Hostetler, Stutzman & Lehman, LLC
- 11:15 A.M. DRAFTING BEST PRACTICES TRUST PROTECTOR ACT
Brian C. Layman, Esq., Layman Law Group
Daniel R. Griffith, Esq., SVP Director of Wealth Strategy, The Huntington National Bank
- 12:00 NOON LUNCH PROVIDED
- 12:55 P.M. Presentation by KIKO (Event Sponsor)
- 1:00 P.M. CASE LAW UPDATE
Jessica Forrest, Esq., Reminger Co., L.P.A.
- 2:00 P.M. BREAK
- 2:15 P.M. UNDERSTANDING LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE: POLICY TYPES,
QUALIFICATION STANDARDS, AND CASE STUDIES
Jim Wolverton, J.D., Director of Legal Education, Krause Financial
- 3:15 P.M. BREAK
- 3:25 P.M. Presentation by Farmer's Trust Company (Reception Sponsor)
- 3:30 P.M. VIEW FROM THE BENCH
Honorable Curt Werren, Stark County Probate Court
- 4:15 P.M. ADJOURN

RECEPTION WITH THE HONORABLE CURT WERREN FOLLOWING SEMINAR.

(continued on next page)

2025 ESTATE PLANNING AND ELDER LAW SYMPOSIUM LIVE SEMINAR - KENT STATE STARK CONFERENCE CENTER

Thursday, September 25, 2025

Registration Deadline: September 11, 2025

*Members: \$265.00 Associate Members: \$235.00 Non-Members: \$415.00

Name: _____ Atty. Reg. No. _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Please mail your payment for this seminar to: Stark County Bar Association
116 Cleveland Avenue, N.W., Suite 400, Canton, Ohio 44702-1728

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.

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

NO REFUNDS UNLESS RESERVATION CANCELLATION IS RECEIVED 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF SEMINAR.

Application applied for 6.00 CLE General Credit Hours and
6.00 Certified Specialization Credit Hours in Elder Law and Estate Planning, Trust, and Probate Law.



CLE UPDATE!

**Take advantage of the Stark County Bar Association's
SELF-STUDY courses through our website:
www.starkctybar.com**

THE FOLLOWING SELF-STUDY COURSES ARE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE:

- 2024 Criminal Law Seminar (3.25 General credit hours)
- 2024 Professional Conduct Seminar (2.5 Professional Conduct credit hours)
- 2024 Family Law Seminar (3.00 General credit hours)
- 2024 Law Day Seminar (3.00 General credit hours)
- The 28th Annual White-Williams Bankruptcy Institute (5.00 General & 1.0 Professional Conduct credit hour)
- 2024 Estate Planning & Elder Law Symposium (5.25 General credit hours & 1.0 Professional Conduct credit hour)
- 2024 Summertime Tech Series - Session 1: Generative AI Seminar (1.0 General credit hour)
- 2024 Summertime Tech Series - Session 2: Cyber Security Seminar (1.0 General credit hour)
- 2024 Summertime Tech Series - Session 3: Digital Forensics (1.0 General credit hour)
- 2024 Municipal Court Seminar (3.00 General credit hours)
- 2025 Criminal Law Seminar (3.00 General credit hours)
- 2025 Municipal Court Seminar (2.5 General credit hours & .50 Professional Conduct credit hour)
- 2025 Family Law Seminar (2.75 General credit hours)
- 2025 Law Day Seminar (2.5 General credit hours & .75 Professional Conduct credit hour)

SCBA's self-study courses direct link: <https://starkctybar.com/cle/cle-self-study/>

AVAILABLE AND ACCESSIBLE ANYWHERE 24/7!

If you have questions about our online CLE or have problems logging in, please call the Bar Office or email CLE@starkctybar.com.

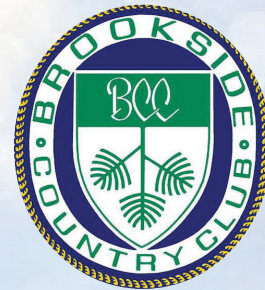
NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Melanie John - Paralegal
Sponsor: Honorable Taryn L. Heath

Caragan Burick
Law Student



Save The Date



Holiday Party
Brookside Country Club
December 5, 2025

JOIN OUR TEAM

BAASTEN, MCKINLEY & CO., L.P.A.

Experience Level: Associate 0-5 years / Full-Time / On-Site

BMCO is a respected law firm focused on labor and employment law, proudly representing public employees, unions, and working professionals throughout Ohio. BMCO is seeking a passionate, detail-oriented attorney.

