

How to Recognize Problems

The ABA's Senior Lawyer Assistance Committee's 2014 "Working Paper on Cognitive Impairment and Cognitive Decline" contains a Cognitive Impairment Worksheet. The entire paper can be found online in a search using that wording, or at www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/lawyer_assistancells_colap_working_paper_on_cognitive_imp.authcheckdam.pdf.

The worksheet offers signs and symptoms to watch for. Some examples include:

- Deteriorating performance at work
- Making mistakes on files or cases
- Difficulty functioning without help
- Committing obvious ethical violations
- Failing to remain current on changes in law; over-relying on experience
- Exhibiting confusion about timelines, deadlines, conflicts, trust accounting
- Inappropriately dressed, or poor grooming or hygiene
- Sexually inappropriate statements or behavior uncharacteristic for the lawyer
- Denial of any problem or highly defensive or paranoid
- Forgetting conversations, events, details of cases
- Frequently repeating questions and making requests for information
- Trouble staying on task or topic
- Difficulty adjusting to changes
- Problems with verbal expression, digression, distraction
- Confusion, lapses in attention, concentration
- Emotional distress, rapid mood shifts