Attorneys Offer Support for Opioid-Dependent Injured Workers

By Anna Berry

In the midst of a statewide substance abuse crisis, the New Hampshire Department of Labor will launch an Opioid Pilot Mediation Program to voluntarily transition some injured workers away from opioids and into treatment.

“When ever we get information about workers comp claims, there’s a lot of folks who are getting prescribed very high levels of opioids,” said attorney Edward Sisson, the assistant director of the Workers’ Compensation Division of the NH Department of Labor. “There’s a concern that it is a danger to these workers.”

According to Sisson, the goal is to bring together injured workers using opioids and insurance carriers through a mediation process to find covered options for non-narcotic pain relief and recovery.

For inspiration, the department looked to Massachusetts, where the Department of Industrial Accidents (DIA) started a first-of-its-kind, two-year pilot program in June 2017 — the Opioid Alternative Treatment Pathway. The DIA recognized that its litigation process “often failed to adequately address the problem [of opioid addiction] in a timely manner,” according to the Massachusetts’s Office of Labor and Workforce Development’s announcement.

The Massachusetts program is available to injured workers with previously settled workers’ compensation claims who continue to treat with opioids, and where insurers seek to discontinue payment for opioids — around 100 cases annually, which previously took a year to settle.

Under the pilot program, a meeting between the administrative judge and the two parties is held within 30 days, and a nurse is assigned to the case to help the injured worker find pain relief beyond addictive narcotics.

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PRACTITIONER PROFILE

State’s Northernmost Lawyer Is Right at Home

By Kathie Ragsdale

Jonathan Frizzell occupies the northernmost office in the northernmost law firm in the northernmost county of New Hampshire.

And yes, location does influence the types of cases he handles, from logging truck accidents to timber-company restructuring, as well as the hobbies he pursues — a North Country mix of hiking, hunting and ATV riding.

Waystack Frizzell Trial Lawyers, of which Frizzell is a partner, maintains offices in three Coos County communities — Lancaster, Berlin and Colebrook — the latter being barely a 10-minute drive from the Canadian border.

Colebrook has been Frizzell’s home since he was 3.

“When I have been anywhere for an extended period of time and I can’t see mountains, I start to get homesick,” he says.

His law practice is focused on negligence and other civil matters, an interest that was sparked as a boy when he would follow his grandmother, a state representative, through the halls of the New Hampshire State House, and further fanned when he attended town meetings in Colebrook as a young man.

“Someone was always saying ‘you can’t do this because of the liability’… or ‘you can’t do this because of the law,’” he remembers of those sessions.

Still, when he graduated from Dartmouth with a degree in English, his first career was teaching — initially junior

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Amity Insurance Acquires NHBA Insurance Agency

By Anna Berry

New Hampshire Bar Association members will have expanded options for insurance coverage after the Bar recently announced the creation of a strategic alliance with Massachusetts-based Amity Insurance Agency, Inc.

“Amity is a great fit — they have an outstanding reputation and deep experience providing coverage options for lawyers, which was very important to us,” said David McGrath, president of the New Hampshire Bar’s Board of Governors.

“We expect this transition will be seamless.”

Under the terms of the agreement announced January 23, Amity purchased the insurance agency business from the New Hampshire Bar Association and will now be the Association’s exclusively endorsed insurance program.

The NH Bar Association established its own agency in 2002 as an option for professional liability insurance for its members at a time when there were few, if any, options in the marketplace. Today, the market is robust with numerous insurers vying for business.

Amity will extend the offer to provide professional liability to all of the NH Bar’s members, which is one of Amity’s core offerings. They have provided professional liability to Massachusetts’ attorneys for more than three decades. Amity Insurance was founded in 1978 and grew from a local, small commercial and personal line agency to a national brokerage firm based in North Quincy.

Additionally, Amity will open an office within the NH Bar Center at 2 Pillsbury Street, Concord. The firm will also add a new key employee to its ranks, Sue Morand, who ran the New Hampshire Bar Association Insurance Agency for nearly

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