

# Mental and Emotional Wellness in Law Schools



# Survey of Law Student Well Being (SLSWB)

Made possible by the financial support of the ABA Enterprise Fund and the Dave Nee Foundation, and the cooperation of the 15 participating law schools and their students.

# Participants & Methods

- IRB
- Web-based Survey Design
- 15 Law Schools
- About 11,300 Law Students
- Approximately 3,400 Respondents
- Response Rate of Roughly 30%
- 56% women
- 44% men
- 69% Caucasian
- 8% African-American
- 5% Hispanic
- 7% Asian
- 7% Multiracial
- First-years – 30.4%
- Second-years – 34.4%
- Third-years (or more) – 35%

# SLSWB Results

Alcohol, Drugs and  
Prescription Drug Use

<b>Alcohol Consumption</b>	<b>SLSWB</b>	<b>Healthy Minds (Grad.)</b>	<b>Healthy Minds (Undergrad.)</b>
<b>Prior 30 days - drank enough to get drunk</b>	53%	39%	61%
<b>Prior 2 weeks - binge drank at least once</b>	43%	36%	45%
<b>Prior 2 weeks - binge drank 2 or more times</b>	22%	12%	30%

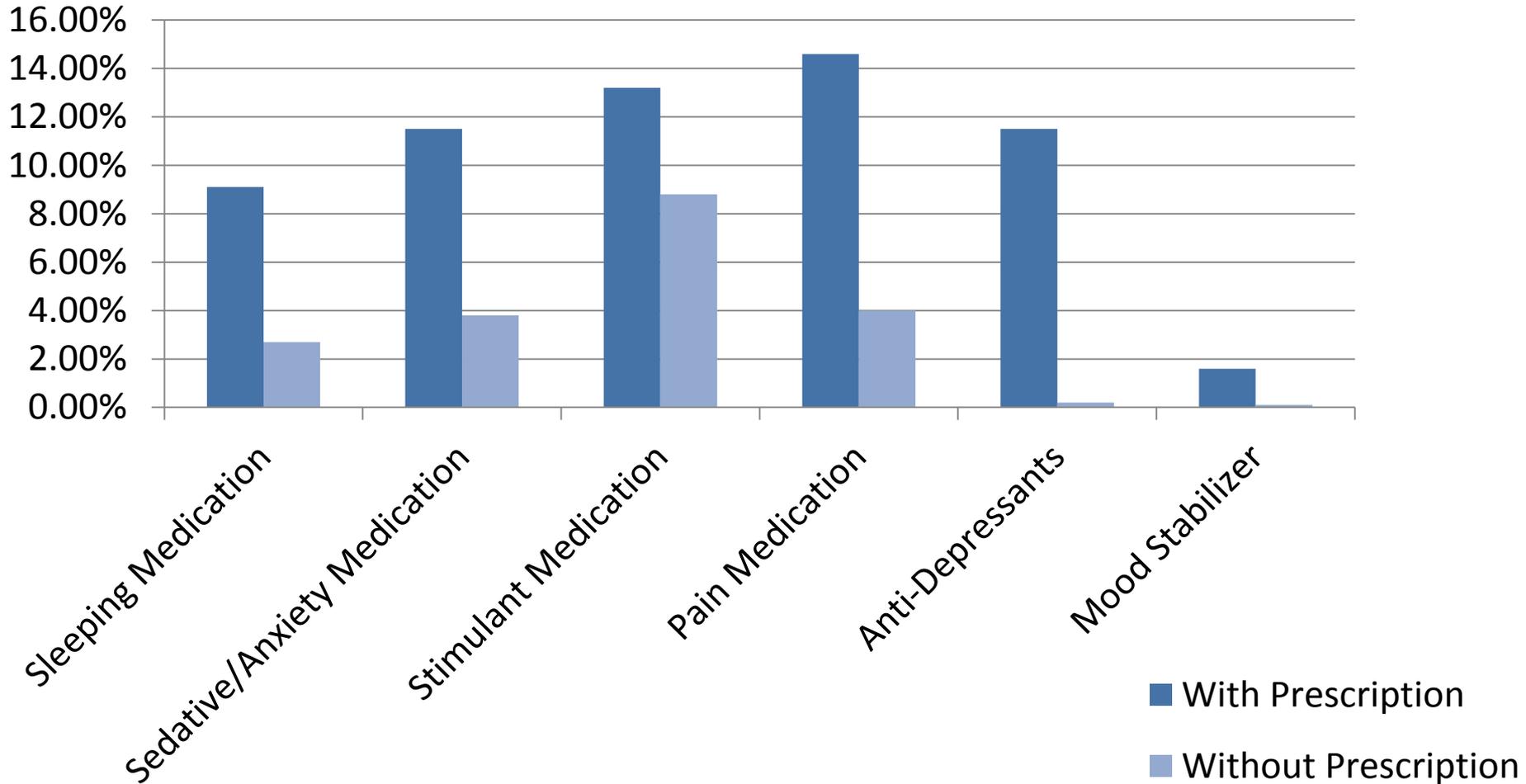
# Alcohol Consumption and Problem Behaviors

