



PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

The Advocacy Institute Is Pleased to Present

Dealing with Difficult Clients and Impossible Adversaries

April 16, 2025

1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

WEBINAR

Program Summary

Conflict is a part of life, and as attorneys, it's essential to learn how to handle people who seemingly thrive on it. Attorneys can't change the behavior of difficult clients or adversaries, but they can change how they deal with such behaviors. Understanding what drives difficult people and how to best react to outbursts, threats, and intimidation is a skill that some people innately have, but many must learn. This program is designed to provide attorneys with a basic understanding of the issues, causes and characteristics underlying the behavior patterns of difficult people – as well as simple strategies they can use to resolve issues quickly and easily before they escalate. The presenters will provide insights into dealing with challenging personalities, including techniques and strategies for managing difficult, challenging clients and impossible adversaries while maintaining professionalism and civility. They will also discuss how attorneys can develop awareness of their own traits, thinking patterns, and behaviors which can cause conflicts with clients and adversaries.

Eligibility

This program is open to attorneys in the Department of Law and Public Safety and county prosecutors' offices.

Faculty

Ramon Ortiz, Esq. is Senior Attorney Counselor with the New Jersey Lawyers Assistance Program (NJLAP) in New Brunswick, NJ. He has been employed by NJLAP for the past 26 years assisting lawyers with problems related to alcohol, drugs, gambling, and other process addictions.

Prior to joining the New Jersey Lawyers Assistance Program, he worked as a drug and alcohol counselor at Turning Point in Verona and Eva's Village in Paterson, N.J. Before entering the field of addictions treatment, he was an Associate Professor of Property Law, Clinical Professor of Law, and Director of Clinical Programs at Seton Hall Law School. He also practiced law with the firm of Ortiz & Velez for 20 years. Mr. Ortiz holds a B.A. in Sociology from the University of Vermont and a J.D. from Howard Law School and Rutgers Law School – Newark.

Dr. Defne Ekin is a counseling psychologist who serves as the team clinician for the New Jersey Lawyers Assistance Program (NJLAP). Before joining NJLAP, Dr. Ekin served as a faculty member at Columbia University, Adelphi University, New York University and Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. For most of her years in academia, she held key administrative and supervisory positions in addition to teaching. She remains actively involved in clinical treatment research and maintains a private practice in New York City. Dr. Ekin holds a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from New York University, an M. A. in Organizational Psychology from Columbia University and completed her post-graduate training at the Ackerman Institute for the Family.

CLE Credit

NJ CLE Credit: This program has been approved by the Board on Continuing Legal Education of the Supreme Court of New Jersey for 2.3 hours of total CLE credit. Of these, 0.5 qualify as hours of credit for ethics/professionalism.

Registration

Those who are eligible to apply should use the Zoom Webinar registration link in the Program Announcement email. Students who are registered will receive a confirmation email with a link to access the program.

Students must download Zoom before the webinar in order for the AGAI to record polling responses that are required for attendance verification and CLE credit.

The AGAI will be unable to verify attendance or grant CLE credit to students who have not downloaded Zoom before the webinar.

Agenda

I. Introduction and Context - 1:00 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.

- Overview of session goals and relevance to the realities of legal practice.
- Introduction to NJLAP and its role in supporting lawyers and judges.
- How chronic stress, isolation, and adversarial systems shape professional challenges.
- Framing the session: navigating difficult personalities and preserving effectiveness.

II. Understanding Personality and Its Impact on Legal Practice - 1:15 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

- Overview of how personality develops and influences behavior in high-stress professions.
- Identifying how certain personality traits and patterns can complicate professional interactions.
- Discussion of challenges related to rigid and problematic personalities in legal settings.

III. Practical Tools for Difficult Interactions

- Tips for identifying personality dynamics and adjusting your approach.
1:45 p.m. – 2:05 p.m.

BREAK – 2:05 p.m. – 2:10 p.m.

- Communication strategies for managing conflict, setting boundaries, and maintaining control.
2:10 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

IV. Sustaining Professionalism and Civility 2:30 p.m. - 2:55 p.m.

- The importance of maintaining civility, especially in high-conflict or adversarial situations.
- Strategies for staying composed, focused, and non-reactive under pressure.
- Long-term approaches to protect your well-being and uphold professional standards.

V. Q&A and Discussion 2:55 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

- Open forum for questions, insights, and discussion of shared experiences.