Job Expectations:

- Advocate for clients in labor and employment matters
- Conduct legal research and write memoranda
- Participate in administrative proceedings with State agencies, including but not limited to SERB, ODEW, and the Industrial Commission
- Support collective bargaining negotiations
- Provide legal training sessions to clients and groups

SEND YOUR RESUME: baastenmckinleyatty.com rreight@bmcolawfirm.com

Continuing Legal Education Looking For Free CLE?

The Stark County Bar Association is in need of Moderators for CLE video replays at our office. We need attorneys throughout the year, especially during the month of December, who would be willing to serve in this capacity. **In order to qualify as a Moderator, the Supreme Court requires that an attorney must have experience in the area of law in which they will be serving, must have reviewed the recorded materials prior to the replay, and must remain in the room with the attendees during the entire video. The Moderator will attend the video replay free of charge and receive CLE credit for the program.**

If interested, please indicate the areas of law in which you would be willing to serve and mail or fax to the Bar Office, 116 Cleveland Avenue, N.W., Suite 400, Canton, Ohio 44702. Phone: 330-453-0685 / Fax: 330-453-0180. The complete form can also be scanned and emailed to: CLE@StarkCtyBar.com.

NAME: _____ EMAIL: _____

- ☐ Appellate Court
- ☐ Criminal Law
- ☐ Professional Conduct
- ☐ Family Law
- ☐ Other (s)

- ☐ Litigation
- ☐ Municipal Court
- ☐ Probate
- ☐ Real Estate

Notary Stamp Prices

The Stark County Bar Association is offering for sale Attorney and Non-Attorney Notary Public Stamps and Seals. If you are interested in purchasing these items, please contact the Stark County Bar Association at 330-453-0685, or visit our website at www.starkctybar.com.

PRICE INFORMATION:

1. Notary Name Stamp and Embossed Seal (to be used with ink pad).....	(\$46.75 + \$2.65 tax) = *\$49.40
2. Notary Self-Ink Stamp with seal (includes name stamp & notary seal in one)	(\$42.50 + \$2.37 tax) = *\$44.87
3. Notary Self-Ink Stamp without seal (name stamp only in self-ink)	(\$37.00 + \$2.02 tax) = *\$39.02
4. Notary Pre-Ink Stamp with seal (includes name stamp & notary seal in one).....	(\$44.75 + \$2.52 tax) = *\$47.27
5. Notary Pre-Ink Stamp without seal (name stamp only in pre-ink).....	(\$37.85 + \$2.07 tax) = *\$39.92
6. Notary Name Stamp Only (to be used with ink pad)	(\$24.40 + \$1.20 tax) = *\$25.60
7. Embossed Seal Only	(\$33.70 + \$1.80 tax) = *\$35.50
8. Felt Stamp Pad Black Ink.....	(\$11.35 + \$0.35 tax) = *\$11.70

**Prices include 6.50% Sales Tax & Shipping Charges*

Would You Like Additional Clients? Join Our Lawyer Referral Service

Why not consider your Stark County Bar Association's Lawyer Referral Service? We will refer clients to you who need your expertise in your specialties of law. Attorneys are currently needed for our LAWYER REFERRAL SERVICE for all areas of law, especially:

- Consumer Law - auto/retail/home • Child custody/support/visitation • Insurance - health/life/auto • Small Claims
- General • Civil Matters • Identity Theft • Immigration • School Law • Real Estate • Predatory Lending

Call the Stark County Bar Association at 330-453-0685
or E-mail: SCBAReferral@StarkCtyBar.com for more information.

Bar Journal Advertising Rates

Full Page	\$250.00
Half Page	125.00
One-Third Page	85.00
Quarter Page	62.50
Per Column Inch	
Approximately 1 3/4" x 1"	10.00
1 3/4" x 2"	20.00
Double Column Width	
3 1/2" x 1"	20.00
3 1/2" x 2" (Business Card Size).....	40.00

DEADLINE: 15th of each month for following month's issue.

Advertising is free to our members for the first three months – limited to business card size or smaller ad.

If you run the same ad consecutively starting January to December and you pay the entire year in advance in January, you will get December's ad free.

Back Cover ad – The size of the back page is 8 1/2" by 9". The price is still \$250.00. This is due to Post Office requirements.

Legal Writing Tune-Up: Quick Tips for a Winning Brief

Legal briefs are key to success in the courtroom. The purpose of your brief is to present a clear and persuasive legal argument to the court. A well-crafted brief can leave a strong impression on a judge and even help sway their opinion before you step into the courtroom. Writing is an essential skill that requires continual practice. According to market research, attorneys spend an average of 23% of their working hours drafting documents.¹ Attorneys in this study mentioned that writing legal briefs was challenging. In this article, we will list four tips to help you navigate these challenges.

