



The
DISCIPLINARY BOARD
of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

December 2025
Newsletter



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From the Chair

The Members and staff of the Disciplinary Board grieve the [passing of esteemed colleague Barry M. Simpson](#). A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, Barry was the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Bar Association from 1999 until his retirement in 2023, also serving as the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Bar Institute. In service of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Barry was a member of its Continuing Legal Education Board and, prior to that, a member of its IOLTA Board. It is a true understatement to simply say that Barry will be missed by many. On behalf of the Disciplinary Board, I offer condolences to his wife, children, grandchildren, and myriad friends and colleagues. He was a true pillar of Pennsylvania's legal community.



As we reach the holiday season and the end of another year, we look forward to celebration, recreation, and quality time with loved ones. Many also may welcome major professional and life changes. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate any Pennsylvania attorneys planning for retirement in the near future and thank all amongst those ranks for their years of dedication to the vocation. Your strengths, passions, and ethical practice are the pride of the Commonwealth's legal community.

Echoing [last month's edition](#) of *The Keystone Lex*, *what should you do about your license if you are considering an end to your law practice in Pennsylvania?* The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania offers four license status options available to those planning to retire their law practice: continue maintaining active status, assume inactive status, assume retired status, or request emeritus status.

To any who are retiring and seeking a way to serve their fellow Pennsylvanians, I enthusiastically encourage you to learn more about participation in the Board's [emeritus status program](#). There are currently sixty-one emeritus status attorneys generously volunteering their time and efforts to civil legal aid across the state. These individuals lend their unique expertise and experience to legal aid providers throughout the state, narrowing the gap between the need for and availability of free, high-quality legal services.

I also take enormous pride in this year's many accomplishments of both the Board and its staff in service to the public, the legal profession, and confidence in Pennsylvania's court system. I have no doubt that they will, once again, face both new challenges and opportunities with integrity and great aptitude in the year ahead.

On behalf of the Disciplinary Board, I wish you all a happy and healthy holiday season.

With gratitude,

David S. Senoff
Board Chair

Remembering Barry M. Simpson

Pennsylvania's Legal Community Mourns the Passing of Former PBA Executive Director Barry M. Simpson

Barry M. Simpson, former Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Bar Association (PBA), [passed away](#) on December 5, 2025. Simpson [retired](#) from the position in May 2023.

During his tenure as PBA's longest-serving Executive Director, he promoted diversity throughout the legal profession and organized bar community. He supported the efforts of affinity committees, the hiring of the PBA's first diversity officer, and the work of the PBA Diversity Task Force and Diversity Team. He also spearheaded a number of services and initiatives focused on communications and accessibility, including PBA's social media presence and its first free online legal research program for its members.

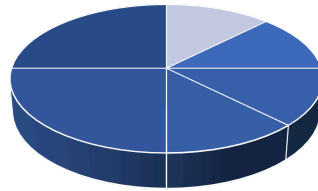
Simpson was a member of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania's Continuing Legal Education Board and its Lawyers Fund for Client Security Board. He also served as the chair of the Court's IOLTA Board. Simpson is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh School of Law and the Pennsylvania State University.

The Members and staff of the Disciplinary Board grieve the passing of Barry M. Simpson, Esq. and offer their deepest condolences to his loved ones and colleagues.



Discipline Imposed

November 2025



- Informal Admonition - 1
- Private Reprimand - 0
- Public Reprimand - 0
- Public Censure - 0
- Disability Inactive - 1
- Temporary Suspension - 1
- Probation - 1
- Suspension - 2
- Disbarment - 2

Disability Inactive
[Jonathan Charles Springer](#)

Temporary Suspension
[Michael Joseph Farley](#)

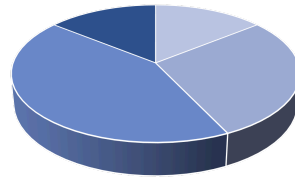
Probation
[Jason Guy Beardsley](#)

Suspension
[Christopher Lee Harris](#)
[Mark D. Mungello](#)

Disbarment
[Seth Daniel Carson](#)
[Yale Darran Weinstein](#)

Reinstatements

November 2025



- From Inactive - 1
- From Retired - 2
- From Administrative Suspension - 3
- From Disability Inactive - 0
- From Suspension - 0
- From Disbarment - 1
- Reinstatement Denied - 0

From Inactive
[Justin Michael Shilliday](#)

From Retired
[Jeffrey Breen](#)
[Kenneth Martin Courtney](#)

From Administrative Suspension
[David Allen Denham](#)
[Jonathan Taylor Haas](#)
[Paul Schwartzman](#)

From Disbarment
[Brian Joseph Salisbury](#)

Note: The above-listed granted reinstatement matters reflect only those granted by Supreme Court Order. An attorney listed as reinstatement granted, but whose current license status does not reflect reinstatement, has yet to submit the fees necessary to finalize reinstatement.

