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00:01

Thank you for joining us today. My name is Laurie beston. I'm the executive director of lawyers concern for lawyers of Pennsylvania. I've been asked to do this presentation for you to discuss substance abuse and mental health disorders in the legal profession. I'm also going to touch on some of the prevalence rates in the general population. So you can understand this is a true problem in our profession. The most important thing I can say today is there's also a solution. I want to talk for a minute although I know this lecture will be presented and offered multiple states. We are seated in Pennsylvania today, so I can discuss the specifics of the lawyers Assistance Program in Pennsylvania. But Please be assured regardless of what state you may be in or where you may be practicing law. Every state has some type of lawyers Assistance Program. Sometimes they vary as far as funding or as far as monitoring. But the bottom line is, if you google your state and lawyers Assistance Program, you will be able to get the help that you need. I am going to specifically talk about Pennsylvania, because I'm in Pennsylvania, and I can speak you know about our state. So lawyers concern for lawyers is the lawyers, judges and law students Assistance Program for the legal professionals in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This is actually our 30th year, and we've helped over 7500 people. Our funding comes from the annual license fee that each attorney pays for the privilege to practice law. Half of our funding comes from the Pennsylvania disciplinary board. The other half comes from lawyers on for clients security. However, their amazing support allows us to serve confidentially and safely. Those who are suffering with substance abuse and mental health disorders in our profession. It's very important I say this, we do not report back to the disciplinary board. And I say this often, people can if you can find a payphone and I used to make payphone jokes until I started doing all kinds of road travel and actually found payphones it's still work. But if you can find a payphone you can call our program and multiple other programs. And say your name is anonymous, anonymous, you are an attorney, or and you need help your judge and you need help your lawsuit and you need help. As far as our state is concerned, we don't care who you are, we just want to help you.

We're literally in the business of saving lives. And I know that because I'm one of them. And I don't say that lightly part of this program, I am going to share my personal story with you. Because the truth is, if this happened to me, this can happen to anybody. I came from a family on paper, this should have never happened to me, but it did. And because of this organization, and the folks that were there before me, to support me, I'm here today to talk about it. I also want to say and it's very important in Pennsylvania, and the majority of the other state lawyers assistance programs also assist family members. So when we say our services are available to you as an attorney and a judge, we also assist the family members of attorneys and judges. Often people will say in Pennsylvania, well, how close have a family member if a family member of yours is struggling? We care and we're going to help them. What if my Pennsylvania attorney license is not active, we're still going to help them your status as an attorney or a judge in Pennsylvania is does not indicate whether we will treat somebody or help them or not. We will absolutely help somebody your status regarding your licensure is irrelevant to us. Like I said, we are not the disciplinary board, we save lives. It's also important we obviously help law students as I mentioned, but we do not assist family members of law students. So once someone becomes an attorney, we obviously will assist them. So I want to start off by reading two letters to you. And I will say when I first came in contact with this organization, I was in law school, and I remember was during orientation and I will discuss law school and all my education. It was during orientation and this was a mandatory presentation the lawyers concern for lawyers presentation, the my predecessor, Ken Hey green, the Executive Director for 25 years, came to our law school in Pennsylvania and did a whole presentation and he basically stood there and said, you know, basically one in three of you are going to need our help. So if it's not you look to the left look to the right. And honestly, I could not believe there was somebody telling us that we were going to need this organization's help, because truly I thought we were in law school to represent those people. So you can imagine how shocking it was to me when I actually became the one person out of 168 that truly needed to hear that message.

04:59

So It's important whether you think this could apply to you, you think you can't trust me, addiction and mental health impacts all of us. Often I say, I say to people, you know, when I started speaking, do you know somebody who has dealt with this? And I don't mean if you're a judge, if you had a defendant in front of you, do you know a family member, somebody that's in recovery in recovery, someone who's lost their life to an overdose. We all know somebody, we all know somebody. And then I say, and I just was at the law schools in Pennsylvania and Washington, DC last week. And I said, If I told you wish you had a 35% chance of winning a lottery, who in here would play and every person raised their hand as why wouldn't they? And those are also the prevalence rates of our profession, the legal profession for substance abuse and mental health disorders. Sound shocking, it's way above the general population rates. When I started speaking at the law schools, the first school that I actually asked this question to because I thought, well,

it's kind of funny. Let me see what people think. So I said, who in here thinks I'm an attorney, I was at Penn State, State College, their orientation, it's a law school, everybody raises their hand. So I said, who in here thinks I'm a doctor, I received a couple sympathy votes. And people were not sure and kind of put their hand up. And I said, who in here thinks I'm a felon? People started laughing. People started laughing, like, what a preposterous question. Then I said, how many people in here think I'm a drug addict? People like we're laughing. And you know, two people put their hand up. And the reason I asked that, and I say that, and I share that is because the truth is, I am a drug addict, I am a felon. I'm not a doctor, and I am an attorney. And the most important message that I'm going to share is recovery as possible. If the cards were fair, I would be dead. But because of this organization, and those people in recovery, who assisted me, I'm here to talk about it. So I want to start off, reading two letters to you. And those letters. One of them in my addiction in the throes of my addiction. It was your about I'm trying to think about 2000, I was about four years into a five year addiction. And my mom, at this point was removed, had removed herself from my life. And I was now living with my dad, my parents were now separated. So I was able to kind of play them against each other. And I'm, you know, in my upper 20s, I'm not a kid. And so at this point, you know, I could barely even get out of bed and do anything other than buy drugs. And so my mom thought the only way for her to communicate with me was to write a letter to me. And I'm going to share that letter and I share it and I teach as part of what I do with LCL. I teach the minor judiciary, I have a presence at all nine law schools, I present in all 67 counties teach judicial programs, regional bench meetings, and I share this letter I started sharing this letter because you know, when somebody is in the throes of an addiction, and although depression is not part of my story, it's really no different. We as the person, under the influence or impaired feel that we are not impacting anybody I remember in my addiction thinking, as long as I don't show up to family functions, nobody else is impacted by this. And the truth is, I was extremely wrong. Every time the phone rang, my parents thought that that was the call that I died, at least my mom did. So and I, I share this with you. Because I remember at the time my mom gave this to me and I was completely irritated that she would take the time to write down her feelings, and I really didn't even want to read it. And now sometimes when I read it, I can't even get through it. So let me go ahead and read this to you and then I one other letter and then we'll move along in the presentation.

