

Dear Classmates,

Last semester, the Student Services Committee was asked by the SBA Executive Board to engage in a discussion about the role of alcohol in the law school community. This request was motivated by specific events as well as general student and administration concerns about the physical and emotional well-being of Northwestern law students.

Consider the following facts and study findings about alcohol, depression and substance abuse in the legal community:

- The prevalence of alcohol abuse among lawyers is almost double that of the general population.¹
- “Whereas only 3 to 9 percent of individuals in Western industrialized countries suffer from depression, by late spring of the first year of law school, 32 percent of the students were depressed.”²
- “The worst aspect of a law student’s development of one or more psychological, alcohol, and drug abuse symptoms appears to be the establishment of long-term dysfunctional patterns of behavior.”³

These dangers can and should be addressed on many levels: individually, as event organizers, as community members, and as members of the legal profession. We urge event organizers to consider placing limits on individuals’ alcohol consumption and if alcohol is to be served, that it not be the sole or predominant beverage and always be served with food. We ask individuals to exercise good judgment and to help others who appear to be in need. To that end, we would like to alert you to specific resources that can help:

Resources within the University

- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
 - A free resource available to students on the 5th floor of Abbott Hall
 - Offers general psychological expertise as well as experience in dealing with stress, alcohol, and other specific problems
 - Website: <http://www.northwestern.edu/counseling/>
 - Phone number: 847-491-2151
- Campus Ministry
 - A free resource available to students on the 7th floor of Abbott Hall
 - Offers availability to talk confidentially with those facing interpersonal conflicts, crises, difficult decisions, or personal problems
 - Website: http://www.northwestern.edu/chaplain/ministry_ctrs.html
 - Phone number: 312-503-1363

¹ Kent D. Syverud & Patrick J. Schiltz, On Being A Happy, Healthy, And Ethical Member Of An Unhappy, Unhealthy, And Unethical Profession, 52 VANDERBILT L. REV. 869 ().

² G. Andrew H. Benjamin et al., The Prevalence of Depression, Alcohol Abuse, and Cocaine Abuse Among United States Lawyers, 13 INT’L J. OF L. & PSYCH. 233, 234 (1990).

³ Cynthia A. Cooper, “Under the Influence,” STUDENT LAWYER, Dec. 2003 at 20, 30 (citing Report of the AALS Special Committee On Problems of Substance Abuse in the Law Schools).

External Resources in the Chicago Area

- Lawyers' Assistance Program
 - Provides free, confidential assistance to law students as well as lawyers and judges
 - Offers individual and group counseling
 - Website: <http://www.illinoislap.org/>
 - Phone number: 312-726-6607

- Alcoholics Anonymous
 - A Chicago-area service office for AA
 - Holds over 2,500 weekly meetings throughout Chicago
 - Website: <http://www.chicagoaa.org/>

We intend for this letter to initiate an ongoing process of dealing with alcohol abuse at NU Law in an open and honest way. We hope that you will take an active role in improving awareness and promoting greater individual and community responsibility. If you have any suggestions for future events, please contact any member of the Student Services Committee, the SBA Executive Board, or the Student Services Office.

Sincerely,

The SBA Student Services Committee