

# NEBRASKA LICENSEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A SERVICE OF BEST CARE EAP

## HOPE

In retrospect, my problems with alcohol began with the first drink. I was 13 years old when I became a binge drinker. Unfortunately, my pattern of drinking was far too common among the teens and adults in my small town. It is said what you don't know, won't hurt you. I know that is a fallacy.

It is not that I wasn't successful when I applied myself. I graduated from nursing school, followed several years later by medical school and residency. When necessary, while meeting a goal, I would not drink. However, when that period of abstinence was complete, I would relieve stress, anxiety, and depression with alcohol. Little did I know the depressant effects of the alcohol were largely contributing to that stress and anxiety.

I began practicing medicine and had a fairly busy call schedule. I set a boundary where I would not drink on call. Leisure time usually involved alcohol. My best friend from medical school said I would work hard, and play hard, too. My experiences with boundaries and alcohol involved the word, "yet". I would not drink during the week when working- yet. I would not drink on Saturday night before participating in Sunday worship as communion assistant or reader- yet. Eventually, the boundaries set by me would be breached, "yet" would happen, and I would set new boundaries. When I wanted to lose weight, I would stop drinking alcohol because those are empty calories. When I reached my goal weight, I would begin drinking again. When I drank, I didn't know if I would have one drink and stop, or if I would drink to oblivion. It was "Russian roulette," sometimes I could control it, sometimes, not. More and more, I could not.

One Saturday, I met a friend for lunch whom I had not seen in a long time. We had a glass of sparkling wine to celebrate our reunion. Planning to have one drink, I drank all afternoon, despite being on call starting at 5 pm. I presented for my call shift intoxicated. My colleague, who I was relieving, met me at the elevator. She recognized my impairment, and by the grace of God, stopped me before I could go further. The date was September 16, 2017. And so began my journey of recovery.

I knew very little about alcoholism, or alcohol use disorder, Alcoholics Anonymous, the Licensee Assistance Program (LAP), or treatment facilities. I was blessed to have a supportive hospital administration and medical staff committee who guided me to the places I needed to obtain help. I met Michelle at LAP, and subsequently completed a 90 day inpatient recovery program well-known for treatment of health professionals in Atlanta, Georgia. When I returned to Omaha, I remained involved with the LAP, and became involved with the Licensee Support Group (LSG) and the Recovery community. I continue to participate in a program of recovery that helps me stay sober. This includes daily prayer, meditation, readings, meeting attendance four to five times per week including the LSG meetings, being a sponsor, therapy sessions, and trying to be of service to other alcoholics. So far, this has been effective. I have not had a relapse- "yet". Again, that word. I know if I choose to stray from the recovery program that works for me, I can fall back into the downward spiral of alcoholism and the misery that accompanies it.

Life still happens. My license has been placed on probationary status, I have gone through a Department of Health and Human Services Investigation. I have been terminated from a job. No matter what, I know I will be fine. The fellowship offered in the LSG gives me HOPE. Others have been through what I have been through, or worse. They have survived and thrived. I have FAITH that I will, too.

*If you are a licensed health or health-related service professional wanting more information about sobriety and recovery, please contact the NE LAP at (800) 851-2336 or (402) 354-8055 or visit our web site at [www.lapne.org](http://www.lapne.org). If you would like to consult with the NE LAP, or schedule an assessment or an educational presentation, please ask for Michelle Hruska, NE LAP Coordinator, or Nicole Winkler, NE LAP Counselor.*