

NALP ANNUAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE 2025

The Kids are Not Alright:

HELPING STUDENTS IN CRISIS



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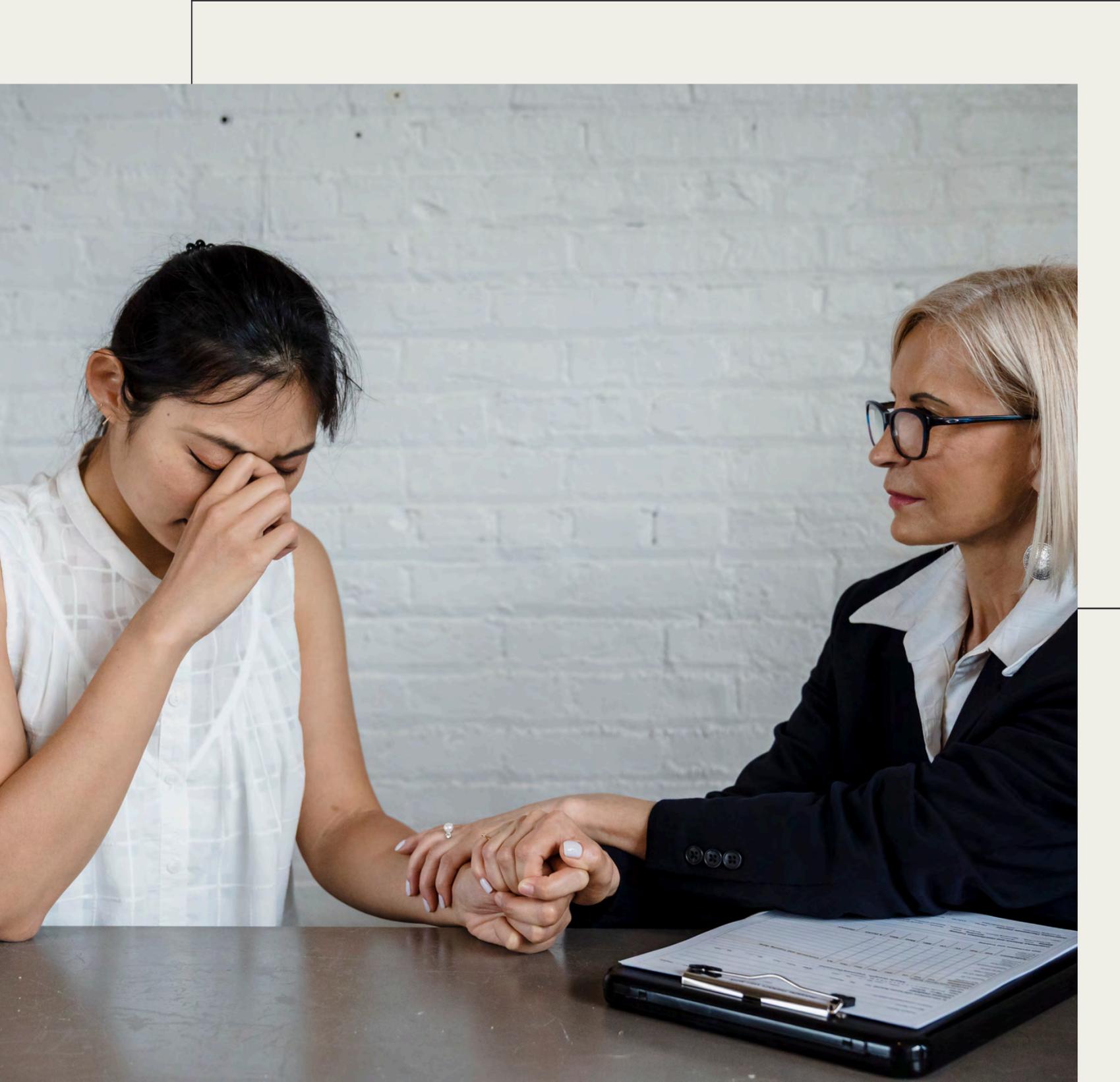
OBJECTIVES

- To better understand the interplay of personal and professional challenges faced by law students and how those challenges affect students' career development
- To explore empathy-driven family law client advising techniques and ways to incorporate those techniques into student career advising
- To affirm the need for career services professionals to maintain appropriate boundaries to effectively support students and avoid personal burnout

CAREER SERVICES: SERVICES WE ADVERTISE

- Career counseling
- Resume and cover letter review
- Job and internship database management
- On-campus recruitment
- Networking events
- Professional development programs





CAREER SERVICES: SERVICES WE OFFER

- Talk therapy
- Ghost-writing
- Copy editing
- Social work
- Wardrobe consulting
- IT troubleshooting
- Email translating
- Motivational speaking
- Unconditional support



Why do we take on these other tasks?

