

## Pursuing Wellness: A Firm's Work With Mental Health Experts

By **Annette Sciallo and Mark Goldberg** (September 19, 2019, 5:37 PM EDT)

*One year after the American Bar Association launched its seven-step pledge to improve mental health and well-being in the legal industry, this Expert Analysis series features updates from leaders at some of the law firms that were among the first to commit to the campaign. These articles explain how firms came up with ideas to implement elements of the initiative, how those ideas were put into action and the impact their efforts have had to date.*

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Last fall, Latham & Watkins LLP was delighted to be an inaugural signatory of the American Bar Association's well-being pledge campaign. Signing the pledge was a natural progression of the firm's ongoing efforts to support the well-being of our lawyers and staff, which have included programs aimed at developing mindfulness and resilience, preventing diabetes and musculoskeletal injuries, and increasing fitness and movement, among other initiatives. The pledge has served as a strong and positive statement of our intention to continue that work and the importance we place upon it.

We're fortunate that our firm's leadership has long believed that investing in the well-being of our people is the right thing to do — and when it comes to supporting well-being, we don't differentiate between our lawyers and staff. While the firm's well-being platform has evolved significantly over the last decade, at its core is an unwavering commitment to helping people stay on track both personally and professionally by empowering them with resources that support their ability to thrive.

Reflecting on the year since signing the ABA pledge — in particular how we have implemented pledge principle number four ("providing confidential access to addiction and mental health experts and resources") — it is helpful to examine Latham's well-being journey, which began in the mid-2000s and helped lay the foundation for today's mental health initiatives.

Our early research showed the value of bringing a health and wellness focus into the workplace and led to the launch of several targeted well-being initiatives, including a global physical activity competition that's now in its 11th year. Latham's global health and well-being program, LiveWell Latham, launched formally in 2009, focusing initially on general nutrition and fitness and later evolving to include evidence-based programming designed to meet the unique needs of legal professionals. Most recently, LiveWell Latham has focused on engaging our personnel more proactively in their physical, mental and emotional health.



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Over the years, Latham has developed partnerships with experts in the mental health space, including renowned physicians and providers, to provide high-quality programming customized to the firm. For example, in early 2016, we began working with Dr. Amit Sood, then a physician at the Mayo Clinic, to adapt his stress management and resiliency training, or SMART, program, for a Latham audience.

This popular multisession program integrates elements of neuroscience, psychology and philosophy to offer a scientific approach to stress management. The program has included both live and videoconference sessions as well as Sood's books, weekly communications, optional resilience consultations and a confidential resilience self-check that allowed participants to measure their personal resilience levels both before and after the program.

After running the SMART program in all of our U.S. offices, data analysis has shown a notable decrease in stress and an increase in resilience, well-being and other quality-of-life measures among participants. The firm is currently working with Sood to create an on-demand version of the program and expand SMART both within and outside the U.S. in 2020.

The firm also began developing a mindful performance program in early 2017 in conjunction with The Potential Project, a global leadership training and development organization that helps individuals build resilience, manage stress and enhance performance through mindfulness. Latham's tailored version of this multisession program takes a deep dive into mindfulness along with topics such as acceptance, presence, focus and sleep, all underpinned by neuroscience.

As with SMART, the mindful performance program has included live sessions, books, emails and other communications, as well as confidential pre- and post-program self-assessments. To date, the mindful performance program has run in offices across the U.S., Europe and Asia, as well as at various internal training academies.

In late 2017, the firm built on its resilience and mindfulness programming success by partnering with Patrick Krill, a leading authority on addiction and mental health issues among lawyers, to provide a series of educational presentations on these topics. These efforts dovetailed with the firm's signing of the ABA pledge and helped underscore the need for the legal profession to devote additional resources to supporting mental health and well-being. We've also worked with Krill to develop our global strategy around these issues and provided our attorneys and staff with direct access to him for confidential consultations.

As these various programs and resources continued to expand, in May 2019, the firm launched a robust new global counseling and support program that provides confidential, 24/7 telephone access to master's level clinicians who can provide comprehensive evaluations and connect attorneys and staff to appropriate mental health resources.

Depending on the individual's needs, the clinicians can offer in-the-moment counseling, as well as personalized short- and/or long-term care plans. In the U.S., counselors remain connected and available to the participant throughout the course of their services to provide additional guidance and support. The firm is committed to helping its future lawyers thrive as well, and has extended this service to summer associates — including when they are back at school. And beginning in late 2019, Latham will offer on-site confidential counseling in two of its most populous offices, with plans to expand to other locations.

In addition, our mental health and addiction resources site on the firm's intranet makes it easy for

individuals to find and access appropriate global and local resources. This includes crisis support, professional consultation, counseling, medical resources and well-being programs.

In support of this work, our well-being working group, consisting of a cross-section of partners, counsel, associates and staff from offices around the world, serves as an adviser on various mental and emotional health initiatives and acts as a sounding board for evaluating potential new resources and programs.

Finally, recognizing the need to support the whole person, and that physical health often overlaps with emotional and even financial health, the firm has also focused on other key areas of health and well-being by providing:

- Diabetes prevention support through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Diabetes Prevention Program, through which 11 Latham cohorts to date across New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston have lowered their blood sugar and lost significant weight, with a high percentage of participants moving from prediabetic to normal blood sugar range;
- Musculoskeletal support through our global ergonomics program, through which more than 120 ergonomics specialists around the world have received extensive and ongoing training that enables them to perform ergonomics evaluations for all lawyers and staff;
- Medical resources such as our global partner executive health program; U.S. and U.K. telemedicine resources (for both medical and mental health); global medical second opinion and referral services; and two new cancer care resources that provide expedited access to top cancer care at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center as well as specialized guidance from Johns Hopkins to both cancer patients and caregivers;
- Convenience services such as backup care (including for self-care) and work/life referrals for addressing daily life needs; and
- Financial planning services in the U.S. that offer confidential one-on-one phone coaching and digital tools to help navigate everyday money matters and plan for the future.

While we've achieved success with these initiatives to date, we know that there is much more work to be done. To that end, we continue to expand access to addiction and mental health experts and resources. We are currently piloting a mindfulness app, as well as developing various trainings related to mental health first aid, mental health training for supervisors, and other resources to raise awareness and literacy around mental health issues.

We are grateful that our leadership remains firmly committed to supporting the physical, mental and emotional well-being of our lawyers and staff, and we will continue our work to encourage a culture of help-seeking, enhance access to care and normalize the conversation around mental health.

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