09:04

Dear Laurie, there are so many things I need to say to you. First and foremost know that I love you. a parent's love is constant. My heart is heavy with an ache for you and what you're going through now, but know that I love you. I love the child who would do anything to please anyone. A child who would decorate my car on the night before my birthday just to surprise me a loving and giving woman who will get together many gifts for friends at Christmas. I love the child woman who makes me laugh. Whether it be jokes about us or anyone else in the family. De partie laughs like no one else can make me feel. I remember back to a young girl with tendencies to be

compulsive about boys, getting away with things and getting into trouble. I remember a young girl heading into trouble. I always felt you were a little different, so much more caring than other children. So loving, so anxious to test. I remember when you and God were living at home and I hid all The prescription medications inside of her ski boot. So even back then I knew you would take things you should never touch. Since you were almost born, you had trouble sleeping at night, always. When the rest of the world slept, you were awake. I remember you laughing at us to paying to get your psychological help. Even at the youngest age, you were manipulating people, we took you to a doctor to help you and you refuse to even speak to her. I remember knowing in my heart that you were slave to drugs long before I allowed myself to think it could possibly be true. The way your mind races, your inability to sit and eat with anyone I knew years before I admitted that I did. I think you thought of rehab as another way to manipulate it made you legitimate. You had a problem that lots of other people had. But Laurie, you're different than them. You're by far, the brightest of all of them. You have the potential to do anything that you want. You're beautiful, and I love you for what you will one day be again, I pray to God that that will happen. I have tears coming down my cheeks as I'm typing this to you. A mother never loses love for her child. You're a gift from God. Laurie, no one can fix things for you anymore. It has to come from you and you alone. You need to look in the mirror and see the help you need to find for yourself. No one can help you. We can support your effort, but it must come from you. There's no reason or need to reiterate what happened. I heard it all from Adrian, all about the white Mercedes pulling up in the transaction that followed. You can deny it all you want. But it's really make a difference. Now, you need help to get yourself off the poison in your body and psychological help to get you on track. At one point you said you were going to see Dr. Johnson, I actually think he's wonderful. But the ball is in your court now. You're the only person who can make yourself better. I miss you. I missed you at family dinners. I missed the joking and teasing. I know you're in pain and I feel I can't right reach across the table and touch you know, your pain is my pain. Also, without you in my life, I'm experiencing a loss that hurts more than I thought I could hurt. dad thinks you and I have a love hate relationship. I know better. You're in a difficult place now. And I understand that you're living with dad. And there's not a reason in the world that you should have to choose. You're an adult, but you need to be honest with him. He needs to know that you're hurting and suffering. Remember how we used to joke about God? Well, believe it or not, I've prayed to him every day that you will come back to me and behold, again, you're part of who I am. I will love you forever love mom. And that letter at the time that I read it, although I like it, my heart is heavy, even just reading that. I remember being completely annoyed and thinking, why does she need to put this on paper, because I wouldn't speak to her. And that was her way of communicating. We now have an amazing relationship. And often we will go places together and she will read that letter. And the whole point of me sharing that is the ripple effect. Even if somebody's suffering silently with depression, the ripple effect is the entire family. It impacts way more than the person suffering. And that's why it's so important. If family members are watching this, and you see a loved one, a colleague, a partner, your judge, and you see another judge, you know, exhibiting symptoms and signs. And I know there was a PowerPoint that that goes with this

presentation that would be available, please reach out and get them help. suffering in silence is and I say this often, you know, is the worst way to suffer. I part of my stories, I did go to jail. I was arrested eventually. And the consequences placed me in jail. And I often say the greatest prison I was ever in was the prison of addiction. It was not physical confinement. Physical confinement was actually the first taste of freedom I experienced

