

**Initial Steps for Mental Health Reform:
Policy Asks of the Harvard Law School Administration and Faculty
March 23, 2018**

In collaboration with student groups actively involved with mental health resource advocacy and training, specifically: APALSA, Board of Student Advisers, Lambda, Student Mental Health Association, QTPOC, as well as members of Section 3, Class of 2019, Student Government presents this report of policy reforms towards reducing mental health stigma and improving student wellness.

This report comes in anticipation of mental health survey results from HLS' first annual mental health survey done in the fall of 2017. These asks are preliminary brainstorms, influenced by news reports, research papers, ABA research reports, and students' own experiences and understanding of peer mental health challenges on campus. It is by no means a full extent of possible solutions; instead, these asks represent a minimum that student advocates hope to see. We in turn hope that students, faculty, clinicians, and staff will use these asks as a starting point for change.

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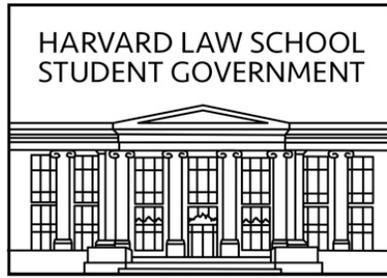
- I. Asks of the Administration
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Presented to:

John Manning, *Dean*
Marcia Sells, *Dean of Students*
HLS Student Body

Drafters:

Amanda Lee & Amanda Chan
Student Government President & Vice President
Adam Savitt
Student Government Health & Wellness Committee Chair



I. Asks of the Administration

a. More Accessible and Culturally Sensitive Providers

i. **House 5 FTE therapists at HLS.**

Currently, there is (1) one full time law school provider who spends 70% of her time seeing patients and 30% of her time hosting programs and (3) three providers that split their time at the Smith center (Assuming 50% split). This a total of 2.3 FTE.

1. Based on 2014 data from the survey on Law Student Well-Being (11,000 respondents across 15 law schools), 17% of students were depressed, 23% had mild to moderate and 14% severe anxiety, and 21% reported thinking seriously about suicide in their lifetime.
2. Similarly, assuming that the survey results will show that at least 20% of the HLS student body at the most serious end of the spectrum of depression, anxiety and suicide, would benefit from mental health resources, HLS should have at least 5 FTE staff during the academic year.

400 students * 1 hr/2 weeks * 36 school weeks= 7200 hours of need
7200 hours/8 hours a day = 900 days
900 days/ 180 days per provider = 5 FTE providers

Stakeholders: HUHS, DOS

ii. **Have drop in school therapists once a week**

Similar to the Harvard Grad Econ Department and the “Let’s TALK,” initiative, they should be walk-ins with no appointments necessary.

Stakeholders: HUHS, DOS

iii. **Hire culturally sensitive providers**

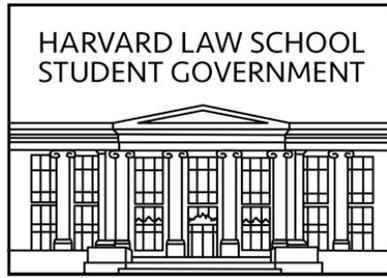
Building off requests from APALSA, Lambda and QTPOC, both train providers on being culturally sensitive and hire providers with diverse backgrounds and specialties.

Stakeholders: HUHS, DOS, APALSA, Lambda, QTPOC

iv. **Provide Resources to Summer students in need of help**

Clarify the policy to seek help from a therapist when students are away from Cambridge, or develop a tele-health system.

Stakeholders: HUHS, DOS



b. Character & Fitness Question Reform & Clarity

i. **Push State Bar Examiners Forward: Be a Peer Leader**

HLS should be a peer leader in demanding that State Bar requirements be free of character and fitness questions related to past mental health seeking behavior. Similar to how HLS does not allow law firms to pick candidates to interview, the administration can push Bar Examiners to reform and/or clarify their state requirements. Pursuant to the ABA's Resolution #102, "state and territorial bar licensing entities [should] eliminate any questions that ask about mental health history, diagnoses, or treatment when determining character and fitness for the purpose of bar admission. The questions should focus instead on conduct or behavior that impairs an applicant's ability to practice law in a competent, ethical, and professional manner."

