**What Does A WVJLAP Volunteer Do?**

**Why would someone want to volunteer?**

* because of personal or professional experience with disability, depression, addiction, stress, anxiety or work/life balance issues
* to have a deeper impact on their role within the legal community
* to help a peer, partner, colleague, friend or family member
* to be part of a team
* to network with others
* to give back
* just for fun & fellowship!

**Qualifications to be a Volunteer:**

* willingness to share your own experience as appropriate
* willingness to set aside the time needed
* stable in your own recovery from physical disability, addiction, mental or emotional health issues (if applicable)

**Some ways for volunteers to get involved:**

**Interventions.** With WVJLAP guidance, volunteers are often asked to participate in interventions. An intervention is defined as “presenting reality to a person out of touch with it in a receivable way.” (Intervention, Vernon E. Johnson, p 61). The overall objective of an intervention is to help a person to see how his/her self-destructive behavior affects themselves and others. While sometimes the volunteer may know the person being intervened upon, it is not always necessary. A volunteer can share their “experience, strength and hope” with anyone who might be in need of support.

**Outreach.** Getting the word out! Outreach opportunities can be as simple as talking about WVJLAP at legal functions to sharing about WVJLAP with concerned parties or a peer, partner or colleague in need of services.

**Peer Monitoring.** WVJLAP sometimes monitors clients for the Office of Disciplinary Counsel, the Board of Law Examiners, Courts, law schools and firms. Monitoring Agreements are written contracts wherein a client agrees to certain measurable activities in order to maintain and document their mental/emotional health and/or commitment to a personal program of recovery. It is the client’s job to call the Monitor once a week and to schedule a face-to-face meeting with the Monitor once a month. The Monitor is required to file a monthly report with the WVJLAP office.

The Monitor is not a 12-step sponsor and is not expected to insure that Client complies with the contract conditions. To act as the Monitored client’s sponsor obviously would set up a conflict if the Monitored attorney has a substance abuse or behavioral relapse. While a Monitor may attend some 12-step or support group meetings with the client, it is recommended that the Monitor not attend all of the meetings of the Monitored attorney. This allows the Monitored client to feel free to participate fully and will provide the client with the most value from a meeting.

Monitors are expected to immediately report all client non-compliance issues in accordance with the conditions of the client’s WVJLAP Monitoring Agreement. When behavioral relapse or drug/alcohol use is suspected, a Monitor may suggest drug screens by notifying the WVJLAP office.

A Monitor is never to act as legal counsel for any WVJLAP participant that they are Monitoring, but may appear on behalf of a Monitored client as a witness after consulting the WVJLAP Director.

**Responsibilities of the Monitor:**

* Meet with the client by scheduled appointment on a monthly basis, and file a monthly progress report with WVJLAP whether the meeting was held or not.
* Regularly review the Monitoring Agreement requirements and monthly calendar with the client.
* Discuss and Report any difficulties the client is having.
* Act as a mental health or sobriety mentor as it relates to the practice of law.
* Participate in any intervention for noncompliance.

“I volunteered as a Peer Monitor for several years working with attorneys in recovery who were under contract with the WVJLAP.  It was a very rewarding experience.  I am certain that I got more out of it than those that I monitored.  I know that I experienced more gratitude, peace and serenity in my life because of the work I was doing with WVJLAP.”

**Public speaking.** Education of the bench and bar is a primary mission of WVJLAP. Volunteers are asked to speak at bar functions, CLE programs, law firms, conferences and law schools. Volunteers may also be asked to write articles or stories for publication in state or local bar journals and other print media. Although sharing a personal story is often an asset, it is never required. Anonymity and confidentiality is respected with volunteers as well as clients.

“I had the opportunity to travel around state and speak to different groups about the great work that WVJLAP is doing.  I spoke to public defenders, district attorneys, the private defense bar, judges, and even law students.  The programs were always well received.  You could tell that people know how important the work of WVJLAP is because inevitably several people would come up after the speaking engagement to talk privately.  They might have a question or maybe a concern about a friend or colleague.  Maybe even some of them had a concern about themselves.  Doing this type of work was very fulfilling.”

**Fundraising.** Members of the legal profession have demonstrated above average rates of chemical dependency and mental health issues. Unfortunately, by the time an attorney makes the decision to enter treatment for any of these issues, he or she is rarely financially postured to pay for the treatment. Fundraising is a unique and meaningful way to invest in the profession by helping fellow attorneys in need.

**FUN.** WVJLAP will host social events across the state, a yearly retreat, and more.

While WVJLAP may ask for your help, you are free to accept or decline any request.