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in five years. It was the first time that I was able to go to sleep and actually wake up and not need drugs. So often people say, you know, jail is the worst thing that can happen. The truth is between jail and this organization. That's why I'm here today. The second letter that I want to read and share with you. I actually received while I was incarcerated in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, and I'll get into how that all happened. It was one of the classes you could leave the unit to attend. And they gave out a letter and it was a letter from your drug addiction. And I remember reading this letter, you know, and I came from a family that literally every time I went to jail, they would tell everyone friends and family that I was backpacking Europe, okay, so I came from a family where being a drug addict was not in the cards not on paper for us, and they were going to hide it at all measures. So when I came across this letter in jail, and I read it, it was the first time I felt that I read something that I felt Another person who is not an addict or dealt with an addiction could read this and understand the grasp that addiction actually has on people who are suffering from it. And so I'm going to share that because although you watching this may not be an addict, you may know somebody. And the common perception, which is what leads to the stigmas is that it's a weakness. It's a choice. I will say, the first drink or drug is a choice it is in my story, there's no way I would have you know, excelled in school excelled in law school, pass two bar exams, prestigious clerkship to become a convicted felon and go to jail. No one in their right mind would choose that, you know, growing up when people say what do you want to be a felon drug addict was certainly not on my radar. And it's not something you know, anyone would have on their radar to be when they're older. So I just share that as in sometimes these things happen, but it's so important to know there's resources available. So I'm going to read this letter, it's a little shorter than the other one. A letter from your drug addiction. Dear friend, I have come to visit once again. I love to see you suffer mentally, physically, spiritually and socially. I want to make your restless so you can never relax. I want you jumpy, nervous and anxious. I want to make you agitated and irritable so that everything and everybody makes you uncomfortable. I want to make you hate everything and everyone, especially yourself. I want you to feel guilty and remorseful for the things you have done in the past that you will never be able to let go of. I want to make you angry and hateful towards the world for the way it is and the way you are. I want you to feel sorry for yourself and blame everything but for your diction for the way things are. I want you to be deceitful and untrustworthy, and to manipulate and con as many people as possible. I want to make you fearful and paranoid for no reason at all. I want you to wake up all hours the night screaming for me, you know you can sleep with me, even you can't sleep without me. I'm

even in your dreams. I want to be the first thing you wake up to every morning The last thing you touch before you blacked out, I would rather kill you, but I'll be happy enough to put you back into a hospital, another institution or jail. But you know, I'll still be waiting for you when you get out. I love to watch you slowly go insane.

17:21

I love to see all the physical damage I'm causing you. I love to watch who's causing you excuse me, I can't help but sneer and chuckle when you shiver and shake

17:31

when you freeze and sweat at the same time. And when you wake up with the sheets soaking wet. It's amazing how much destruction I can put into your human organs, while at the same time work on your brain destroying it bit by bit. I deeply appreciate all you sacrifice for me. The countless good jobs you have sacrificed for me all the fine friends that you deeply cared for you gave them up for me. And what's more, the ones you turned against because of your inexcusable actions. I'm even more grateful. Especially your loved ones, your family, the most important people in the world to you even threw them away for me. I can't express in words the gratitude I have for the loyalty you have for me. You sacrificed all these beautiful things in life just to devote yourself completely to me. But do not despair, my friend from me you can always depend for after you've lost all of these things you can still depend on me to take even more you can depend on me to keep you in a living hell to keep your mind body and soul for I will not be satisfied until you are dead. My friend, faithfully yours your addiction. Pretty powerful letter. And that is literally the pull of an addiction. And that will kind of explain why a person who would have such a bright future and I am not unique. I'm definitely not unique 10% of the United States is in recovery. I just happen to be in this position with this organization and have the platform to share that there's hope. But that kind of explains why somebody who had the potential for such a bright future could have their cards laid out and have a life exactly the story I'm going to share with you. So before we get into my personal story, I do want to talk about the prevalence rates that are in the legal profession, which would then be the need for the lawyers Assistance Program. So the American Bar Association in conjunction with Hazleton Betty Ford conducted a survey I think they started the survey about 2014. The results were released in 2016 with the Journal of Addiction Medicine, and they survey 12,825 active practicing attorneys in 19 states. I know that Pennsylvania was one of them. I don't know what the other states, the other 18 states, but the most important thing I can say is active practicing attorneys. So you're watching this because you need CLE credits active practicing as in your prevalence rates are within the group that was conduct Did in the survey. So out of those 28% active practicing screen positive for mild depression and depressive symptoms 28% 20% screen positive for major depression, major depression. I want to just say one thing really quickly about major depression. Studies have come out it is. Depression is

extremely treatable 80% of the time, extremely treatable with medication.

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I can't think of another disease that has an 80% treatable rate. If someone is having a major depressive episode, has the first one and does not get help for it. Their their chances of reoccurrence of another episode 50% if they have a second episode, and do not receive treatment, reoccurrence for a third 70% if they then have a third and don't receive treatment, 90% chance of reoccurrence that they will have before what I'm trying to explain these illnesses are chronic, progressive and fatal. They're also extremely treatable. The stigmas associated with all of these illnesses plus the legal profession because we are the ones that help people and solve their problems. What happens when we have a problem? We suffer in silence because we can't reach out for help because the stigmas keep us paralyzed, which just exacerbates the issues. So I said 28% for depressive symptoms. Let me compare that to the general population seven to 9%. How about major depression 20%. In our profession, seven to 9% general population, you can see our numbers are completely skyrocketed. substance use disorder in our profession 19%. In general populations, depending on where you get your information 10 to 14%. Doctors have 14% substance use disorder rates, stressed anxiety 19 to 23%. In our profession, so 60% of substance use and mental health disorders are co occurring, meaning if somebody has one, they have a 60% chance of having the other one alongside it. So if you look at those numbers, 28% 2019 and 19 to 23% any way you look at it, it's at least one in three of us. And that's why we're here. And that's why we do programs like this. Also, it's important to say because all of us attorneys attended law school at some point, there was recently well 2015 A study conducted through the American University Law School in Washington DC, led by David Jaffe. And at that point, he surveyed and put a survey out to several law schools. 3300 law students participated in the survey, I believe it was 15 law schools. I know at least one of the Pennsylvania law schools participated. And I want to discuss those rates as well, because before we come become attorneys, and the prevalence rates I just discussed, our prevalence rates were in law school. So of the 3300 students, 25% of them screened positive for possible alcohol use disorder, one in four law students. And I remember just thinking back when I was a law student, you know, I was the last person to get the memo that I had a drug or an alcohol problem. But hearing these numbers one in four, our numbers are really high 23% screen positive for mild to moderate anxiety. That's not really surprising. Given how stressful law school is 17% screen possible. Screen positive for possible depression 14% screen positive for severe anxiety 13% admitted to sharing prescription medications with other students and 6% said that they have used a prescription without an actual valid prescription. They've used prescription medication, I would venture to say the 6% is extremely low. This is also self reported. So it was the American Bar Association study. And like I said, and I sincerely mean this, despite being arrested my story five times. rehabs multiple convictions, arrest jail, I honestly was the last person to get the memo that I had a drug problem. So when I say these are self reported, definitely low balling numbers, because people never