What are the unintended consequences when we do?

COMMON CHALLENGES FACED BY LAW STUDENTS

- *Financial Struggles*
- *Family Responsibilities and Caregiving*
- *Mental Health Issues*
- *Physical Health Issues*
- *Legal Issues*

CHALLENGES UNIQUE TO GEN Z STUDENTS

- *Authenticity in Law*
- *Shifting DEI Landscape*
- *Social Media and Professional Online Presence*
- *Work-Life Balance*

IMPACT

Academic Performance



- **Time, Energy, and Scheduling Constraints:** Working , caregiving responsibilities, and unpredictable schedules reduce study time, interfere with class attendance, and limit participation in extracurricular activities.
- **Financial and Basic Needs Struggles:** Inability to afford housing, insurance, basic personal necessities, study aids, bar prep courses, and other essentials can impact concentration and academic performance, while financial stress related to student loans and other debts create additional distractions.
- **Health and Accessibility Challenges:** Mental health struggles, chronic illnesses, and disabilities can lead to exhaustion, attendance issues, and difficulty meeting deadlines. Barriers to necessary accommodations can exacerbate these issues.
- **Environmental and Stability Issues:** Frequent moves, lack of stable internet, lack of access to technology and necessary devices, and difficulty finding a quiet study space can disrupt learning, while work eligibility restrictions limit opportunities for some students.
- **Social and Psychological Barriers:** Fear of stigma, feelings of isolation, microaggressions, and lack of representation can undermine confidence, engagement in class, and willingness to seek support.

IMPACT

Job Search Challenges



- **Financial and Practical Barriers:** Limited ability to accept unpaid or low-paying internships, lack of funds for professional attire or travel, and housing instability make it harder to pursue job opportunities and prepare for interviews.
- **Time and Stability Constraints:** Family responsibilities and the need for job stability over prestige can restrict career choices and reduce the time available for job applications, interviews, and clerkships.
- **Psychological and Confidence Challenges:** Imposter syndrome, self-doubt, burnout, and anxiety can make job hunting overwhelming, impact interview performance, and hinder self-promotion.
- **Legal and Structural Obstacles:** Visa restrictions, employer reluctance to sponsor work visas, and bias in hiring can limit job prospects, especially for students from underrepresented backgrounds.
- **Access and Inclusion Issues:** Lack of mentorship, fewer networking opportunities, and a shortage of generational connections in the legal profession create disadvantages in securing employment.

IMPACT

Networking Barriers



- **Financial and Logistical Hurdles:** Costs associated with conferences, bar association dues, and social events, along with housing instability, make networking opportunities less accessible.
- **Time and Family Constraints:** Family responsibilities and scheduling conflicts can make attending after-hours networking events difficult.
- **Mental Health and Confidence Challenges:** Social anxiety, depression, imposter syndrome, and fear of exclusion can discourage engagement in networking and professional interactions.
- **Lifestyle and Cultural Barriers:** Students in recovery for substance use or those who avoid alcohol for religious, cultural, or other personal reasons may be reluctant to participate in networking events and activities that involve alcohol. Others may steer clear of events like cocktail parties, finding them socially uncomfortable, pretentious, or classist.
- **Physical and Accessibility Limitations:** Disabilities and mobility challenges can create barriers to attending in-person networking events.
- **Uncertainty and Hesitation:** Housing instability and concerns about future job or immigration status may cause reluctance to form professional relationships.

How can family law advising techniques inform our approach to counseling students facing crises?

FAMILY LAW TECHNIQUE #1

Listen with Empathy

- Practice active listening and avoid immediately offering solutions.
- Use reflective listening techniques like paraphrasing what the student shares to ensure understanding and to help them feel heard.
- Validate their feelings and acknowledge the difficulty of balancing law school, job searching, and personal challenges.
- Normalize discussions about stress, burnout, and imposter syndrome, reminding students that many in their position face similar obstacles and still succeed.