- 25 percent positive for CAGE questions
- Other common problems included:
  - vomited (37%)
  - had amnesia or memory loss (25%)
  - missed class (19%)
  - drove while under the influence (15%)
  - Thought I had a problem – afraid I might be an alcoholic (14%)

# Street Drugs

- Use of **marijuana and cocaine** have increased since the 1991 AALS survey
- **25%** (12 months) and **14%** (30 days) have used **marijuana** which compares with **21% and 8%** in **1991**.
- **6%** (12 months) and **2.5%** (30 days) have used **cocaine** which compares with **5% and 1%** in **1991**.

# Prescription Drug Use in the Past 12 Months



# Distribution and Misuse

- Overall, **12.6%** of respondents with a prescription have given away their prescription drugs in the last 12 months – with stimulants being most frequent, followed by sedatives and pain medication.
- Overall, **14.4%** of respondents used prescription drugs without a prescription in the last 12 months – with stimulants being used most frequently, followed by sedatives and pain medication.

# Prescription Stimulants

- Most common reasons for prescription stimulant use **without a prescription:**
  - To concentrate better while studying – 67%
  - To increase my alertness to study longer – 64%
  - To increase my alertness to work longer – 46%
  - To concentrate better while working -- 45%
  - To prevent other students (who are using prescription stimulants) from having an “edge” – 20%

# SLSWB Results

## Mental Health Concerns

# Depression & Anxiety in Law School

<b>Depression/Anxiety SCREEN</b>
<b>Depression</b>
Screened Positive: 17% [PHQ-2]
<b>Anxiety</b>
Screened Positive: 37% total 23% for mild to moderate 14% for severe

# Depression & Anxiety in Law School

Depression/Anxiety Diagnosis	Comparison
<b>Depression</b>	15% of undergraduate students and 17% of graduate students from the Healthy Minds Study
Diagnosis: 18% in lifetime, <b>17% of whom were diagnosed since starting law school</b>	
<b>Anxiety</b>	14% of undergraduate students and 15% of graduate students from the Healthy Minds Study
Diagnosis: 21% in lifetime, <b>30% of whom were diagnosed since starting law school</b>	

# Frequency of Suicidal Thoughts & Self-Injury

- 20% have thought seriously about suicide sometime in their life
- 6% have thought seriously about suicide in the last 12 months
- 9% of respondents have hurt themselves in the last 12 months
- 17% of those have done so two or more times in the past month

# Multiple Issues

- Those who reported binge drinking two or more times in the prior week are much more likely to
  - also have experienced **five or more problem** behaviors associated with alcohol (4X more likely).
  - also have **smoked marijuana** in the last year and in the past 30 days (3X more likely).
  - also have **used cocaine** in the past year and in the past 30 days (4X more likely)
  - also have **used prescription stimulants** without a prescription in the past year and in the past 30 days. (roughly 3X more likely)

# Multiple Issues

- Those who screened positive for anxiety are much more likely to screen positive for depression and those who screened positive for depression are much more likely to screen positive for anxiety
- Roughly six percent of respondents had three or more “concerns” (binge drinking two or more times, drug use, prescription drug use without a prescription, screened positive for depression, or screened positive for anxiety).

# Help Seeking Behaviors

# For Drug and Alcohol Concerns

- If you believed you had an alcohol or drug problem, how likely would you be to seek assistance from
- **81%** - a health professional
- **30%** - LAP
- **14%** - dean of students
- But only 4% have ever actually used a health professional for alcohol or drug issues.

# For Mental Health Concerns

- If you believed you had a mental health problem, how likely would you be to seek assistance from
- **79%** a health professional
- **15%** dean of students

# For Mental Health Concerns

- 42% thought they needed help for emotional or mental health problems in the past year.
- **Only half of those who thought they needed help reported actually receiving counseling**

# Factors that would discourage seeking help

- Threat to job or academic status
- Potential threat to bar admission
- Social stigma
- Handle it myself

# Our Law Students are scared to ask for help

- **44%** report a better chance of getting admitted to the bar if a mental health problem is **hidden**.
- **49%** report a better chance of getting admitted to the bar if a substance use problem is **hidden**.
- **The percentages are even higher among those with multiple concerns, who are most in need of seeking help.**
- **71%** agree or strongly agree that law students do not seek help for fear of the professional consequences.

