For Judges – Are you witnessing Chemical Dependency/ Clinical Depression and a few suggestions if the answer is "Yes."

Are you witnessing Substance Abuse or Dependency?

Family/Social

- Withdrawal from activities
- Frequent absences from family life
- Frequent arguments; child/spousal abuse
- Family members display codependent behaviors
- Separation/divorce (initiated by spouse)

Physical

- Multiple physical complaints
- Increased use of prescription medicine, alcohol, drugs
- Increased accidents, trauma, ER visits, hospitalizations
- Frequent visits to physicians, dentists
- Personal hygiene, dress deteriorate
- Increased and serious emotional crises

Community

- Decrease in participation in community activities
- Change of friends, acquaintances
- Drunk and disorderly, PI, DUI
- Loss of confidence in attorney by community leaders
- Change in Involvement with place of worship
- Sexual promiscuity
- Withdrawal and isolation from support systems

Work/Office

- Changes in behavior, odd and unusual behavior
- Disorganized, inattentive, makes many mistakes, produces sloppy work product
- Hostile behavior to staff, clients, court personnel
- Inappropriate behavior/moods
- Overreaction to real/imagined criticism, resentful, arrogant
- Frequently sick, absent, unavailable, undependable
- Offers excuses but does not correct behavior
- Clients begin to complain to associates, staff, court
- Decreasing quality of performance
- Inappropriate or irrational decision making
- Borrowing money from friends, staff, co-workers
- Missed hearings, depositions, appointments
- Co-workers and courthouse "gossip" about changes in behavior
- Possible unethical behavior
- Malpractice and disciplinary claims
- Loss of clients, practice, respect

Are you witnessing Clinical Depression?

The onset of an episode of clinical depression may not be obvious at first if the onset is gradual or mild. The symptoms of depression characteristically represent a significant change from how a person functioned before the illness. These symptoms include:

- Persistent sad or irritable mood;
- Pronounced changes in sleep, appetite, and energy;
- Difficulty thinking, analyzing, concentrating, and remembering;
- · Physical slowing or agitation;
- Lack of interest in or pleasure from activities that were once enjoyed;
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, hopelessness, and emptiness;
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide;
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain.

Ask yourself these questions:

Does he express feelings of sadness or emptiness?
Hopelessness, pessimism or guilt?
Helplessness or worthlessness?

Does he seem unable to make decisions? Is he unable to concentrate and remember things? Has he lost interest or pleasure in ordinary activities – like work, sports, hobbies, social activities? Does he appear to have more problems at work and at home?

Does he complain of loss of energy and drive – so that he seems "slowed down?" Does he have trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or getting up? Is he losing or gaining weight? Does he talk about headaches, stomach aches, or back aches or chronic aches and pains in joints and muscles?

Has his behavior changed

suddenly so that he is restless and more irritable? Does he want to be alone most of the time? Has he started missing work, deadlines, appointments or dropped hobbies or activities?

Has he talked about death, suicide or harming himself?

Short List of Suggestions

- Contact the Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program (TLAP) at 800-219-6474 or 800-343-8527 to explore peer assistance or intervention services.
- Talk to the lawyer in chambers at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Consult local rules and if applicable, act accordingly.
- Consider contempt charges. Contempt may be purged if the lawyer presents for, secures and verifies completion of an assessment with a competent licensed mental health or addiction professional.
- Consider ordering assessment and/or satisfactory completion of appropriate course of treatment as a condition of any bond, probation or sentence.
- Consider whether the circumstances warrant taking the lawyer off any court appointment list until the lawyer demonstrates recovery, health and professional behavior.
- Consider filing a complaint with the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's Office.
 Depending on the particular circumstances, alerting the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's Office as to a possible disability may also be appropriate.