believe until they make it to recovery, that their issue was actually as bad as it was. So I want to take a moment. And it's important to say because we're all aware of the opioid epidemic that's going on. And it's not just going on out there. It's in our profession as well. Why would it not be we're part of the population so So, the latest statistics I have at the time of this filming the 2016 overdose statistics 64,000 individuals in the United States died of a drug overdose in 2016. suicides 44,000. In 2016. Compare that to the Vietnam casualty rates. 58,000 soldiers died in Vietnam. So to say we are to even focus and just say it's only an opioid epidemic. Suicide is also an epidemic. And it's outside of our profession. It's inside of our profession. We're all in this together. So it's important to acknowledge that also, it's also important to say, like I said, 10% of the United States is in recovery. Important to note that, you know, and I know, you hear this, and you think, well, I'm an attorney, I need my CLE credit. That's why I'm taking this. Just consider this. Heroin, which I can honestly sit here and say, I've never tried heroin, never held in my hand, which is kind of unbelievable based on where my story took me. But eight out of 10 heroin users started with prescription medications. So if I had a little more time, or freedom, there's no doubt heroin, heroin would have been part of my story. But I believe it also would have been the end of my story, I don't believe I would have survived heroin use. So when we hear heroin addicts, or I've dealt in our state, people say, Well, I was embarrassed to reach out. eight out of 10 people who were on heroin started with prescription meds. So the bottom line is hope, hope and help is available. And it's so important to reach out. So I want to take a minute. And like I said, there's variations on all different types of lawyers assistance programs, I want to talk about Pennsylvania specifically, just to give you an idea of what is available. You know, in general, if you contact yours in your state, pretty much we're all the same. And like I already explained our funding sources, I want to explain the services we offer, because that's probably the most important thing to discuss. This is the resource, this is the solution. And again, I can say in our state, if you know someone that's suffering, and you, you know, you don't think they would be willing to call or in any state, you can call that lawyers Assistance Program for them, and they can utilize their services through you. So you can be the conduit for help you can be the lifeline for somebody. And I will say often people say and I will discuss a couple scenarios that have happened in Pennsylvania, without being specifics were completely confidential. People often say I didn't reach out because I didn't want to get involved, because it's not my business. To that I answer 64,000 overdose deaths, 44,000 suicides, it is your business, we are a self regulating profession. And if you notice something, you have an obligation as a human being to reach out and help somebody. So please remember that and I often say, you may be the only person with the courage to pick up the phone and call, but please do it. People are literally dying, because a they're paralyzed, and they can't reach out for help. And other people are concerned that if they get involved, that they may lose a friend or they may be wrong, always more important to err on the side of caution and be the hand of hope and help for somebody. So I'm going to talk about LCL services. The most important thing we in Pennsylvania, I know this is, you know, going to be broadly shown across the United States, completely confidential,

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safe, supportive, and we don't report to the disciplinary board, although we're funded through there, as well as lawyers on for client security.

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So somebody can call us and remain completely anonymous. I know majority of the other states operate the same way. Some of the states do therapy in house. So obviously you can't remain anonymous, if you have to be face to face, Pennsylvania does not we are a pure based support group and we refer out for evaluations. So I will discuss that now. So if somebody calls and our helpline, almost every state is 20 473 65. So if you nine to five in our office, we answer after 5pm. The medical Bureau in Harrisburg answers our phone, both of our help lines, we have a judge's helpline and the lawyers helpline. And the second question they ask is do you need to speak to somebody? Unless you're calling for a book? The answer should be yes. Every time I speak I say this in my addiction. When I felt like a tinge of desperation and wanting to get help. I would call rehabs between two and 4am just to see if they were open if somebody would answer and the answer is yes they did. And so so are we. So if you call and it's two o'clock in the morning, they will contact us We will call you back. There's only five of us in our office, we highly encourage those calls, I would venture to say there's probably the busiest hours and inpatient rehab is in the middle of the night, window of opportunity this small, if somebody reaches out to you that they need help, or they're struggling, or they're not feeling great, don't wait and see how things get. Often people have done that, and people are dying, I'm going to share a couple of scenarios about interventions that I've handled, where people have lost their life because people were afraid to reach out or they assume somebody else would. So we have in Pennsylvania, 67 counties. LCL has coverage with health care professionals in all 67 counties for substance use mental health disorders. So if you are a family member calls and says, I'm dealing with stress, I'm dealing with addiction, I'm dealing with depression, I live in this county, but I would prefer to be seen in a different County, we will mean any parameters that you give us, we pay for the initial session, and that provider will make a diagnosis recommendation of treatment, we will have you in there seated within 48 hours of you calling. Of course, if it's an emergency, somebody needs to go to rehab, we'll have that arranged in hours. And that provider, again will make a diagnosis recommendation of treatment. If ongoing treatment is necessary, we try to match somebody with the insurance that they carry. So in the event that it's they're going to continue outpatient there is not an interruption of treatment. I say this, if somebody and I'm sure other states have similar programs, needs treatment, and has no other resources, we will assist you finding resources, whether it's county funding, we have a private fund, the EM Patricia Carroll fund, that if someone needs treatment is highly motivated, has no other resources. Absolutely not, we can make an application to them. And they will assist an attorney, Judge, family member law student with receiving ongoing treatment. The bottom line, if somebody isn't willing and motivated, we in Pennsylvania and all the other states will take it from there. What is the value of a life it's

