

DRI for Life— Wellness Committee Toolkit



How to Set Up a Wellness Committee

A Resource for
DRI State and
Local Defense
Organizations



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Introduction

A few years ago, DRI created a committee called DRI for Life. The purpose of DRI for Life is to provide support for DRI members' wellness as well as professional and personal development throughout their careers.

DRI for Life created this toolkit for the state and local defense organizations (SLDOs) to use as a resource. More and more lawyers' associations are embracing a wellness focus during their networking activities and choosing to offer wellness resources to their members. Some associations have known tragedy, and most lawyers, especially litigators, know someone who is suffering from or who has been unable to bear the burden of mental illness, addiction, or stress associated with the practice of law. To supplement resources available from state bar associations and Lawyers Assistance Plans, many SLDOs seek to implement their own wellness committees. DRI for Life has prepared this toolkit with ideas on how to start this important initiative in your association.

DRI for Life gratefully acknowledges the indispensable input from the SLDOs of the DRI Northeast and Atlantic Regions¹ and of the Defense Trial Counsel of Indiana for their collaboration and contribution to this toolkit.

Please contact DRI for Life Chair Alex Hagan alex.hagan@elliswinters.com; or DRI for Life Vice Chair Audrey Seeley audrey.seeley@emcbc.doe.gov with your suggestions for more DRI for Life projects!

DRI for Life is responding to members' request for more work-life balance resources. Other initiatives of DRI for Life include:

- DRI Seminar Activities Active Networking Database—resource lists for seminar planners of recommended networking activities in cities DRI offers programs

¹ Connecticut Defense Lawyers Association; Tri-State Defense Lawyers Association; Massachusetts Defense Lawyers Association; Defense Counsel of Rhode Island; Defense Counsel of Delaware; New Jersey Defense Association; Defense Association of New York; and Philadelphia Association of Defense Counsel.

- DRI Work Life Balance Resource Center—online wellness resources, <http://www.dri.org/work-life-balance>
- DRI Substance Abuse Resource Center—online resources, <http://www.dri.org/substance-abuse-resource-center>
- DRI’s S.O.L.A.C.E. chapter—Support for Lawyers and Legal Personnel, All Concern Encouraged—email-based, in-kind help network for lawyers, their staff, and families experiencing personal crises



Develop a Wellness Committee in Your Association

Toolkit Checklist

Part I: Constituting the Founding Wellness Committee

First, you will want to constitute your founding wellness committee. Below is a list of elements to consider.

- Recruit and appoint a committee chair, vice chair, and members
- Cultivate champions for leadership (successful champions often have a personal wellness connection and passion about the topic)
- Consider diversity of gender, race, religion, geography, and practice specialty
- Draft committee description and/or vision or mission statement and consider other ways to raise the dialogue about wellness (see the DRI Young Lawyers Committee Wellness Subcommittee description example on page 7)
- Consider a broad concept of wellness
- Evaluate the needs of your local bar
- Review existing wellness services and resources (financial and tangible)
- Consider committee leadership terms and transition plans
- Consider whether the wellness committee leadership will be open to members or by appointment only
- Create and maintain membership lists and membership initiatives
- Consider obstacles (such as the stigma associated with experiencing mental illness or addiction)
- Plan for technology needs (access to a webpage, blog account, social media account)
- Factor in committee evaluation and program metrics
- Seek funding
- Grow sponsorships
- Develop signature programming