Stakeholders: Dean Manning, Support from HLS Student Groups, Other T14 Deans

ii. **Institutionalize events on character and fitness for all states**

Bringing in the MA Bar examiner, for example, may be quite different from other states where HLS students go. Having an institutionalized event that reaches beyond Massachusetts is crucial.

Stakeholders: DOS, MHSA

c. Make Wellness a Sustained Conversation

i. **Issue a Challenge for Mental Health Policy Innovation**

Modeled off the Deans' Challenge for Food Law Innovation under Dean Minow and the Diversity Hackathon with Professor Westfahl, the Administration should issue a "challenge" like a mental health incubator. Teams comprised of faculty, staff, and students should gather to discuss initiatives to improve mental health on campus over the 2018-2019 year.

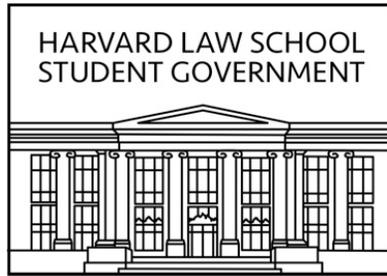
Stakeholders: DOS and Dean Manning to create timeline, with support from Student Government and SMHA

ii. **Create a Firm/Public Interest Ranking of Mental Health Support**

Encourage law firms and public interest jobs to better their wellness programs by ranking firms and incentivizing them to think about student interests in mental health programs. All summer evaluation forms run by OPIA and OCS should include an evaluation of mental health programs and services for students to fill in.

Stakeholders: OCS and OPIA to create survey in conjunction with Student Government, OCS and OPIA to require filling out survey of firms/PI orgs, Student Government marketing of rankings.

d. Peer Support & Training



in big law, prestige pressure, career questions similar to the Life in the Law Series, but in coordination with student group co-sponsors

Stakeholders: DOS, Student Groups

II. Faculty Ask:

a. Curricular changes

- i. **Include mental health education in all legal profession classes (or in a similar mandated class like PSW).**

Mental health and substance abuse are such huge parts of the legal profession that not discussing them in legal profession would seem misrepresentative.

Stakeholders: DOS, Faculty & Assistants, Registrar, Dean Claypoole, Student Groups for feedback

- ii. **List mental health resource language on every syllabus**

As recommended by the ABA, each syllabus should have a section that acknowledges that classes can be stress-inducing and that there are resources available. Draft language that is vetted by students to include on all syllabi. Enforce this through training faculty and their amazing assistants!

Stakeholders: DOS, Faculty & Assistants, Registrar, Dean Claypoole, Student Groups for feedback

b. Discuss mental health challenges openly and be in support of peers and students

- i. **Participate in the Dean's Challenge for Mental Health Policy Innovation**

Take part in the creation of a small group brainstorming teams made up of faculty, clinicians, staff, and students to dream up potential policy reforms to make mental health better at HLS.

Stakeholders: All Deans and administrators at HLS, Faculty, Clinicians, Staff, and Students

- ii. **Participate in exhibits that openly discuss mental health challenges**

Participate in a "If You Really Knew Me" exhibit, which can be memorialized into a short book/PDF to provide to all incoming students, where students, staff and faculty can share stories about loneliness, depression, personal tragedies and other struggles they have experienced while at HLS, as well as how they're working to overcome these struggles. These exhibits, as well as a general discussion of mental health resources, would be important to discuss as early as ASW and orientation.

Stakeholders: DOS, Communications Office, Faculty, Administrative Staff, Students, Mental Health Student Association & Student Government