Disciplinary Board News

New Year, New License Status?

Are you currently on or thinking of assuming retired status? Consider assuming emeritus status in the new year!

In 2018, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania adopted [Rule 403 of the Pennsylvania Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement \(Pa.R.D.E.\)](#), creating an emeritus status for attorneys who **retire** from

the practice of law and seek to provide pro bono services to legal aid organizations. The Emeritus program creates a pool of qualified volunteer attorneys to provide necessary legal services to those in need. Emeritus attorneys perform valuable roles in the community by bolstering legal aid and other nonprofit programs to help close the gap between the need for and the availability of free legal services.

How do I assume Emeritus Status of my Pennsylvania law license?

- **Legal Aid Organization Approval:** Attorneys who have assumed emeritus status must submit an Eligible Legal Aid Organization Form for approval PRIOR to the commencement of services. *A separate form shall be submitted for each organization for which the attorney expects to perform pro bono services.*
- **Renewal:** Attorneys on emeritus status are required to renew annually by January 31st. Renewal forms are distributed on or before January 1st. Failure to renew by January 31st will result in the transfer to retired status.

Visit the Board's website to find the appropriate [forms](#), view the [Emeritus FAQs](#), and visit the "[Pro Bono](#)" [page](#). Please [contact us](#) with any questions!



WHAT IS EMERITUS STATUS?

In 2018, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania created an emeritus status for attorneys who have retired from the practice of law who seek to provide pro bono services through eligible legal aid organizations.

The DISCIPLINARY BOARD
of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

Disciplinary Board Quarterly Publishes Financial Institutions List, Highlighting Platinum Leader Banks

Quarterly, the Disciplinary Board publishes an up-to-date list of financial institutions approved by the Supreme Court for the maintenance of fiduciary accounts of attorneys under the terms of [Pennsylvania Rule of Disciplinary Enforcement 221](#). The most recent list [was printed](#) in the November 29, 2025 issue of the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

New to the list this quarter is [Central Penn Bank & Trust](#).

Readers will notice that some of the institutions on the list are designated as [Platinum Leader Banks](#). These institutions have made a commitment to support the [Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts \(IOLTA\)](#) program and increase funding for legal representation of those in need of free civil legal services. The PA IOLTA Board provides critical grant funding to legal aid organizations that deliver free civil legal aid to low-income Pennsylvanians facing a legal crisis where a basic human need is at stake.

Read more about Platinum Leader Banks and view the full list of institutions currently designated as such [here](#).

Upcoming Public Proceedings

We encourage you to observe our public disciplinary and reinstatement hearings, oral arguments, and public reprimands on the [Board's YouTube channel](#). You can also view "Upcoming Public Proceedings" at the bottom of the Board's [home page](#).

Scheduled proceedings begin at 9:30 am unless otherwise noted.

<i>December</i>		
December 11	Ryan A. Mergl (<i>cont.</i>)	Reinstatement Hearing
December 16, 30	Jesse J. White	Reinstatement Hearing
<i>January</i>		
January 5-6	Ronnie Louis Creazzo	Disciplinary Hearing
January 7	Amy Lee Thomas	Disciplinary Hearing
January 28-29	Dustin William Cole	Disciplinary Hearing
<i>February</i>		
February 6	John McDanel (<i>cont.</i>)	Disciplinary Hearing
February 23-24	Jeffrey Larkin Wertz	Disciplinary Hearing
<i>March</i>		
March 2	Bruce K. Warren, Jr.	Disciplinary Hearing
March 4-5	Ronald J. Bua	Disciplinary Hearing
March 17-18	Joseph Alexander Scioscia, III	Disciplinary Hearing
<i>To Be Scheduled</i>		
Kelton Merrill Burgess - Public Reprimand		
Shaka Mzee Johnson - Public Reprimand		
Ian James Musselman - Public Reprimand		

Articles of Interest

Lawyer Agrees to Stayed Suspension after Clashes with Clients, Courts, Officials

A Susquehanna County lawyer recently agreed to imposition of a suspension stayed in full by probation after admitting to a pattern of misconduct committed years prior while undergoing a mental health crisis, now treated.