Example: DRI Young Lawyers Committee Wellness Subcommittee Description

The Wellness Subcommittee is dedicated to enhancing the physical, emotional, social, psychological, spiritual, and creative wellness of Young Lawyers. By taking a holistic approach to wellness and educating Young Lawyers on those topics, the Wellness Subcommittee helps Young Lawyers incorporate wellness habits into their practice. Believing that a commitment to wellness enhances job satisfaction, prevents burnout, and promotes better understanding of colleagues and clients, the Wellness Subcommittee is devoted to raising awareness of and providing the tools for wellness. The subcommittee frequently works with DRI for Life, as well as other YLC Subcommittees to add a wellness dimension to all aspects of the DRI Young Lawyers experience and calendar year. It authors a “Timeout for Wellness” column in *Raising the Bar*, hosts teleconferences with speakers on various wellness topics, collaborates on cultural events at DRI conferences, and is looking to build a Wellness Reference Library. Questions? Please contact Chair Tracy Frazier tracy.frazier@chockbarhoum.com OR Portland, Chair Samantha Woods smwoods@martinpringle.com KS Wichita, Vice Chair Stephanie Holcombe sholcombe@porterhedges.com TX Houston, Vice Chair Jenn Eppensteiner jeppensteiner@reedsmith.com NJ Princeton.

Part II: Developing Activities of the Wellness Committee—Projects to Consider

Develop a dialogue around wellness! Develop signature programming so that your wellness committee can create a platform for people to publish, speak, read, or participate in wellness experiences. Here are some projects areas to consider for your association.

Newsletter Articles and Blog Posts

- Contribute a regular column in the association newsletter (print, online) on wellness topics
- Assign blog posts to committee members on wellness topics
- Recruit involvement of substantive law committees and affinity groups
- Emphasize local character of posts for wellness resources

- Develop a wellness calendar to prompt articles and blog posts
- Incorporate photographs from or in anticipation of wellness oriented events

Example

A “*Well Wishes*” feature in an e-newsletter could celebrate members’ accomplishments *outside the law* to encourage thinking of members as people with full and balanced lives.

Seminar Speakers

- Build a list of local speakers on wellness topics (including health practitioners)
- Access DRI for Life and CoLAP speaker database
- Encourage seminar planners to incorporate at least one wellness topic per program
- Evaluate state bar mandatory CLE for wellness, suicide awareness, substance abuse (consider ethics credit as an option)



Active Networking

- Consider outreach to local bar associations
- Consider outreach to other groups and specialists in your state
- Review your association calendar: how can events be “layered” with a wellness angle?
- Have seminar activities chairs maintain a list of what was well attended, brainstorm ideas

Example

Contests are great fun ways to generate content for social media accounts for associations.

Resource Centers

- Create a digital online wellness resource center to educate your membership
- Offer a print, hard-copy wellness toolkit
- Establish formal contact with the state Lawyers Assistance Plan for connection to its resources

Education

- Investigate mandatory CLE on wellness topics—Does this exist in your state? If not yet, is it being considered?
- Hold teleconferences or webinars
- Plan and offer podcasts
- Consider partnerships with the state Lawyers Assistance Plan for CLE

Brainstorming

- Gather input on wellness initiatives
- Send out a membership survey to gather information about wellness topics and needs
- Use social media to seek members’ input



More Wellness Activity Ideas...

Nutrition and General Health

- Offer healthy menu choices at events (if it increases catering costs, consider sponsorship of “wellness luncheon options”); consider abolishing unhealthy snacks and soda, offering juice and mineral water instead as non-alcoholic options, and offering non-fat or non-dairy milk instead of cream at coffee and tea bars
- Create and “publish” an association healthy cookbook profiling well-known litigators, and sell sponsorships to defray costs (or sell it and consider donating the residual proceeds to a mental health association)
- Organize as a social networking event a healthy potluck (with a sign-up sheet online or at earlier event)
- Arrange a teambuilding chef experience or cooking demo
- Offer a walking networking lunch to a local farmers market or farm
- Engage a nutritionist or dietician as a guest speaker, or offer private 10–15 minute consultations during other events (either at the association’s cost or sponsored with outside resources)
- Have a massage therapist available for 10-15 minute sessions at seminars
- Hold a “quit smoking” competition among members, incentivized
- Host a tea tasting social event or tea bar at a reception
- Arrange for group therapy sessions or discounts on therapy sessions to discuss stress management, grief, or managing health crises