FAMILY LAW TECHNIQUE # 2

Ask Follow-Up Questions

- Ask probing yet sensitive questions to uncover challenges that the student may not initially disclose, such as housing instability, food insecurity, or caregiving responsibilities.
- Use structured intake questions like:
 - “What are your biggest concerns right now regarding your job search?”
 - “Are there any personal circumstances that may impact your ability to work full-time or relocate?”
 - “Do you have the financial resources needed to support unpaid internships, the bar exam, or travel for interviews?”
- Ensure that follow-up questions lead to actionable solutions, rather than overwhelming the student with too many concerns at once.



FAMILY LAW TECHNIQUE # 3

Define the Issues

- Help the student identify the biggest barriers to their job search success by categorizing their issues (e.g., financial, logistical, personal, academic).
- Encourage students to prioritize their challenges. What needs immediate attention (e.g., lack of housing) versus what can be addressed over time (e.g., networking strategy).
- Use clear goal-setting techniques like the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) framework to outline job search action steps that align with their situation.



FAMILY LAW TECHNIQUE # 4

Triage by Urgency

- Assist in identifying which challenges need immediate intervention and which ones require a long-term strategy.
- If a student is struggling with basic needs (housing, food, transportation), direct them to campus emergency funds, housing assistance programs, and food banks before diving into job search concerns.
- Help students create a hierarchy of needs to avoid overwhelm, ensuring that foundational challenges are addressed before focusing on career-building tasks.



FAMILY LAW TECHNIQUE # 5

Brainstorm Solutions

- Work with the student to explore different approaches to job searching that accommodate their circumstances, such as:
 - Finding part-time or contract legal work instead of full-time roles.
 - Looking for remote or hybrid positions to allow flexibility for family responsibilities or health concerns.
 - Exploring alternative legal careers in compliance, policy, or academia that may better align with their needs.
- Discuss multiple paths to success, emphasizing that traditional law firm jobs are not the only option.



FAMILY LAW TECHNIQUE # 6

Connect with Resources

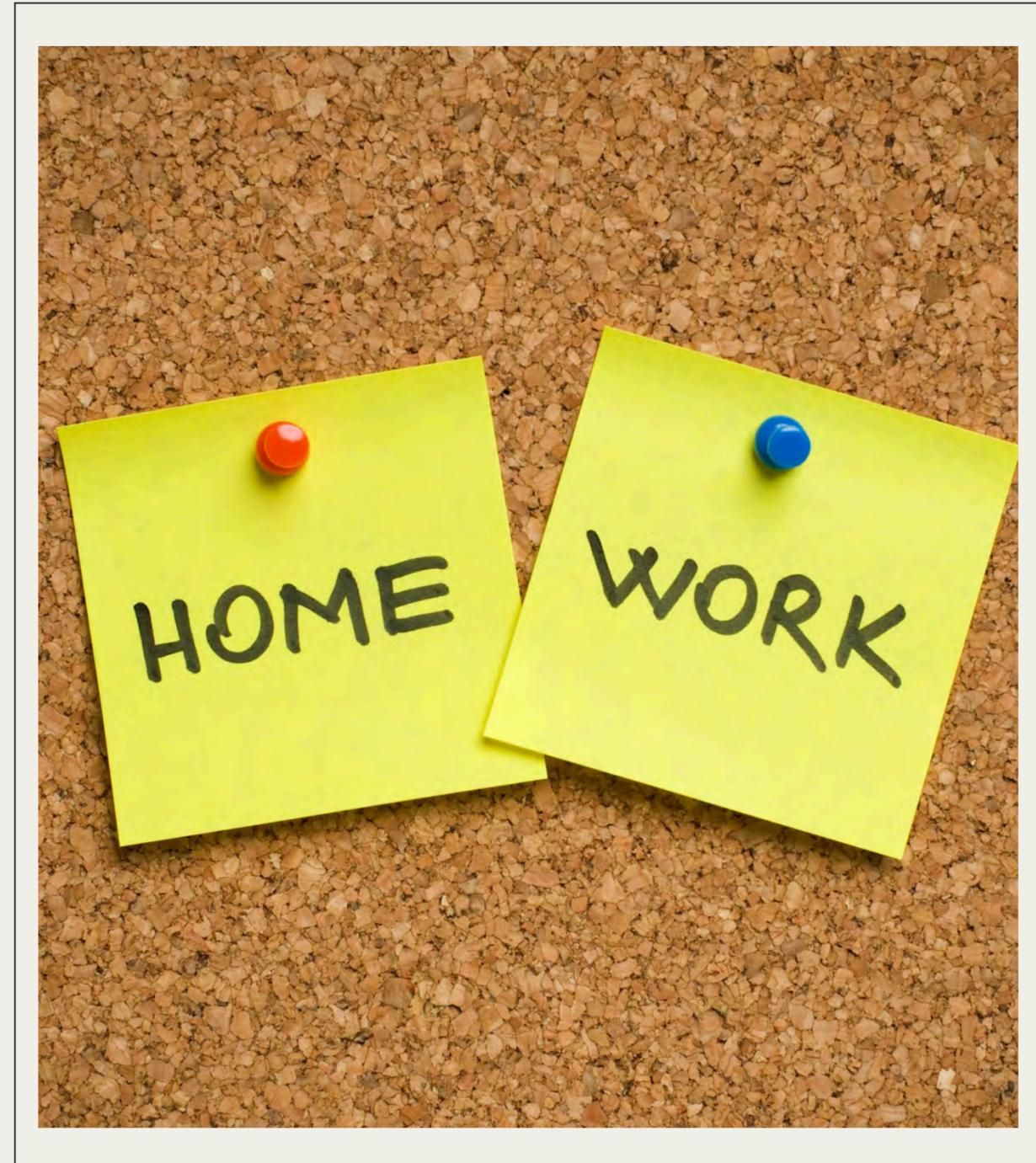
- Maintain a curated list of community and university resources for financial assistance, housing support, disability accommodations, mental health services, and recovery support.
- Establish relationships with mentors, alumni, and employers who can provide job leads and support for students facing barriers.
- Direct students toward scholarships, fellowships, and bar prep financial aid to relieve financial pressure.