[Jason G. Beardsley](#) of Montrose admitted to misconduct committed during a period when he became convinced that judges, court officials, the entire bar, and even clients were engaged in a conspiracy to destroy him. He filed motions to disqualify the entire Susquehanna Court of Common Pleas, the Court Administrator, and the District Attorney's Office from all his cases. When this relief was denied, he filed motions to withdraw from representation of twenty-six clients. He alleged that several of his clients were complicit in the plot to destroy him. He admitted that he did not speak to any of the clients to inform them of his motions to disqualify or withdraw. He told the court he would not represent clients even if ordered to do so. He failed to appear on behalf of twenty-one clients scheduled for hearings and refused to refund any fees. He accused one client of being a "government snitch" in league with the plot and told another, days before a guilty plea hearing, that he would not represent him or refund his fee. He sent an obscenity-filled text to one client and later pled guilty to two summary harassment charges for abusive communications he had sent to clients.

When contacted by the Office of Disciplinary Counsel about the cases, he responded, "Don't contact me again because now you are part of the conspiracy, and I will pray that you get charged and lose everything that you have loved or ever could love."

Subsequently, Disciplinary Counsel filed a motion to have Beardsley placed on Emergency Temporary Suspension, and the Supreme Court issued a rule to show cause why he should not be suspended. On the last day allowed by the rule, he contacted Disciplinary Counsel and stated that his conduct was a result of severe mental distress and that he did not intend to respond to the rule because he knew he was currently unfit to practice law. He was temporarily suspended by the Supreme Court on October 11, 2023.

He subsequently underwent a course of psychiatric treatment and began taking medication for his

condition. Eventually, he repaid fees owed to clients and apologized to judges, court officials, the DA's office, and clients.

Beardsley and Disciplinary Counsel agreed that the appropriate disposition was a suspension for a year and a day, which would require him to petition for reinstatement, with the suspension stayed in full and a two-year period of probation. As a term of the probation, he must continue his psychiatric treatment and submit a letter from his treating professional on a quarterly basis.

By Order dated November 14, 2025, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania granted the Joint Petition and imposed the requested discipline. It also dissolved the order of temporary suspension entered October 11, 2023, so Beardsley is restored to active status.

If you or someone you know is suffering from a mental health crisis, contact [Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers](#)' 24/7 confidential hotline at 1-888-999-1941. You are not alone.

DC Bar Offers Ethical Advice on Law Firm Contracts with Government

The District of Columbia Bar has issued its [Ethics Opinion 391](#), addressing the [ethical obligations](#) of lawyers and law firms considering entering into agreements with governments that may limit or shape their law practices.

The Opinion identifies three issues that a lawyer's contract with a government agency may raise: (1) conflicts of interest for current or future matters adverse to that government, (2) improper restrictions on a lawyer's practice, and (3) interference with a lawyer's professional independence.

The Opinion notes that the lawyer's entry into representation of a government may involve several District of Columbia Rules of Professional Conduct, including:

- RPC 1.3 (Diligence and Zeal)
- RPC 1.7 (Conflicts of Interest)
- RPC 1.10 (Imputed Disqualification: General Rule)
- RPC 1.16 (Declining or Terminating Representation)
- RPC 5.4 (Professional Independence of a Lawyer)
- RPC 5.6 (Restrictions on Right to Practice)

The potential for conflicts of interest when a lawyer represents a government agency are significant. The Opinion states that a lawyer may proceed despite the existence of such a conflict only if two conditions are satisfied. First, the lawyer must "reasonably believe" that he or she can "provide competent and diligent representation to each affected client." Second, the lawyer must "disclose the possible conflict to [his or her] client" and receive the client's "informed consent" to the conflict "after full disclosure of the existence and nature of the possible conflict and the possible adverse consequences of such representation."

The opinion recognizes that such consent may be difficult to draft and obtain. Government typically comprises multiple agencies. In some circumstances, such a structure may mean that a conflict with one agency needs not be measured against the government as a whole. The current position of the U.S. Department of Justice, however, is that a private lawyer's adversity to any element of the federal government constitutes a conflict with the entire executive branch, if not the entire U.S. government.