Productivity

- Incorporate “blue sky” sessions in your association programming and make it literal!
- Consider alternative physical spaces to boardrooms (i.e., walking brainstorming sessions, community bike rides, 5k run/walk)
- Develop flex work hour protocols for the association’s firms to adopt (engage employment lawyers in this process)

- Offer door prizes or membership goal incentives that have a wellness theme: gift certificates for massages, nutrition or physical fitness assessments, or discounts on fitness wear or shoes
- If possible, consider giving the association staff the day off on their birthdays, or one mental health day a month, or incorporate other wellness into their compensation (pet-friendly offices, half-day Fridays in the summer, for example)
- In book club conversation groups, include the occasional non-fiction book on wellness, or biographies of inspiring wellness figures
- Play music at programs, networking events, and meetings (consider live music), and consider taking a survey or having a contest about what music to listen to
- Promote a costume or theme day, just for fun
- Present a weekly, funny award to association members to lighten the mood: best smile, new haircut, PowerPoint
- Offer alternative networking events in smaller groups for those interested in sharing a creative outlet: painting or illustrating class, pottery class, sign making class, glass making class, or knitting class

Fitness and Physical Activity

- Form a local co-ed sports team that is associated with your organization (softball, baseball, soccer, dragon boat racing, or run/walk group, among others), and offer subsidized membership fees as incentives (and consider sponsors)
- Offer on-site yoga or Pilates, meditation, or dance classes at seminars
- Make walking and activity a part of meetings: pick up a beverage at a tea or coffee shop and walk to a destination (a member's firm? the courthouse? a seminar venue?), pre-arranged with an Outlook appointment with details; consider ordering the beverages for pick up in advance
- Host a social networking field day at a local park, for instance, with Frisbees and hotdogs, or host a traditional picnic day (consider sponsors)

- Start or incorporate breaks into large meetings with physical activity (jumping jacks, stretching) for a more productive meeting
- Connect with local physical fitness and wellness providers (gyms, spas, clinics, personal trainers) that might wish to sponsor your events or offer discounted member affinity benefits
- Plan service projects that incorporate physical activity (food banks, clothing drives, canvassing)
- Consider association retreats (“Ski LE, anyone?” or a yoga or meditation retreat)
- Appoint a social media coordinator (who can be a member) to collect pictures from each wellness networking event and ensure that they are posted
- Plan ways to make sure that networking events include a walk to the destination

Challenges and Contests

- Coordinate a wearable tech contest—www.FitBit.com connects (or through Facebook) to challenge other users
- Plan a weight loss (biggest loser) challenge with weigh-ins (or coordinated through a local Weight Watchers)
- Issue a sleep hours logged challenge (which can be supplemented with evidence from wearable tech)
- Host scavenger hunts as social networking events; these can be throughout the city in restaurants, museums, malls, or local parks (consider sponsorship)
- Plan golf tournaments—‘nuff said!
- Arrange fitness challenges (who can do the most push ups or sit ups, for example, supervised by local trainers or instructors who might be willing to donate their time); give awards for first and last to keep it fun
- Challenge members to post their random act of kindness or gratefulness items—maybe as a competition between the membership and the board, judged by the president or the staff, which would generate great social media content to highlight individual members as well as the association
- Plan 5K runs or walks

Mental Health and Personal Growth

- ❑ Offer a lunch and learn series on wellness topics; it can be brown bag or bring your own
- ❑ Arrange financial health seminars, especially for young lawyers (Investing 101, Retirement Savings 101)
- ❑ Use inspirational quotes in member communication and publications
- ❑ Form an association band
- ❑ Download fitness and meditation apps and encourage a group of members to participate (Headspace.com is great!)
- ❑ For your incentives and thank you gifts for program speakers, give gift cards or gifts from businesses such as Whole Foods, sporting goods stores, gyms, or spas (a three-month membership, for instance)
- ❑ Offer a “de-stress with pets” program; contact a local pet store or shelter to consider its involvement, but you may have recourse to members with pets!
- ❑ Plan service projects that will involve shut-ins, rehab hospitals, homes for the aged