# What We Do/What We Can Do: An Internal Quiz



# Present during Orientation



Have onsite a professional counselor

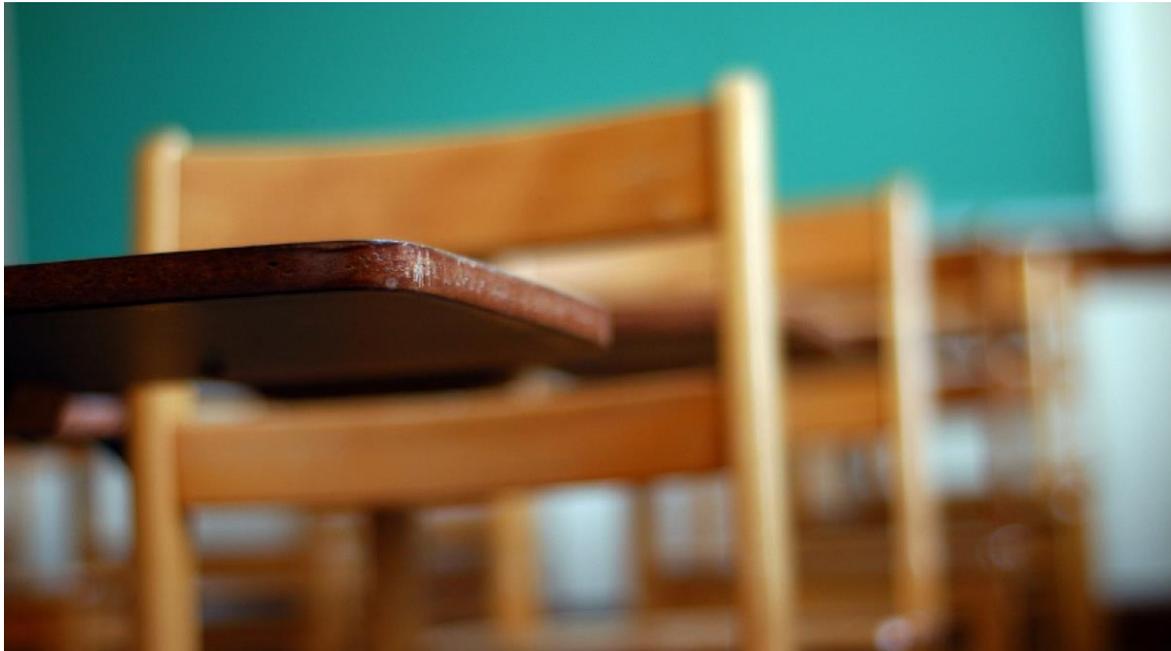


# Check in post-admissions on students with “checkered” applications



# Ensure attendance is being kept and absences reported

including appreciation for students  
who report concerns of classmates



# Educate faculty on “trigger” behavior



# Check in occasionally in class



# Develop Curriculum

Sustainable Lawyering: An Introduction to  
Mindfulness for 1Ls; Effective and Sustainable  
Law Practice: The  
Meditative Perspective (Berkeley)

Well-Being and the Practice of Law (Duke)

Mindful Ethics; Mindfulness & Leadership;  
Mindfulness in Law (Miami)

Contemplative Lawyering (USF)

Lawyers in Balance (Georgetown)

# Lead By (Active) Example



# Recruit student peer volunteers



# Highlight availability of resources



WELLNESS ACCOMMODATIONS ADVISING STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS COMMENCEMENT



## Wellness

Here at WCL, we invest in more than our students' academic and professional development: we believe in supporting the whole student. A student's health and well-being is our first priority, and the Office of Student Affairs works to provide students with the self-care tools they need to succeed in law school and beyond.

It takes a healthy and happy law student to become a sharp and prepared lawyer. Our office offers on-site personal counseling four days a week, as well as ongoing Wellness programming in Mindfulness, Yoga, and Recreation.

There are many ways to practice self-care while here at WCL, and our office tries lead by example. Dean Jaffe seeks self-care each day by being in the moment with each of his two daughters. Sarah loves to treat herself to a movie alone at E-Street Cinema after a stressful day or long week. Shira unwinds by reading a good book outside. The point is, find what helps bring you balance and the ability to re-charge; if there's any way our office can help, our door is always open.

## Self-Care and Counseling

Whether familial, financial, academic, or otherwise, the Office of Student Affairs assures a safe

WCL COUNSELING CENTER

# Support a student organization dedicated to wellness