The Committee notes that D.C. Rule 5.6(b) prohibits lawyers from entering into an agreement in which a restriction on the lawyer's right to practice is part of the settlement of a client controversy. The Committee cites a 2002 decision of the D.C. Court of Appeals which stressed the need to prohibit conditions whose effect is to limit the access of future clients to lawyers of their choosing—particularly "lawyers, who by virtue of their background and experience, might be the very best available talent to represent [such] individuals."

Lastly, the Committee states, "Lawyers and law firms that contemplate agreeing with a government to conditions that may limit or shape their law practices must examine whether such conduct will create issues under the Rules of Professional Conduct. This might include conflicts of interest for engagements (existing or new) adverse to that government, improper restrictions upon the lawyers' right to practice, or interference with the lawyers' professional independence. If a conflict is found to exist, obtaining a valid waiver may be difficult. Lawyers who represent the government in seeking, negotiating, or implementing such agreements also must consider their responsibilities under the Rules of Professional Conduct."

Lawyer Mediating for Unrepresented Parties Must Explain Role Clearly, ABA Ethics Opinion States

A new ethics opinion published by the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Ethics and Professional Responsibility, [Formal Opinion 518](#), considers the responsibilities of a lawyer serving as mediator in a case involving unrepresented parties.

The Opinion primarily addresses a lawyer's responsibilities under [Rule 2.4](#) of the Model Rules of Professional Conduct, "Lawyer Serving as Third-Party Neutral." Pennsylvania's [Rule 2.4](#) is identical to the Model Rule. Rule 2.4(a) states, "A lawyer serves as a third-party neutral when the lawyer assists two or more persons who are not clients of the lawyer to reach a resolution of a dispute or other matter that has arisen between them." This term includes mediation, arbitration, and other decision-making processes. Rule 2.4(b) imposes two duties on the lawyer acting in this role: to "inform unrepresented parties that the lawyer is not representing them," and, if the lawyer knows or reasonably should know that a party does not understand the lawyer's role, to "explain the difference between the lawyer's role as a third-party neutral and a lawyer's role as one who represents a client."

Comment 3 to the Rule notes that this responsibility is particularly applicable for parties who are using the dispute resolution process for the first time. It adds, "Where appropriate, the lawyer should inform unrepresented parties of the important differences between the lawyer's role as third-party neutral and a lawyer's role as a client representative, including the inapplicability of the attorney-client evidentiary privilege."

The Opinion states that the lawyer-mediator should avoid communicating in a manner that might be taken as legal advice, or otherwise suggesting to a mediation party that the lawyer mediator's role is to protect or advance a party's legal interests or to help the party to attain a particular desired result. A lawyer-mediator may offer an opinion as to how a tribunal is likely to rule on an issue but should not state or imply that a settlement is in the party's best interest because a tribunal is likely to decide adversely to the party.

The Committee warns that a lawyer-mediator does not have the same leeway as a lawyer negotiating for a client to make statements that are immaterial or of questionable veracity. It states, "Given the lawyer-mediator's neutrality, parties are likely to trust the lawyer-mediator to play it straight, and to not exaggerate or make false statements designed to lead the parties to an agreement." For this reason, "a lawyer-mediator must be both thoughtful and cautious in communicating information from one party to the other and in answering questions that may be asked about the information communicated or about the lawyer-mediator's views of the information."

In conclusion, the Committee states, "Unless the parties are sophisticated consumers of mediation services, it is prudent for the lawyer-mediator not only to inform all parties that the lawyer-mediator does not represent them but also to afford them an opportunity to discuss what this means."

Note that this Opinion is advisory only. It is not binding on the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania or any other Court.

All Shook Up: Judge Agrees to Retirement After Elvis Cosplay in Court

A Missouri judge agreed to a disciplinary disposition that provided for his retirement after [admitting](#) to a course of conduct that included dressing up as Elvis Presley for Halloween and conducting court sessions with an Elvis flair.

[Circuit Judge Matthew Thornhill](#) of St. Charles County, Missouri agreed to a [disciplinary disposition](#) with the Missouri Commission on Retirement, Removal, and Discipline. Thornhill admitted that he had dressed like Elvis and wore an Elvis wig in court on October 31st. The allegations stated that he had allowed litigants to be sworn in using Elvis music played on his phone, played Elvis songs while entering the courtroom and while doing court business there, and made Elvis references in court "when such statements were irrelevant to the proceedings." The Commission concluded that this conduct violated rules requiring a judge to maintain "order and decorum" and "promote confidence in the integrity of the judiciary." The Commission also found that Thornhill had inappropriately discussed his political opinions in court proceedings and hand-delivered an affidavit vouching for a party in an adoption case, in violation of Missouri Supreme Court rules.

