

AHERN Update



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Navigating COVID-19 & Resources for Attorney Wellbeing

As the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic progresses, there is uncertainty surrounding how the impact of the virus on the economy will affect law firms in particular. To prepare for any potential interruption due to COVID-19, attorneys need to develop business continuity and business resiliency plans similar to those utilized in the event of natural disasters and other major disruptions. There are precautions that attorneys and law firms can take to reduce the impact of the virus on firm business and the health of the staff. Some of these steps include:

- Restrict work-related travel.
- Cancel internal and external events and meetings such as partner retreats and summits.
- Create working groups to advise clients on how the virus will impact them.
- Maintain regular communication with clients and respond receptively to any concerns that clients have surrounding travel or in-person appearances for their case, especially elderly clients and clients with existing health issues.
- Have a backup copy of your calendar available to you at both home and at work and be prepared to maintain your calendar without the support of your assistant in the event there is a quarantine.
- Review upcoming deadlines for the next 60 days and consider how you will meet those deadlines should you have to self-quarantine due to the Coronavirus.
- Test your capability to file electronically from your home.
- Consider measures to have mail delivered to your home.
- To protect the privacy and security of clients be sure that client information is not placed or stored on home computers, personal storage devices or in the cloud.
- Make arrangements to appear by video or telephone if a deposition must be made during quarantine due to a court deadline.
- Prepare to perform conflict checks and prospective client due diligence remotely and ensure there are backups available to perform these tasks in

the event current personnel are quarantined or unable to work.

- Prepare to perform legal recruiting and develop new clients remotely – activities which can be especially challenging when the option of in-person meetings is eliminated.
- Take steps to combat feelings of isolation among attorneys who must work remotely for long periods of time.
- Contact insurance carriers for risk-avoidance tips or suggestions for special procedures and contact your carrier promptly in the event a malpractice suit is threatened or filed.

An attorney must balance the need to protect his or her health and the health of those around them with the need to continue to competently represent clients. Taking steps now can more adequately prepare attorneys and firms for the transitions that will take place in the event of practice interruption resulting from COVID-19.

The ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs has also published a list of resources for maintaining your well-being in this extraordinary time:

ANXIETY

To get free confidential, 24/7 support for anxiety, text "HOME" to the Crisis Text Line which is 741741. For more information, [click here](#).

For information on Science-based strategies for coping with Covid anxiety, [click here](#).

OFFICE MANAGEMENT/LEADERSHIP

[Click here](#) for information regarding organizational leadership and managing COVID-19 panic.

[Click here](#) for tips for working remotely from Fast Company.

PANIC

[Click here](#) for an article that shares specifics about mental health and panic associated with COVID-19.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

[Click here](#) for an article on coping mentally with social distancing, isolation and quarantine.

STAYING MENTALLY HEALTHY

[Click here](#) to read about challenges for mental health and coping mechanisms during COVID-19 as outlined by the CDC.

[Click here](#) for great tips for staying mentally healthy.

[Click here](#) to find tips for managing mental health in troubling times.

[Click here](#) for information on the National Association for the Mentally Ill Online Support Groups.

[Click here](#) for information on the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance.

STRESS

Click here to read an article that provides tips on managing stress levels in the office.

Click here for information on how to cope with Stress during infectious disease outbreaks.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE RESOURCES

Alcoholics Anonymous

In the Rooms

Alanon

Smart Recovery

Author Brian Cuban's blog "The Addicted Lawyer" offers guidance and options for recovery meetings.
<http://briancuban.com/blog/responsible-recovery-in-pandemic-times/>.

Importance of seeking help for mental health and substance use disorders - Fear Not: Speaking Out to End Stigma (three minute video)

SUICIDE

Free, confidential 24/7 support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for oneself and others Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK; <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

To find your lawyers assistance program go to:

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/resources/lap_programs_by_state

See also, the ABA's "Surviving a Disaster: A Lawyer's Guide to Disaster Planning."

No portion of this article is intended to constitute legal advice. Be sure to perform independent research and analysis.