priceless. So that's the evaluations, we also have 328 volunteers. So when I say that about 45 are judges, about half of them are in recovery, half are just compassionate folks willing serve their colleagues, majority of them our attorneys, I served as a volunteer before I came on board with the organization. And we have a handful of law students as well. So if somebody calls and says I'm in Philadelphia, I'm dealing with, you know, alcoholism, I would like to speak to another attorney that's in recovery, it's on the other end of the state, we will match that person with a volunteer. Trust me, there is no situation possible that one of us have not already been through and devalue. And we say this often in the rooms of recovery, the therapeutic value of one person helping another who has been through this is without parallel. When I say this organization helped save my life, there was a volunteer that reached out to me. And that literally was my point of contact with LCL and is inevitably 100%. The reason I'm sitting here today, so and I will discuss that briefly. So peer support crosses state, we also have lawyer judge law, student recovery meetings in 13 counties, a lot of states have the exact same program. So if you are judge and you sentence defendants to go to recovery meetings in the community, you don't want to show up but those recovery meetings as well. And we understand that. So we give you a safe place to have a recovery meeting. Most of our meetings are open to whether it's not strictly alcohol related. It could be alcohol, mental health, or anything substance use. It's just a safe place for people to gather literature and online resources. We have you named the book, anything substance use mental health disorder related, we have a ton of literature in house, if we don't have it, we will order it and send it to you free of charge. So you know, our literature's great value. Our website is invaluable. We have CLE programs, I know this program is going to be offered on our website as well. So it's a myriad of information. Also interventions. I'm going to take a minute and talk about intervention services in 2017. And it's crazy when I tell you this about 50,000 active 50 to 60,000 active attorneys in Pennsylvania, it was like 55,000. So when I give you the prevalence rates, we'll just keep it at 30% for number purposes. When I tell you that in 2017, we had 485 helpline contacts, you would think Shouldn't it be close to 20,000 or 15,000? or close to that? And the answer is it should and that's why we do these educational programs. Stigma keeps people paralyzed. But the bottom line of all of our helpline contacts 100 Didn't 77 were third party calls, interventions, people concerned about somebody else. And of those 177 150 went on to approach the person they were concerned about, of the 150 93 of those individuals went on to get an evaluation, and or treatment, because somebody else cared enough to pick up the phone for that. So when I tell you that number, you can make a difference. If you think it's maybe not your business, trust me, it is your business. In Pennsylvania, every call to LCL is completely confidential. So if you, Joe, call me about Sarah, and I discussed an approach. And then eventually you have Sarah call. And she says, Well, I know you spoke to Joe, we want to confirm or deny that we just want to know how to help somebody, excuse me. So and whether you can or can't be involved in an approach, I say in Pennsylvania, give us the opportunity to assist somebody, if you can, we will discuss and validate an approach and validate your concerns. In simple terms, I know we've all probably watched the show intervention. And I won't say anything. Well, I mean, it started on the a&e channel, now it's on lifetime. And I love lifetime. So I won't say anything that has been

demoted in channels. But it's, it's the Johnson style intervention. 10 people sit around, they read bottom line letters that if you don't go to treatment, we are cutting you out of our life, blah, blah, blah, it's, it's entertaining. But I can tell you in real life, it really doesn't work like that. Anytime I was approached by a group of people with bottom line consequences, I in my addiction would look at them and say, Okay, well, that's three less people I need to worry about. So while on TV, it's entertaining, and real life really doesn't work. So I want to talk about a couple of scenarios that happened intervention wise. But it's important, the most important thing I can tell you, if you are concerned about somebody and you call LCL. In general, our approach is always start with something positive. If you're going to approach somebody and you say, whether it's the nature of your relationship, we've been partners in a law firm for 15 years, and your work product is amazing. I know your family, we socialize outside of work, and I think extremely highly of you, okay, then you say to them, despite how obvious something may be about their behavior, or what's going on, and Joe, it appears something may be going on and appears you may be struggling now. And your words are so important appears, is not accusing somebody. And then you say, I just want you to know there's a resource available. I'm not sure if you're aware, and I'll use our state because I'm filming in Pennsylvania. But lawyers concern for lawyers is confidential, it's safe, it's been around 30 years. And they assist people with things regardless of what it is. And then at the end of your approach, because you're then giving them a solution, you say, and if I'm wrong, I apologize, I just care. It's so important. When you approach somebody you're concerned about not to tell them and diagnose them, I have a lot of that in my addiction, and not to laundry list of things that they've done. Believe it or not, they're keenly aware of their behavior and what they've done. So you laundry listing, a new diagnosing literally will put a wall up, and they will not be able to hear anything else that you say. So you say it starts positive, you say it appears something could be wrong. Here's the solution. And if I'm wrong, I'm sorry, there's no way to go wrong with that, of course, every situation is unique.

