

Brighton Hospital's Bright Idea

By Martha D. Burkett

Pardon me if this month's topic seems tangential or incidental to attorney wellness, but I recently learned of a program at Brighton Hospital that is worth mentioning. Please note that this program is available for families of your clients and for families of lawyers and judges.

If you practice family or criminal law, you are already aware of the incidence of substance use in divorce and criminal cases, and sometimes you may feel at a loss to offer guidance to the affected families—especially to children who are profoundly impacted by the substance use or addiction of one or both primary caregivers. As unfortunate as it is, children of families in which problematic substance use is the norm frequently suffer huge losses in terms of emotional security and physical safety. Too often, their needs go unmet because much of the family's emotional, physical, and financial resources go to support continued substance use by one or both primary caregivers and to address crises that manifest as a result of substance use.

It is a sad reality that often these children feel duty bound to take over adult responsibilities like household chores and parenting themselves and younger siblings, thus sacrificing their own childhoods. Though they feel great love for and loyalty to substance-affected caregivers, they are left with feelings of anger and resentment toward impaired adults who may have, in effect, abandoned them. Many of these children feel they are at fault for the problems of caregivers and feel enormous pressure to “do better” to get the substance use and ensuing damage to stop. They are often confused and, because secrecy is a norm in substance-affected families, many of these children feel they have no place to turn for help.

Another reality is that children living with addiction—nearly one in three in the United

Brighton Hospital Children's Program

The Children's Program is unique to Brighton Hospital and is free. Dates of upcoming programs for Michigan children ages 7–12:

- August 12–15
- September 30–October 3
- October 21–24
- November 18–21
- December 16–19

All programs are held at:

Brighton Hospital, 12851 Grand River, Brighton, MI 48116

To register, contact Pat Schafer at (248) 406-4260. Classes fill quickly, and reservations are required. Questions about this and other Brighton Hospital programs can be directed to the hospital's customer service staff at (877) 976-2371.

States as estimated by the National Association for Children of Alcoholics—have an increased risk of developing similar problems. According to the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration, children of alcoholics are four times more likely than other children to develop an addiction or compulsive disorder.

With that in mind, Brighton Hospital has launched a free prevention program for children between the ages of 7 and 12 to help them build their strengths and deepen their resilience to face daily challenges at home or at school by teaching them a variety of healthy coping skills, problem-solving tools, and self-care strategies.

The Brighton Children's Program, a day camp offered monthly on four consecutive days, is beneficial for children who have a family member with an alcohol or drug problem or a family member who is active in recovery by allowing them to learn about the disease of addiction in age-appropriate ways while meeting other children with similar situations. This program is also useful for kids who have not witnessed the effects of addiction in their families.

The program was designed by Jerry Moe, vice president of children's programs for

the Betty Ford Center in Rancho Mirage, California. The Betty Ford Center offers the Children's Program in Texas, California, and Colorado at a cost of \$400 per child, which is the cost to run the program. *Thanks to generous donations and grants, Brighton Hospital offers the program free of charge so children of all substance-affected families can participate.* The hospital also provides transportation for program participants in the greater Detroit area, Lansing, and Ann Arbor. ■



Martha D. Burkett is the program administrator for the State Bar of Michigan Lawyers and Judges Assistance Program. Ms. Burkett has completed her master's degrees in public administration and in

counseling education, and is both a licensed professional counselor and a nationally certified counselor. She has completed graduate certification in holistic health and has achieved level II certification in addictions counseling. She is certified as an advanced-level board certified interventionist and as an approved clinical supervisor.