

June 24, 2025

ABA and Krill Strategies launch new lawyer mental health research project

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CHICAGO, June 24, 2025— The American Bar Association, through its [Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs](#) (COLAP), and [Krill Strategies](#) have entered into a cooperation agreement to collaborate on a new, nationwide research project aimed at improving mental health and well-being in the legal profession. This research will be conducted by state bars disseminating an anonymous and confidential survey to a random sample of their lawyers.

Given substantial shifts in the legal profession over the past decade, including significant changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, an updated national assessment of mental health and substance use among attorneys is critically needed. This study will provide a 10-year update to and build upon the landmark 2016 ABA-Hazelden Betty Ford study, offering essential insights into current trends, attitudes and barriers to mental health and well-being in law.

Approximately 30 states representing all regions of the country will be participating in the research and disseminating the survey to their actively

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profession, necessary information which is highly germane to the practice of law and vital to effective policy formation at the state and national level. The research will allow state bars and regulators to improve outcomes, mitigate impairment risk, and increase public trust and confidence in our legal system consistent with the purpose and spirit of ABA Model Rule 1.1 (Competence).



Timeline: The survey will launch this summer, with data analysis continuing through the fall and a planned publication of the findings in a peer-reviewed scientific journal in the first half of 2026.

The 2025 national survey will address multiple important knowledge gaps, including:

- **Establishing Current Mental Health, Substance Use and Burnout Baseline:** The research will update the understanding of the prevalence of mental health and substance use issues among attorneys nationally, reflecting recent changes in the profession. It will also provide the first national estimate of the prevalence of work-related burnout in the legal profession.
- **Attitudes and Barriers:** The survey will assess current attitudes toward mental health, perceived stigma, and specific barriers attorneys face in seeking mental health assistance.

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within the profession.

- **Self-Care and Resource Utilization:** The researchers will evaluate attitudes toward self-care, utilization of mental health resources (e.g., Lawyer Assistance Programs) and other strategies for managing stress.
- **Mental Health Risk Factors and Protective Factors:** The research will examine multiple known risk factors and protective factors related to mental health and well-being, including a sense of meaning and purpose, personal and professional values alignment, and loneliness.
- **Physical Health and Substance Use for Performance:** The study will assess physical health factors and examine the prevalence and attitudes surrounding the use of stimulants or performance-enhancing drugs among attorneys.
- **Qualitative Insights:** The researchers will gather qualitative data through open-ended questions on strategies and interventions that attorneys believe could enhance mental health and well-being.

This research project will be led by attorney behavioral health and well-being specialist [Patrick Krill](#) (JD, LLM, MA), of Krill Strategies, and [Justin Anker](#) (Ph.D.) from the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Minnesota. Prior studies led by Krill and Anker have informed national policies, guided ABA and statewide task forces in improving attorney well-being and generated significant attention for these critical issues and the work of lawyer assistance programs.

“We are optimistic that the ambitious scope of this national study will generate

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This updated national research aims to deliver current, reliable, and actionable data necessary for cultivating a healthier and more resilient legal community. It will strengthen participating bar associations' roles as leaders in promoting attorney mental health and well-being and will support evidence-based decision-making and resource allocation. Results will be reported in the aggregate, with no participating state being singled out or having its state-specific results published.

The ABA is one of the largest voluntary associations of lawyers in the world. As the national voice of the legal profession, the ABA works to improve the administration of justice, promotes programs that assist lawyers and judges in their work, accredits law schools, provides continuing legal education, and works to build public understanding around the world of the importance of the rule of law. View our [privacy statement](#) online. Follow the latest ABA news at www.americanbar.org/news and on X (formerly Twitter) [@ABANews](#).

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