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So I want to talk about a couple things. So I presented part of what I do is I will speak and address the hearing committee members of the disciplinary board because they're the ones that ultimately decide if attorney should be reinstated to the practice of law. And I sat in my reinstatement hearing in front of three amazing individuals. And so now I share my story with the hearing committee members to let them know that recovery is possible. So I had a presentation scheduled two presentations that day one was in front of the hearing committee members to the disciplinary board, and then I drove a couple hours. And I presented at a bench bar, which is attorneys and judges in that county. And after I gave the presentation, a woman came up to me and again, all these names were in the newspaper, but I'm still not going to use the names. And in the newspaper article, it was mother attorney representing son on alleged heroin drug charges. And part of the overall article was mother son found dead in the house of an alleged heroin overdose. Okay, that was the article I spoke there two weeks after that appeared in the

newspaper with full names. The woman came up to me after I presented and said, You know, I was really worried about and use the individuals name. And I said to her, and I tried to be as professional as possible when it's appropriate. It was not really appropriate. And I said and did you call us and her response was, no, but I assume somebody else was So I share that because don't assume, do not assume two people died as a result of that. I'm not saying we or any other states lawyers assistance program are the end all be all would give us a chance, we are successfully able to help so many people that come into contact with us. Another situation. So I teach, I'm the faculty member for the minor judiciary. And last year, I presented I believe, on intervention strategies. And after the presentation, a judge came up to me. Now the classes are usually about 60 to 70 individuals. And a judge came up to me and we were talking and he said, You know, it was an eye opening presentation. And I remember looking at his name badge, because I went to school with a gentleman that was from that county. And we briefly discussed and he was new their family. And, you know, everybody went on, and then later in the newspaper in June, and I saw this judges name, he committed suicide due to depression. And I thought to myself, I shared all of our services, He even went out of his way to come up to me, and tell me it was an eye opening presentation, what Mark? Am I missing? And I think the most important thing to say is these diseases do not discriminate. It doesn't matter if you're judge, you're an attorney, you're an appellate judge, you're a family member, your doctor, it makes no difference. addiction, and mental health disorders No, no face. What does a felon look like? Does it look like me? Most people would say no, I would have said no, but the truth is, it looks like all of us. And I share that now, the presentation schedule is we're teaching and presenting on depression and suicide for the minor judiciary, because we lost one of our own.

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Also a couple, there was a situation where three partners in a firm called me and said, you know, it's obvious one of our associates has an alcohol issue. He's passed out every day at lunch at his desk. Again, they made the diagnosis, and they knew what was wrong with him. So by the time we were in touch with this individual, because they made an ultimatum that he contact us, he went through an evaluation and went on to go into treatment. He was not an alcoholic, he was depressed, and was self medicating. And I share that because it's so important that people know, you know, although one may seem very obvious, and in my own story, I'm going to share and I, I will get it done in time, I'm going to share that my mom, Miss diagnose me miss the mark. I thought, you know, when she was ready to I thought I was going to rehab and ultimately I was wrong and she was wrong. And then, you know, two and a half years, I went on using an addiction, because she diagnosed me and brought me into a facility for a specific problem that was simply not correct. I will say this. So I have complete permission to share this. Wendy Lorenzo is the director of meetings for the Pennsylvania Bar Association in Pennsylvania, obviously. And Wendy is a wonderfully compassionate person works very hard, mazing family, and I came to know her daughter, Liz, I'm in recovery. So I went to a narcotics support group in the community.

I'm trying to avoid using certain phrases because this is a filming. And so I actually met her daughter, Liz in one of those recovery support meetings for narcotics. And time went on and later. And I think Liz had about a year and a half sober and clean at the time. Liz picked up ended up relapsing age 25 within two days of picking up, overdosed and died, left behind an eight month old child and her fiance and I share that story with her permission and blessing to let people know regardless of how long somebody is in recovery, supports are the way to go. If you ask my family and I'm 14 years clean and sober today, they may tell you I'm cured. But the truth is, it's one day at a time. And I say this often I don't know how far the reach on this video. But often I say an addict or an alcoholic is this far away from a relapse. So I don't care if somebody is 10 years sober, one month sober, utilize our peer support and give people a greater network of support. It's it's not a cat. It's not an end all be all. But the supports are the way to keep people in recovery. And I share that again with her blessing and permission that hopefully you know her daughter's her loss of her daughter can help somebody else in that scenario. So we've come to the point where I want to and I think I discussed all of those sales services. Again, we also have to support specialists that if somebody calls and says I need to know where there's bed avail ability, we will be able to assist you with that we know we have the contacts, we can make calls, get your specific names, locations, and send you an email. So when this happens in your house, it is a complete crisis. Everyone freezes, we call the number on the back of the insurance card, call us we will do all of the legwork for you just know that we are state, every state has a lawyers assistance program that operates as a resource for you for your life, when it happens to you happens to a family member, you are not alone. We wouldn't be here, all the other states wouldn't have lawyers assistance programs, if we were not essential in the legal community. And it's so important to know that we're here to help you. So I'm going to take about the last nine minutes or so eight minutes to share my personal story with you. And it's important and I only do this because if it happened to me, it can happen anybody. So and again, it's my perception. If you probably talk to other people I grew up with in my house, they may have a different perception. I grew up with one sister three and a half years older than me before we were even born. My parents were doing the lawyer doctor chant, so they knew that we were going to be a lawyer and a doctor, before we were even here. And expectations were high growing up in my family. All my family cared about, you know, was how people viewed us. You know, the expectations were lawyer, Doctor, I mean from day one. And I say this, you know, factually, I believe I grew up in a privileged home. We always had a beach house in Margate, New Jersey. I thought everybody had that overnight camps, convertibles, you know, and I say often until I had the option when I was released from jail to go left or right. That was probably the first thing in my life. I actually had to work for my family paid for all of our school. My sister is a doctor. They paid for undergraduate law school, medical school, everything. And that's just the family I came from. So I could never be a drug addict because on paper, look at my life. I came from privilege. So carrying on in my life. AJ first taste about anything outside of myself went to the dentist for routine dental cleaning, they gave me nitrus I loved it. couldn't wait to go back to the dentist not a normal response to a the dentist or be nitrus age 12 first taste of alcohol best friend and I had a friend drop off two six packs of