Thornhill wrote that he intended “to add levity at times when I thought it would help relax litigants” but conceded that he now recognizes “that this could affect the integrity and solemnity of the proceedings.”

The disposition provides that Thornhill will serve a six-month unpaid suspension. He will be allowed to return for an eighteen-month stint but must retire after that and commit to never seek reelection. This will allow him to retire after twenty years of service with full benefits. The disposition is pending before the Supreme Court of Missouri.

Not So Fast: Disgraced Judge Who Covertly Hung Portrait in Courtroom Gets Called Out

A former Arkansas judge who resigned under disciplinary inquiry thought he could [sneak his portrait](#) into his former courtroom while the other judges were away at a judicial conference. That didn't sit well at all with the circuit's administrative judge.

[Former Judge Chris Williams](#) resigned from the bench on March 30, 2024 while under investigation by the Judicial Discipline and Disability Commission (JDDC) for multiple allegations that he violated judicial rules. In a [press release](#) at the time, the JDDC said Williams' resignation terminated the JDDC investigations. Due to his resignation, the nature of the alleged rules violations was never made public. The release further said Williams' resignation included an agreement that he would no longer be eligible to be elected, appointed, or otherwise serve in the judiciary of this state.

When judges in the circuit retire under normal circumstances, the local bar association pays for the creation of a portrait and it is installed in the courtroom in a ceremony. Given the circumstances of Williams' departure from the bench, that did not happen.

But Williams would not be denied. He paid for the painting of a portrait himself and arranged for a secret ceremony to hang it in his former courtroom on a date when the other judges in the circuit were away at the fall Judicial Council Meeting.

When Administrative Judge Stephen Shirron learned of the covert installation, he was enraged. “We cannot stand idly by and allow a celebration of corruption in our courtrooms without speaking up,” he wrote.

Judge Shirron could have simply ordered the portrait removed, but he had a different treatment in mind. He directed that a framed copy of the official JDDC Press Release be hung in the courtroom, immediately below the portrait of Chris Williams.

After Judge Shirron's order was carried out, District Justice of the Peace Ralph Williams, who happens to be Chris Williams's brother, [requested](#) at a meeting of county officials that the press release be removed. When his request was met with no objection from any county official present, he proceeded to take it down directly following the meeting. The press release was reinstated and removed at least once after that. *The Keystone Lex* has no information and has not traveled to Hot Springs, Arkansas to ascertain the current status of the disputed posting.

Psychics Let Me Down on Bar Examination: K. Kardashian

Socialite, professional celebrity, and occasional actress Kim Kardashian has longed for at least half a decade to become a lawyer, but her legal ambitions hit a snag when she [failed](#) the California bar exam. She was pretty irate about it, but her anger was directed not at the bar but rather at a [team of four psychics](#) who all predicted she would pass the exam.

Kardashian took an unconventional path to her goal of bar admission. Beginning in 2019, she served an apprenticeship at a San Francisco law firm which, in California, is an acceptable alternative to attending law school. In 2021, she revealed that she had passed the “baby bar,” or the First-Year Law Student's Examination (on her fourth try).

She vented her frustration in a video on TikTok (recorded on her phone while sitting for eye makeup). She commented, “All of the [bleep] psychics that we have met with, and that we're obsessed with, are all [bleep] full of [bleep].”

The [adjusted passage rate](#) for the California Bar was 63%.

Undaunted, Kardashian announced she intends to keep studying and pass the bar in the future.

Maybe it's not our place to say, but perhaps law school or at least a good bar review course would be a better investment than those psychics.

Attorney Well-Being

Vicarious Trauma and Compassion Fatigue

The terms "[vicarious trauma](#)" and "[compassion fatigue](#)" remain vital in the important, ongoing, and evolving discussions around mental health and well-being within the legal profession. While these experiences often come hand-in-hand, understanding both conditions and their subtle differences will support a healthy law practice and personal life.

According to *Psychology Today*, vicarious trauma [arises](#) "when someone is indirectly exposed to trauma by hearing about or witnessing another person's traumatic experiences." Such trauma is common amongst those working in medicine, emergency services, education, and law and may have a lasting impact on one's personal life and world view. The Disciplinary Board's newsletter, now *The Keystone Lex*, first published an [article on vicarious trauma](#) in 2022, detailing its symptoms and offering strategies to reduce the risk of vicarious trauma.