FAMILY LAW TECHNIQUE #7

Assign “Homework”

- Encourage students to take actionable steps between meetings, such as:
 - Researching three potential employers who offer flexible work options.
 - Setting up an informational interview with an alum who has navigated similar challenges.
 - Drafting an accommodation request letter for an employer if they have a disability or health concern.
- Emphasize that small, manageable tasks will keep them progressing toward their goals without feeling overwhelmed.



FAMILY LAW TECHNIQUE # 8

Encourage Self-Advocacy

- Teach students how to professionally communicate their needs in a job setting, whether it's negotiating salary, requesting a remote work arrangement, or asking for interview accommodations.
- Offer role-playing exercises where they practice discussing their challenges and solutions with a potential employer.
- Encourage students to be transparent with employers about barriers only when necessary and in a way that frames them as problem-solvers rather than victims.



FAMILY LAW TECHNIQUE # 9

Manage Expectations

- Help students understand that job searching is often a long-term process and setbacks do not mean failure.
- Provide realistic employment projections based on market trends and the student's constraints.
- Reframe their expectations by discussing stepping-stone opportunities that may not be ideal but can help them build experience (e.g., short-term legal research projects, fellowships, nontraditional legal roles).



FAMILY LAW TECHNIQUE #10

Follow Up and Adjust

- Schedule regular check-ins to reassess the student's progress and address any new obstacles that arise.
- Adjust job search strategies as needed. For example, if the student originally sought firm jobs but now needs a government or public interest role with possible loan forgiveness options.
- Encourage long-term engagement with career services, even after securing a job, to ensure continued professional growth and stability.



MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES WHEN ADVISING STUDENTS IN CRISIS

Set Clear Expectations and Maintain Professionalism

- Establish the scope of career services early and clarify your role.
- Use appointment confirmations, intake forms, or other standardized means to outline available assistance.
- Keep all communication professional, avoiding casual language or personal disclosures.
- Set clear office hours and response times to manage expectations.

Stay Within Your Expertise and Use a Structured Approach

- Refer students to appropriate campus or external resources for non-career concerns.
- Avoid giving legal, medical, or psychological advice — redirect to trained professionals.
- Keep meetings goal-oriented and career-focused, redirecting personal topics as needed.
- Set time limits for discussions to prevent sessions from becoming counseling-like.

Establish and Enforce Boundaries on Personal Support

- Avoid financial assistance, personal favors, or socializing outside professional settings.
- Decline inappropriate requests, such as acting as a personal reference for non-career matters.
- Maintain a distinction between mentorship and personal friendships with students.
- Be mindful of physical and virtual boundaries, keeping social media interactions professional.

MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES WHEN ADVISING STUDENTS IN CRISIS

Recognize Emotional Triggers and Encourage Student Responsibility

- Show empathy while maintaining objectivity and professional distance.
- Debrief with colleagues if a student's situation affects you emotionally.
- Empower students to take responsibility for their own job searches and challenges.
- Provide resources and strategies rather than intervening directly in conflicts or crises.

