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Oregon Attorney  
Assistance Program

***in*SiGHT**

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## **Oregon's Well-Being Action**

*By Kyra Hazilla*

On January 25, 2019, the Oregon State Bar, in collaboration with the Oregon Attorney Assistance Program, held a Wellness Summit, bringing together many of Oregon's leaders in the legal community to discuss the issues facing the profession related to well-being. A panel of resource experts presented the concerns about well-being for Oregon lawyers, and a panel of lawyers shared their own experiences of overcoming stress, addiction, and mental health issues. Approximately 130 lawyers attended the 2019 Wellness Summit to discuss ideas and brainstorm solutions.

### **The Oregon Conference of Well-Being Stakeholders**

In 2021, the Bar's House of Delegates (HOD) approved Delegate Resolution No. 5, Conference of Well-Being Stakeholders. Delegate Resolution No. 5 built off the initial work done at the 2019 Wellness Summit. It directed the Bar and the Board of Governors to convene a Conference of Well-Being Stakeholders to explore certain areas in need of attention. The HOD directed the Bar to convene the

Conference by June 2022 to address areas ripe for growth and report back to the HOD. This included:

1. Informing well-being efforts using diversity, equity, and inclusion principles and values;
2. Reducing stigma/shame and increasing help-seeking behaviors;
3. Vicarious trauma within our profession;
4. Lawyer education and law school practices;
5. Regulatory and disciplinary practices that affect well-being;
6. Well-being in the workplace and evolving legal culture;
7. Law practice management;
8. Structural impediments to well-being, including UTCRs, court deadlines, and trial court administration.

The OAAP assisted in forming a committee to address the actions suggested by the resolution and facilitated meetings to plan for the Conference as well as the stakeholder groups to follow. The committee actively identified the stakeholder groups that needed to be involved in the Conference, recognizing that the judiciary, bar regulators, legal employers, law schools, stakeholders and representatives of government lawyers, public defenders, nonprofit lawyers, and solos and firms of all sizes, the OSB, the PLF, and the OAAP all needed to be actively engaged in the Conference for it to be successful. Committee members reached out to leaders in these groups who were not already participating and encouraged their attendance at the Conference.



## The 2022 Conference of Well-Being Stakeholders

The Conference of Well-Being Stakeholders was held remotely by Zoom on June 13, 2022. Several leaders from many stakeholder groups spoke about the challenges with well-being in the legal profession.

The Conference's primary goals were to initiate open and candid conversation about vital well-being issues within the Oregon legal profession, serve as a first step in encouraging broader discussion about needed change, and collaboratively develop thoughtful suggestions to Oregon Bar decision makers concerning the identification and implementation of future actions. The Conference was well attended and successfully accomplished its intended goals, providing participants:

1. The opportunity to hear from leaders in the local and national legal community about their efforts to improve well-being;
2. New information about current research concerning the need for greater support of lawyer well-being;
3. A description of factors preventing lawyers from seeking mental health assistance when needed;
4. The opportunity to reflect on their own role in helping to reduce stigma associated with mental and behavior health conditions; and
5. Some direction about steps needed to address well-being moving forward.

During the Conference, participants entered breakout groups to begin the conversation about well-being in more detail. The committee organized stakeholders and volunteers into four Workgroups to meet after the Conference to regularly discuss the challenges impacting attorney well-being.

## Workgroups

Beginning in September 2022, the Workgroups met regularly. The Workgroups centered on the following areas:

1. Well-Being in the Workplace and Evolving Legal Culture/Law Practice Management;
2. Regulatory and Disciplinary Practices, and Structural Impediments to Well-Being; (including UTCRs, court timelines, and trial court administration);
3. Reducing Vicarious Trauma and Stigma in the Legal Profession; and
4. Lawyer Education and Law School Well-Being.

## Next Steps

The OSB and the OAAP collaborated to produce a report on the work of the stakeholder groups, including areas identified for further exploration. This was provided to the Board of Governors in June of 2023. Leaders across Oregon are excited about the next steps. Oregon's legal community is already fertile ground for sustainable well-being as a critical element in the improvement of legal services and increasing access to justice. Stakeholders throughout the state and across the profession have begun the work of sharing their experiences to combat stigma, looking at systems and organizations to identify areas for growth, and dedicating their time and energy to making change.

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## OTHER WORKS BY KYRA HAZILLA AT OAAP.ORG

### Thriving Today

- Well-Being Week in Law: 2023 Preview (April 28, 2023)
- If You Aren't Feeling Buoyed by Resilience, Post-Traumatic Growth May Be on the Horizon (September 1, 2022)
- Move Over Gratitude, It's Time to Try Delight (July 1, 2021)
- Gratitude: Now More Than Ever (October 13, 2020)
- Vicarious Trauma in the Time of COVID-19 (July 24, 2020)
- Acts of Kindness Improve Well-Being (May 5, 2020)
- Moving Beyond Social Distance Towards Expansive Solidarity (April 1, 2020)