Our northern colleagues at the Law Society of British Columbia recently published an [article on compassion fatigue](#) in the legal profession, noting that "it develops when legal professionals are repeatedly exposed to the suffering of others and/or traumatic material, such as graphic evidence, client testimonies or disturbing case files — leading them to experience mental and physical exhaustion." The article recognizes vicarious trauma as a "key element of compassion fatigue." It also denotes the difference between compassion fatigue and burnout (*See the Board's 2022 [article on burnout](#) in partnership with Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers of Pennsylvania.*) while acknowledging the connection between vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout.

The toll that unchecked aggravators take on the physical, mental, and emotional health of an individual cannot be overstated. It can have tremendous consequences in one's personal life and may create patterns of behavior effectuating professional misconduct and necessitating discipline. *Psychology Today* cites self-care practices, professional support, healthy boundaries, a strong network, and organizational support as crucial to combatting both vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue.

For practical personal techniques to support lawyer mental health, refer to the Board's articles on [preventative wellness strategies](#), [mindfulness and meditation](#), and [grounding techniques](#).

HOW IS COMPASSION FATIGUE RELATED TO VICARIOUS TRAUMA?



Navigating the Holiday Season: Embracing Joy Amidst Challenges

As we navigate the holidays and "tis the season," we cannot forget and lose ourselves in the mix.

In our hearts, we know the holidays mean family (which can be VERY stressful), showing up to many celebratory events when our energy is low, and exuding an “attitude of gratitude” on the inside while trying to maintain a semblance of peace within. The expectation of the holiday is unspoken but while there is a lot to celebrate, there are many of us going through heavy times, navigating the loss of loved ones both that have passed on or grieving folks that have left our lives who are very much still alive. The bottom line is it is tough to navigate life on life's terms, especially during the holidays.

Here are some insights that have helped me during these bittersweet moments, and I hope you find them beneficial as well:

1. Embrace the Pause: In our fast-paced world, we often feel compelled to respond immediately to messages or demands on our time. However, taking a moment to pause can be transformative. This invaluable lesson, which I learned in community support settings, allows us to reflect and respond thoughtfully.

2. Movement Is Medicine: Physical activity can uplift our spirits. Even a brief walk outside to experience the refreshing cold air can work wonders for our mental well-being.

3. Take Screen Breaks: On average, we unlock our phones 150 times a day and engage with our screens thousands of times (tapping 2600-5400 times a day on average). Consider the time spent on social media—over five years of our lives. These are five years that we do not and cannot get back. Prioritize intentional breaks from screens and consider doing a digital 'hard reset' to refresh your mind.

4. Drive Mindfully: Distracted driving is responsible for twenty-six percent of car accidents. No message is worth risking your life or the lives of others. Use your time behind the wheel to unwind and be present.

5. Stay Present: It's easy to romanticize the past, but every choice and experience has shaped who we are today. Embrace each day as a precious gift with 86,400 seconds at your disposal. Use your time wisely as it is a finite resource. Time is also our greatest currency.

6. Capture Moments with Generosity: While it's important to experience life in the moment, photographs serve as cherished memories that can last a lifetime. In May, I abruptly lost my dad, and I treasure the thousands of pictures I have of him along with saved voicemail messages. These memories keep him alive in my heart, reminding me to be generous with my picture-taking. So, capture those moments—take photos of loved ones, special gatherings, and everyday joys. One day, these snapshots may be all we have to hold onto.

7. Honor Your Furry Friends: If you're a pet person, take a moment to honor your beloved companion during this holiday season. Remember, one day to us is equivalent to seven days for them. Our pets have so much to teach us about mindfulness, presence, and gratitude. They remind us to savor each moment, whether it's a playful romp in the snow or a quiet cuddle by the fire. Let their joyful spirits inspire you to be fully present and grateful for the simple pleasures in life.

8. Spread Kindness: Remember, everything we have is on loan during our time here. Be generous: donate blood if you can, volunteer for causes close to your heart, and send handwritten notes. Research shows that expressing gratitude benefits both the giver and the receiver.

9. Practice Mindfulness: Dedicate five minutes daily to silent reflection, focusing on your breath. This practice anchors you in the present moment and fosters mindfulness.

10. Honor Your Limits: In the spirit of self-care, remember that “no” is a complete sentence. Recognize your humanity and protect your peace, using each day's 86,400 seconds wisely.

11. Give Yourself Grace: The expectations we place on ourselves can be overwhelming. Allow yourself the grace to navigate your own journey without undue pressure.