alcohol. Lucky for our parents, it was literally two o'clock in the morning going into Mother's Day. We're drunk walking around my neighborhood and Pennsylvania, montgomery county and the police pick us up we go to the police station. And I remember trying to pin the whole thing on my friend at the time and saying she was a bad influence. And it turns out she's a pharmacist today. So she was obviously not the problem and carrying on you know, and in school. I I mean, it's not normal to say but I smoked pot. I did you know what other people did, I drank, you know. And so when it came time for college, my sister went to Penn State I decided because I always felt like I was compared to her. I'll go to University of Maryland College Park. I went for criminology criminal justice major. Again, all my family cared about were my grades. So I graduated in three and a half years and a 3.97, which is great. Except I was living in a suite with six girls. And my best friend and I still my best friend today we would get a case of beer on Thursday nights, we would start drinking in the shower. We thought that it was or I thought it was time management. So by the time you go out, you're drunk. And that's how I live my life. But my grades were so great. Nothing could be wrong. And so after college, my sister was now in medical school and we had a family meeting. Laurie, what are you gonna do with the rest of your life? I always wanted to go to cosmetology school. My family was like, that's great. How about we go to law school first. So I ended up going to law school. And as I said earlier, you know, in orientation LCL came to present. My former my predecessor, you know, said one in three of you are going to need assistance. And I thought, This guy is crazy. What is he talking about? And so I basically ignored him and there was a keg in the curtilage right after the presentation. I went to Dickinson School of Law in Carlisle. They no longer have the keg in the curtilage. And so I went for law school top 15% of my law class. And second year of law school, I was dating a guy, we went to Miami, somebody there pulled out ecstasy. I ended up trying to drug for New Years. And I loved it. It was like nitrus in pill form. And so we came back to law school. I'm still dating the same guy, third year of law school now and we've now or I have now, you know, experimented with other drugs. And so third year I'm coming I'm in coming back from a Pearl Jam concert. And I always joke and say, I thought a drug addict Growing up as a guy with long hair and a Metallica shirt, okay, not somebody wearing a Pearl Jam shirt. So I went to a Pearl Jam concert. Coming back I was the passenger on my own car alcohol involved. We were in a car accident. I ended up at the emergency room, they gave me 20 to 30 pain pills. And the I went 100 miles an hour straight into a drug addiction that I actually thought I was immune from. So literally, these pills gave me the energy to sit and focus and study. Ultimately, what I did with that is I started going to the emergency rooms in the Carlisle area with my law books. I'm legit, look at me, I'm a law student. And I would they would X ray my leg 20 to 30 pain pills. I did that and my plan A was to do that through finals. Ultimately, I found a doctor in Texas who was willing to send me overnight delivery 100 of these pain pills with refills for a certain service feed signature required. By the time I sat for Pennsylvania, New Jersey bar exams. I was taking 310 milligram pain pills an hour to get through those exams. I thought I could stop after the bar exams. And I did pass both of them. I did trip planned to Spain in Africa with the guy that I was seeing the last two years who was living in the house where these deliveries were coming, no clue. And we went and I thought well just take the drugs with me. I ended up calling in a refill from

