Kristine M. Kuzemka

From: Kristine M. Kuzemka
Sent: Wednesday, November 14, 2012 4:50 PM
To: 'tlindeman@nvcourts.nv.gov'
Cc: 'jluevano@nvcourts.nv.gov'
Subject: Letter from Kristine Kuzemka re ADKT 0478

FILED
NOV 26 2012
TRACIE K. LINDEMAN
CLERK OF SUPREME COURT
BY CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK

Dear Ms. Lindeman:

By way of introduction, my name is Kristine Kuzemka and I am a lawyer in Nevada as well as a member of Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers (LCL). I am writing this email to share my thoughts with the Nevada Supreme Court re ADKT 0478 in support of requiring 1 Ethics CLE annually, which would address issues of substance abuse, addiction and/or mental health issues that professionals and paraprofessionals face in the legal field.

For the past seven years, I have presented at numerous CLEs addressing substance abuse and addiction in the legal profession. These presentations have been at several venues and have included, UNLV Boyd School of Law, the State Bar of Nevada - Bridge the Gap, Southern Nevada Association of Women Attorneys, and the Clark County Public Defender's Office. The Clark County Public Defender's Office has sponsored a two-credit Ethics CLE for the past four years, which conveyed both a personal perspective by lawyers in recovery from addiction and/or substance abuse and/or gambling and a clinical perspective. Last year, the CLE included a presentation by Mel Pohl, M.D., who addressed the physiological aspects of addiction and the effect(s) on the brain. Feedback from participants was extremely positive.

My personal experience in the past several years in being involved with the CLEs mentioned above have proved to help many professionals in our field. Due to confidentiality reasons, I cannot disclose any names, but generally, the people who reached out to LCL after these CLEs ranged in age from approximately 28 years to 60 years plus, comprised of both lawyers and non-lawyers. Some reached out for their own individual issues and others reached out for information to help a colleague or friend. Many addressed their respective issues as a result and are now productive members of our profession and society at large. In so doing, these individuals have likely averted a "professional train wreck" thwarting the inevitable negative collateral consequences. Rather, they have avoided the loss of their profession (and diminished negative press for the profession at large), the negative impact on clients, and the negative impact on their families and friends.

Although this is not the only avenue or possible solution toward addressing this problem in our profession, it is certainly an opportunity to raise awareness for both the people who need it or those who don't but, who are concerned about their colleague(s). It is a good start and if mandated as part of annual CLE requirements, could help countless others. One of the difficult aspects of treating the problem/addiction is the denial piece of the disease. There are numerous people in our field who could use help, but are not willing to go to a forum on this issue due to the belief that they could "be seen" by others and therefore, presumed to have a problem. If this type of CLE is mandated, it would arguably limit the fear of any perceived stigma a person may have, as all would be required to attend.

In closing, please consider this input as you determine your course of action as it relates to ADKT 0478. If you have any questions or would like to talk with me directly, please call me at 702.235.4023 or email me.

Sincerely,

Kristine M. Kuzemka

Kristine M. Kuzemka, Esq.
Member of Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers
702.235.4023

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