1. Do Your Research

Research is an integral part of creating a persuasive and effective brief. Your citations should use law that is still accurate. Using applicable citations can help solidify your argument and reflect your competence and professionalism. The Law Library has access to **Lexis+** and **Westlaw**, which can aid your research. Both databases—**Shepard's** and **KeyCite**—offer citation services that give a quick glimpse into laws that have been treated negatively or positively in court.¹ They also provide the option to see why their treatments have changed, which is especially important when the treatment of cases changes rapidly.

Explore our eBook catalog for titles such as *A Judge's Perspective on the Science and Rhetoric of the Written Word* by Robert E. Bacharach. Additionally, *Writing Persuasive Briefs* by Peck Garvin is available for in-person use at the Law Library (KF250.P4).

2. Outline Your Brief

An outline helps ensure you have all your brief's key elements. Although it may be an extra step, creating an outline assists with organizing your document in a logical order.² Additionally, an outline ensures that you explicitly state what you want to say and why before you put your draft together.³

3. Be Clear and Concise

Clarity and concision are vital in both written and verbal communication. Use standard language while tailoring your brief to your client's case. Prioritizing plain language and avoiding jargon helps communicate your ideas effectively.⁴ It enables the reader to understand your message and leaves little room for confusion or misunderstandings. Whoever reads your brief should be able to see your position and understand the applicable body of law in your argument.⁵

4. Proofread and Edit

Although editing can be daunting, it is an essential part of writing. Editing can be done once you complete your first draft. You can edit for structure, content, clarity, style, and citations. When you are finished editing, take the time to proofread. During the proofreading process you can focus on punctuation, grammar, and spelling. Try to keep this process separate and revisit it after taking some distance from your brief.⁶ Separating these processes allows you to focus on the important task of developing and connecting ideas.

By Kasey Brown
Stark County Law Library
kcbrown@starkcountyohio.gov

Footnotes

- ¹LexisNexis. "How to Write Winning Legal Briefs With Judicial Analytics" *LexisNexis*. 18 Jun. 2023. Accessed 19 May. 2025. Available at: <https://www.lexisnexis.com/community/insights/legal/b/thought-leadership/posts/write-winning-legal-briefs-with-judicial-analytics>
- ²Emerson, Mary Sharp. "8 Ways You Can Improve Your Communication Skills" *Harvard Professional and Executive Development*. 08 Jan. 2024. Accessed 19 May. 2025. Available at: <https://professional.dce.harvard.edu/blog/8-ways-you-can-improve-your-communication-skills/>
- ³Mengün, Jef. "Writing Reports and Briefs: Mastering Clarity and Conciseness" *Strategic Learning*. 01 Jun. 2024. Accessed 20 May. 2025. Available at: <https://www.strategiclearning.asia/writing-reports-and-briefs-mastering-clarity-and-conciseness/>
- ⁴Whelan, Claire. "Clarity In Writing: Why It's Important And How To Improve" *VisibleThread*. 12 May. 2022. Accessed 20 May. 2025. Available at: <https://law.lclark.edu/live/files/9394-westlaw-terms-and-connectors-searching>
- ⁵Hanley Kosse, Susan and David T. ButleRitchie. "How Judges, Practitioners, and Legal Writing Teachers Assess the Writing Skills of New Law Graduates: A Comparative Study" *Journal of Legal Education*. Vol. 53, No.1. (pp.80-102) Accessed 21 May. 2025. Available at: www.jstor.org/stable/42893788
- ⁶The Writing Center. "Editing and Proofreading" *The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*. Accessed 21 May. 2025. Available at: <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/editing-and-proofreading/>

SIX WAYS LAWYERS CAN SET BOUNDARIES AND WHY THEY ARE ESSENTIAL FOR A HEALTHY LEGAL CAREER

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

Over the years, I've sat across from countless lawyers—seasoned litigators, public defenders, corporate counsel, solo practitioners—and I've noticed something they all had in common, no matter their area of practice or career stage:

They were overwhelmed.

Some were exhausted. Some were quietly unraveling. Many were functioning on the outside, but feeling lost, burned out, or unsure how to slow down without dropping the ball.

If that sounds familiar, let me tell you this: you're not alone, and it's not a personal failure. It's a systemic problem—and one that we, as a profession, must confront.

One of the most powerful ways to prevent that slow unraveling is deceptively simple:

Set boundaries.

Boundaries are the intentional limits we create to protect our mental, emotional and physical well-being so that we can continue practicing law with clarity, ethics and strength.

And no, setting boundaries doesn't make you selfish or weak. In fact, it's one of the most courageous, responsible things a lawyer can do.

Here are six ways I encourage lawyers to set healthy boundaries—because when you hold the line, you hold on to what matters most.