Above all, remember that Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers of Pennsylvania is here for you (and your family members and staff) at 1-888-999-1941 and lclpa.org, 24/7/365—not just from 9:00am-5:00pm. Stress and anxiety are debilitating, but you are not alone. We are here for you. At the end of the day, remember: we are all simply walking each other home.

Laurie J. Besden, Esq.

Pennsylvania Bar Association to Host Virtual Event on Mindful Presence in Collaborative Practice

On Tuesday, December 16th, the Pennsylvania Bar Association will host a free, virtual lunch and learn hosted by Courtney Schulnick, a former litigator turned full-time mindfulness teacher and consultant. This session will present "mindfulness as a practical tool to help collaborative practitioners stay regulated, responsive, and clearthinking in moments when emotions escalate, expectations collide, or difficult dynamics arise." Click [here](#) to learn more and register for "Mindful Presence in Collaborative Practice: Tools to Regulate, Communicate with, and Support Clients."

The PBA Collaborative Law Committee presents a **LUNCH AND LEARN** **Mindful Presence in Collaborative Practice: Tools to Regulate, Communicate with and Support Clients**

Collaborative attorneys work at the intersection of legal complexity, emotional intensity and human vulnerability. Supporting clients through major life transitions, while maintaining neutrality, compassion, professionalism and steady communication, requires a grounded nervous system and a centered presence. This interactive and experiential session introduces mindfulness as a practical tool to help collaborative practitioners stay regulated, responsive and clear-thinking in moments when emotions escalate, expectations collide or difficult dynamics arise.



Presenter:

Courtney Schulnick is a former litigator turned full-time mindfulness teacher and consultant. For two decades, she built her career as a defense litigator at a large Philadelphia law firm, navigating the intense demands and high-stakes environment of the legal profession. Like many attorneys, she often found herself grappling with stress and pressure, searching for a way to create more balance and ease amidst the whirlwind of practice. This search led her to enroll in the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Program at the Myrna Brind Center for Mindfulness at Jefferson in Philadelphia. Drawing from her firsthand experience as a litigator, she understands the unique pressures attorneys and professionals in high-stress industries face. Her approach combines practical legal insight with mindfulness training to offer tailored tools that help individuals manage stress, enhance focus and build lasting resilience. Whether through individual coaching, team workshops or corporate training, her mission is to help others feel more grounded, recharged and connected to what truly matters - both professionally and personally.

**Tuesday,
December 16
Noon – 1 p.m.
Zoom
No cost; no CLE**

No cost to attend but please **register** in advance for this meeting:



Click or Scan the QR Code

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Grow. Connect. Succeed.

 pabar.org |  [Pennsylvania Bar Association](#) |  [/PaBarAssn](#) |  800.932.0311



Explore the Disciplinary Board's Lawyer Well-Being Webpage

The Disciplinary Board's "[Lawyer Well-Being](#)" webpage connects Pennsylvania attorneys with pertinent resources, [articles](#), events, and CLE opportunities to better understand and support their mental health and well-being. To access the Board's "Lawyer Well-Being" page, visit padisciplinaryboard.org/for-attorneys/well-being.

LAWYER WELL-BEING

Connect to available resources to better understand and support mental health and well-being as they relate to the legal profession.



Digital resources
Informative articles
Upcoming events
CLE opportunities

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers is a confidential and safe resource for Pennsylvania attorneys and their family members who may be struggling with their mental health or substance use. Since 1988, LCL has confidentially assisted and supported thousands of individuals who have faced a myriad of challenges (including grief, stress, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, gambling problems, problematic alcohol or prescription drug use, etc.), helping them navigate through dark and difficult times. If you or someone you know is struggling, please call us. You may save a life.



There is help, and there is hope.



LAWYERS CONCERNED FOR LAWYERS
PENNSYLVANIA

lclpa.org | 1-888-999-1941

Evaluation by a
healthcare professional
Information and literature
Peer and staff support
Assistance with interventions
Recovery meetings
Online resources and CLE

[Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers](#) is a confidential assistance program for the Pennsylvania legal community and their family members. LCL may not report information about a subject attorney back to the Disciplinary Board.