Follow Institutional Policies

- Document meetings professionally and track student progress.
- Adhere to confidentiality policies and mandated reporting requirements.
- Follow proper intervention protocols if a student discloses a crisis.
- Seek supervision or peer support for handling emotionally challenging situations.
- Engage in training and professional development on boundaries and student support.

Prioritize Self-Care

- Recognize that it is not your job to fix every problem.
- Debrief with colleagues for perspective and support and consult campus counseling or wellness services when needed.
- Take regular breaks, engage in mindfulness or stress-relief techniques, and prioritize hobbies or exercise to recharge.
- Seek professional support if needed and remind yourself of the positive impact you have while acknowledging the limits of your role.

Hypotheticals: Scenario 1

A Student Facing Housing Instability and Financial Hardship

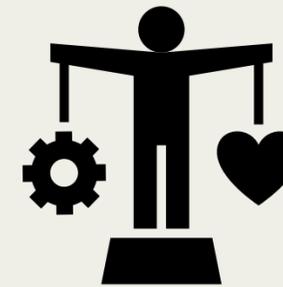
Sarah, a 2L, recently lost her apartment due to financial struggles. She is couch-surfing with classmates and working a part-time job, but she's struggling to focus on classes and her summer job search. She's too embarrassed to bring it up, but her professors have noticed a decline in her performance. She shares that she's feeling hopeless about her future in the legal profession and is considering dropping out of school.



Hypotheticals: Scenario 2

A Student Balancing Law School and Caregiving Responsibilities

Maya, a 3L, is caring for her sick parent while juggling law school and job searching, which severely limits her ability to attend networking events, complete summer internships, or apply to jobs outside her immediate location. She feels overwhelmed and doesn't know what to do next.



Hypotheticals: Scenario 3

A Student Struggling with Mental Health and Burnout

Chris, a 1L, is overwhelmed by law school's demands and feels like he's falling behind. He hasn't applied to summer jobs because he's dealing with anxiety and depression. He's afraid this will ruin his career before it starts but is hesitant to seek professional help due to stigma.



IN CLOSING

- Recognize when students' personal issues negatively impact their professional development.
- Develop and implement practical strategies to support students and tailor guidance to individual needs.
- Maintain professional boundaries and practice self-care.
- **Appreciate the wins.**

Thank You!

Supporting Students in Crisis

A REFERENCE GUIDE FOR CAREER SERVICES PROFESSIONALS

1

ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

- Ensure staff are trained in active listening, empathy, and trauma-informed communication
- Maintain a nonjudgmental, student-centered approach in all interactions
- Develop clear policies for handling sensitive student disclosures

5

ADDRESS FINANCIAL BARRIERS

- Identify and share scholarship, grant, and emergency fund opportunities
- Provide budgeting resources for job searches, bar exam costs, and professional expenses
- Help students find flexible job or internship opportunities that accommodate their circumstances

2

KNOW YOUR CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- Maintain up-to-date contact information for campus offices (Counseling, Disability Services, Financial Aid, Dean of Students, Title IX, etc.)
- Build relationships with external organizations offering legal aid, health care, mental health support, financial counseling, and other services
- Create a resource guide for students, including local support networks

6

PREPARE FOR LEGAL OR ETHICAL ISSUES

- Ensure CSO staff understand mandatory reporting obligations
- Have a protocol for referring students to legal aid or bar associations for personal legal matters
- Be prepared to assist students facing character and fitness concerns related to the bar exam

3

PROVIDE FLEXIBLE AND INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SUPPORT

- Offer alternative career advising methods (virtual meetings, extended hours, drop-in appointments)
- Help students identify short-term and long-term career goals that accommodate their circumstances
- Be proactive in connecting students with mentors and alumni who have faced similar challenges

7

ENCOURAGE WELLNESS AND SELF-CARE IN CAREER PLANNING

- Normalize discussions around balancing career goals with personal well-being
- Partner with wellness programs to provide stress management and resilience training
- Encourage students to set realistic goals and timelines based on their current circumstances

4

ASSIST WITH JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES AND WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS

- Advise students on how to discuss gaps in employment, accommodations, or career pivots in a professional manner
- Help students identify employers with inclusive policies and supportive work environments
- Provide guidance on requesting reasonable accommodations in the workplace

8

FOLLOW UP AND STAY ENGAGED

- Check in periodically with students who disclose challenges to reassess their needs
- Offer continued career support even after graduation, especially for those facing prolonged difficulties
- Solicit student feedback on ways the CSO can improve its support systems