Reclaim your time—without guilt

Lawyers are taught to be available, responsive, and always “on.” But let's be honest. Being on 24/7 isn't sustainable. It's a fast track to burnout.

One of the most common struggles I hear at OLAP is “I'm working all the time, and I still feel behind.”

Consider some of these tips to create essential time boundaries:

- Set office hours for yourself and stick to them, even if you work from home.
- Communicate realistic response times to clients

upfront.

- Turn off email notifications when you're off the clock.
- Schedule protected blocks of time during the day when you don't take calls or check your inbox.

Remember: You're allowed to stop working at a reasonable hour. You're allowed to have dinner without multitasking. You're allowed to rest.

Separate your role from your identity

Many lawyers I've worked with describe feeling like they are their job. When things go wrong, they internalize it. When clients are in crisis, they feel personally responsible. The line between personal and professional disappears.

But, you are not your caseload. You are not your clients' trauma, or their decisions, or the outcome of any one matter.

Emotional boundaries are about learning to care without carrying everything on your shoulders:

- Debrief tough cases with a trusted peer or counselor.
- Journal or reflect after intense court days to process and release emotion.
- Recognize when compassion is turning into codependence.
- Give yourself permission to step back, even momentarily.

You can be fully committed and still protect your heart.

Redraw relationship boundaries—even with clients and colleagues

It can feel awkward to set limits with clients, partners, or even friends who want “a quick legal opinion.” But the lack of boundaries is often what leads to resentment, burnout, or even ethical issues.

Here's what healthy relationship boundaries look like:

- Declining to take on work from friends or family.

- Saying no to “off-the-clock” client calls at night or on weekends.
- Having firm policies about communication—when, how, and how much.
- Being honest about your capacity, even if it disappoints someone.

You don’t have to take every case. You don’t have to answer every call. And you definitely don’t have to explain or apologize for protecting your well-being.

Guard your focus like it’s sacred (because it is)

The law is not a passive profession. It demands attention, critical thinking and precision. Yet many lawyers spend their days ping-ponging between texts, emails, Teams chats, and courtroom prep, never fully sinking into one thing.

Boundaries around attention are game-changers:

- Turn off push notifications while drafting, writing, or reviewing.
- Batch your emails instead of reacting to every new message.
- Use an “away” message when you’re in deep work or out of office.
- Let staff know when you’re unavailable, even if it’s only for 45 minutes.

When you control your attention, you control your energy. And when you protect your energy, everything else improves—productivity, professionalism, even client relationships.

Know where work ends and life begins

The best lawyers I know are also fully themselves outside of work. They hike, sing, travel, read, coach soccer, garden, or just enjoy time with the people they love. But that only happens when they draw real, non-negotiable boundaries around their non-working time.

I’ve spoken with lawyers who broke down in tears because they hadn’t taken a true weekend off in years. Or who hadn’t seen their kids’ games. Or who missed their anniversary dinner to rewrite a motion... for the third time.

We have to do better—for ourselves, and for the people who love us.

Some tools I recommend:

- Schedule personal time just like a hearing—put it on the calendar.
- Let your team know your “hard stops.”
- Create rituals that signal the end of the workday (a walk, a shower, changing clothes).
- Unplug intentionally—yes, even from social media.

Put your mental health on the calendar

I can’t tell you how many lawyers only call OLAP after something has gone wrong: a disciplinary complaint, a panic attack, a health scare. But the truth is, support works best when it’s proactive.

Make mental well-being a regular part of your routine:

- Go to therapy or coaching even when things are fine. Think of it as legal hygiene.
- Join a confidential peer support group.
- Take your vacation. And I mean really take it—don’t just relocate your laptop.
- Learn to notice signs of fatigue, irritability, cynicism, or brain fog. Those are your check-engine lights.

Mental health isn’t a crisis to avoid—it’s a foundation to build.

Strong boundaries make strong lawyers

Boundaries aren’t a luxury. They’re not an escape hatch. They’re not just for people who “can afford to slow down.”

Boundaries are for you—the hardworking, high-achieving, heart-in-the-right-place lawyer who wants to keep doing this work without losing yourself along the way.

And if you ever need help holding that line—if you’re struggling, tired, overwhelmed, or just need to talk—OLAP is here for you. Confidential. Judgment-free.

Because you deserve support; you deserve rest; and you deserve to practice law without breaking yourself in the process.

Let’s draw that line—together.

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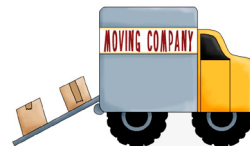
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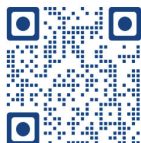
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