Confidential 24/7 Helpline: 1-888-999-1941

Last year, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania adopted amendments to the Pennsylvania Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement (Pa.R.D.E.) relating to confidentiality of proceedings, providing for three exceptions to the requirement of confidentiality under [Pa.R.D.E. 402\(d\)](#). Included in these exceptions is the allowance for Disciplinary Counsel to make a referral of an attorney to [Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers of Pennsylvania](#) (LCL) and share information as part of the referral. *However*, it is crucial to note that LCL may *not* report information about a subject attorney back to the Disciplinary Board. LCL is a **confidential** assistance program for the Pennsylvania legal community and their family members.

Around the Court



Pennsylvania Is Making a Difference Through Veterans Treatment Courts

Veterans experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis can seek 24/7 free and confidential support by dialing 988 and then pressing 1 or by texting "PA" to 741741.

Home to over 700,000 veterans, Pennsylvania's veteran population is the fifth largest in the

nation. [Veterans Treatment Courts](#) across PA support veterans “charged with crimes who are struggling with addiction, mental illness, or co-occurring disorders and come in contact with the criminal justice system.”

Since the program's inception in 2009, Veterans Treatment Court participants:

- routinely appear before a judge;
- are partnered with a [veteran mentor](#) who provides support and guidance; and
- receive treatment addressing underlying issues often caused by [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) (PTSD).

Veterans involved in the state's justice system also are entitled to a [Veteran Justice Outreach](#) program specialist who will assist them in navigating the Veterans Affairs system and services.

Fifty-four of the Commonwealth's sixty-seven counties currently offer treatment courts in which eligible veterans can take part. Last year, 146 veteran participants graduated from a PA Veterans Treatment Court, a seventy-five percent success rate.

In November, the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts released a new infographic highlighting the work of these invaluable Veterans Treatment Courts. Read the full press release [here](#).

Visit the Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania's [website](#) to learn more about becoming a volunteer veteran mentor.

A Look at Pennsylvania's Veterans Courts



What are Veterans Courts?

Veterans Courts assist veterans who are charged with crimes and are struggling with substance use disorder, mental illness or other co-occurring disorders. Veterans Court participants:

- 1) Appear before the judge on a regular basis
- 2) Gain support and guidance from veteran mentors
- 3) Receive supervision by specialized probation officers
- 4) Get treatment and support to address underlying problems often caused by post-traumatic stress disorder
- 5) Work closely with the VA Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists

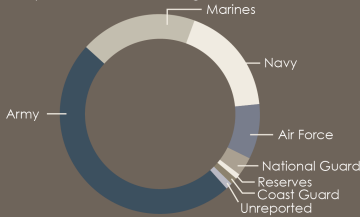
700,000
total veterans in
Pennsylvania (2024)

Pennsylvania's
veteran
population
ranks
5th
in the
United States

The first
veterans
treatment
court
opened in
Lackawanna
County
in 2009

233 admissions
in 2024

They came from the following branches of service:

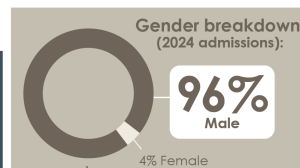


147 veterans graduated (out of 196 participants discharged from the program) in 2024
which is a **75%** successful graduation rate.

27% increase in employment
among successful graduates.

27 veterans treatment courts
in Pennsylvania were active
in 2024. (Common Pleas)
14 counties have veterans
diversion programs
(Magisterial District Courts)

Average age
at screening
was
46



Statewide court programming for Veterans Courts and all treatment courts are supported by the AOPC.

AOPC

From the Pennsylvania Bar Association



As 2025 comes to a close, the Pennsylvania Bar Association reflects on the incredible work attorneys throughout the Commonwealth have done to strengthen the legal profession and serve our communities.

From championing legislative priorities to advancing pro bono initiatives, your dedication ensures that justice is accessible and strong. Every hour volunteered, every case handled, and every voice raised in advocacy makes a tangible difference in the lives of Pennsylvanians.

The PBA is deeply grateful for your leadership, support, and commitment. Together, PBA members have expanded resources for those in need, provided critical legal assistance, and upheld the highest standards of professionalism.

Entering 2026, the PBA looks forward to continuing this momentum.

Happy Holidays to you and thank you for making a difference every day.



Please note that the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Bar Association (PBA) are separate organizations. For more information about PBA, visit pabar.org or follow on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

We Want To Hear From You...

We are always on the lookout for stories of interest relating to legal ethics, new issues in the practice of law, lawyer wellness, and funny or just plain weird stories about the legal profession. If you come across something you think might be enlightening, educational, or entertaining to our readers or social media followers, [pass it along](#). If you are our original source, there may be a hat tip in it for you.

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