

possible for legal aid advocates to keep doing what is important while having the fulfilling lives they deserve and that allow them to fully express their work passion.

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### With the Assistance of Managers

I generally love my work and feel very committed to our cause. But when my work takes more time away from my family than I think it should, it's easy to start



resenting the work. Colleagues from my generation all seem to share a commitment to spending quality time with our families and engaging in activities outside of work. I think we are healthier and better attorneys when we have evenings and weekends truly away from work. The best

way managers can help with that is to understand staff attorneys' caseloads and the time commitments that those cases require, and then to assign cases and other tasks accordingly. Everyone understands that managers cannot plan perfectly and that sometimes cases will require more time than others. But if we make work/life balance a priority for employees, and regularly dialogue about how we are doing, I think that would be positive for our clients and ourselves.

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### A Positive Work Environment



Our office environment sets the foundation for work-life balance. My supervisors and coworkers help support me in my advocacy efforts and help me maintain valuable connections to other social justice activists. As a transplant,

the collegial office atmosphere helped me adjust to the community and I have been fortunate enough to form friendships among our staff.

In the office, we strive to regularly discuss our work, even our individual projects. We also try to stay reasonably healthy. Our deputy director recently built a walking desk to be shared among the office, which helps break up the day. I enjoy contributing vegan dishes to our themed-potlucks. I may not surf at lunch, but our location means that I can always step out of the office and sit under palm trees or see the ocean. I feel balance is not necessarily maintaining a day-to-day equilibrium between work and play—it's often not realistic given the nature of our work—but a positive work environment combined with regular small pleasures means that I experience an overall sense of balance.

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### Go Home Soon

When I was a young associate in private practice in an established law firm, I was given semi-annual performance reviews. The review consisted in part of



forms, completed by partners, that graded me from 1 to 5 on thirty or so performance standards. One of the standards, on which

I was graded from 1 to 5, was "ability to put firm goals ahead of personal goals."

We do things differently at New Hampshire Legal Assistance. The organization supports work-life balance mostly by *meaning* it. Many law firms and other businesses talk about work-life balance, but NHLA walks the walk. Our executive director makes the rounds every evening before he leaves, admonishing those of us still there to "go home soon." At first, this stunned me. No one in private practice ever said this. Now, it makes me smile.

The work itself inspires enthusiasm and passion. Every day, I am plunged into a Dickens novel, and I get to be the character that shines a small light of justice