a payphone in Spain. So when I got home, there would be drugs there. So I ended up flying back solo because I had a clerkship that started. So Paris to JFK, I ran out of drugs. I actually thought I caught something overseas. I had no idea that I was in a drug detox. I had no idea I was in an addiction. And so I came back and I wish I could say the addiction stop there. When I came back, my mom actually handed me a package said this package arrived. I opened the package, it was the pain pills, I took three of them, I was totally fine. Still had no idea. I had a clerkship on the Superior Court of Pennsylvania for a former Supreme Court Justice. And that clerkship started in August by December, I had nine identities going with the same doctor drugs delivered to chambers signature required 40 pain pills a day to function function get out of bed and function. I called the pharmacy under whatever identity and they said Your doctor has been suspended my doctor tree my nine identities, I ended up making a decision to start calling in my own prescriptions from about 180 mile radius. I did that quantity of 104 refills. Ultimately, I that clerkship was one year, it started finished, I had another clerkship lined up in Philadelphia for three judges. And at that point a friend and I got together she introduced me to cocaine. And I will just say I did not put that drug down until my freedom was taken for me. I went through that second clerkship and I this is the point where my I was down to 110 pounds, and my mom decided I obviously need to go to treatment. She arranged that contacted the judge when I went into treatment and I thought it was for obviously my addiction. No, she decided that I didn't eating disorder. So when they went to take my weight, they told me to stand up and face the other way. And I said why am I facing the other way? They said you have an eating disorder. They watched me bring all the food that I brought and refuse to admit me. That's why it's so important. If you're worried about somebody do not diagnose them. So after that clerkship, I was completely unemployable. I was living in my dad's basement, did nothing with either of my law license and neither stayed and so 2002 to 2004. I was arrested five times for for felony prescription fraud, one for DUI under the influence of drugs, January 29. And during that period of time, 29 car accidents three rehab, three incarcerations. January 29 2004 is my sobriety date. On that day I was being arrested second violation, new charges. And the phone rang in my dad's house and I remember the detective getting on the phone with whoever was on the phone and said like call her the police station. When I went into jail. I was detoxing. 5510 milligram Vicodin today, Ambien, Xanax $2,000 of cocaine a week. I even say that today and I can't even believe that that is a true statement. But it is. So we go to the police station and the detective was typing the statement like this. And I said I'll type the statements. I can't sit up right I was getting really sick. I did. I typed my own police statement. He put me in the holding cell and and came back and gave me a phone. It was an LCL volunteer on the phone. This conversation has been pieced back together. Obviously the time I don't really remember. But he introduced himself. He said he had 31 years clean and sober. He was a volunteer with LCL and he was gonna help me through the process. I couldn't understand who paid him who he was what he was doing. And true to form. He came to see me in the jail that day. And he kept coming back to see me and told me to go to recovery meetings for alcohol and drugs while I was there. I spent 11 and a half months incarcerated in montgomery county correctional facility and I say in passing I went in 110 pounds and I left 253 pounds, the

disease of more does not discriminate. And upon my release this individual Dave was instrumental in helping me put my life back together, told me the recovery meetings to go to, for alcohol for drugs. The lawyers meeting that was in montgomery county I started attending. He helped me get a job as a paralegal in a law firm. Ultimately, he told me, I needed to contact the disciplinary board and let them know what happened. So I wrote a letter on my own behalf. Sorry, I missed the 30 day reporting requirement. by four years, I was arrested five times went to jail, rehab, how do we handle this. And ultimately, we ended up entering a three year joint petition versus pension in Pennsylvania, New Jersey did the same thing. And in the meantime, I became a volunteer with LCL and started bringing recovery meetings back to the prison where I was an inmate and was very active with the fellowships for alcohol and drugs in the community. And in 2008, we filed a reinstatement petition and those hearing committee members that I was talking about three of them sat on my reinstatement panel, and, you know, asked me questions about my addiction and arrest history. And I remember at the time thinking I, I was telling them why my privilege to practice law should be reinstated. And I don't even know that I ever believed someone who was the following could be reinstated. And so ultimately, I was unanimously recommended by the grace of hearing committee members and something much stronger than myself, to be reinstated to the practice of law in Pennsylvania, in 2009, and then New Jersey in 2010. came on board with LCL in 2011. And there's only one extreme story before we wrap this up that I'm going to share

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with a couple things, but we're gonna wrap it up shortly. In 2012, you know, the rewards of recovery, I get the fact that I'm even alive and filming a program is beyond measure, the fact that I can wake up and like appreciate rain because of the cards were fair, I would be dead. beyond measure. The fact that I can volunteer, you know, as dog walker and walk dogs and do projects on breaking the stigma of addiction, mental health and animals beyond measure the fact that I can serve as a treasure for the international lawyers of alcoholics beyond measure. But the truth is, you know, the rewards of recovery are way too many too, you know, get into 2012 I was presenting Penn State a lot of things happen at Penn State. I was presenting at their orientation to law school and I met a woman who was with the board of law examiner's and she, we became friends we put Facebook on her iPhone. And later she was the character and fitness director for the board of law examiner's later I saw a post that she needed a kidney. And I will say I did not end up donating a kidney to her. But I did go through nine months of testing, I was a match. Hershey med in Hershey, Pennsylvania approved me to donate a kidney to her, even given my extensive narcotics diction history. We went as far as she was actually the last person to find out because I guess I wanted the right to back out I don't know, as far as pre admission testing for a June 3 2013 surgery date. That's how close the transplant went. And so it was at that point that she was through a series of events contacted by a hospital in Pittsburgh that there was somebody on life support that was passing away that had a kidney that would work for her. And ultimately that is

where she received a kidney. I share that story because I went from I don't know how close I was to death, but 110 pounds and cocaine and I was pretty close to death to going from there to being deemed healthy enough by the Hershey med team to donate life to somebody and give somebody's life. That's what recovery has given me. You know, I've had the opportunity to recreate my sentencing for CLE program with all the original people that were in it. I gave my sentencing judge judge carpenter, my 10 year medallion, I'm friendly with the district attorney, the prosecutor me who's now with the FBI, my entire life and I believe the platform and all of the events that I went through work to get me here now to be able to share with people that recovery is possible. As long as somebody is breathing, there is hope. If there's any message that you take away from that, hearing my story going as low as you possibly can go. It's never too late to help somebody. So thank you so much for joining us for the program today. If you or somebody you know needs help, please please reach out for help. That's why we and all the other lawyers assistance programs are here. Thank you so much for your time.