

## The ISMA Physician Assistance Program: Serving Indiana doctors for 33 years

In the past 33 years, the Indiana State Medical Association's Physician Assistance Program, (PAP), has grown from the germ of an idea to a well-established, confidential resource helping physicians navigate substance use disorders, physical or psychiatric illnesses or behavioral concerns. In the process, PAP case managers have guided numerous Indiana physicians to renewed health. This steadfast support enables the vast majority of participants to succeed.

No one has been more instrumental in the program's success than Candace Backer, LCSW, LCAC, who retired as its coordinator on Jan. 4. When she was hired in 1990, only a few states had established physician health programs. ISMA brought her on board as coordinator to help develop the program, which had always been focused on helping Indiana physicians in recovery or distress.

In her first few years as program coordinator, Backer, who had previously been clinical director of an inpatient substance abuse hospital for adolescents, spent her time building ISMA's program from the ground up. She worked with the Commission on Physician Assistance chair and PAP's medical consultant to assess physicians' needs, consult with staff of other state programs, create policies and procedures, and visit

county medical societies, hospital medical staffs and ISMA Alliance meetings to provide education about the program's services. She also built a positive reputation with key stakeholders, including the Indiana Medical Licensing Board.

As more physicians became employed in the late 2000s, doctors faced new pressure to increase their caseloads and navigate the technicalities of electronic health records. Backer began working with a greater number of distressed physicians – those dealing with behavioral concerns or mental health issues.

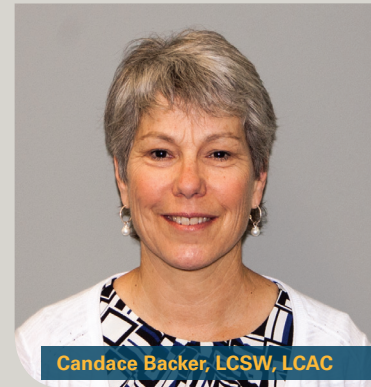
In approximately 2008, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) required hospitals to implement a policy for managing the disruptive physician. Since that time, hospital referrals to PAP for that population have increased significantly. In 2015, ISMA's "Doctor Your Spirit" web resources on burnout, health and wellness, civility, depression and suicide were added at [www.ismanet.org/doctoryourspirit](http://www.ismanet.org/doctoryourspirit) to supplement PAP's work.

As program referrals have increased, the program has added staff. Senior Case Manager Anne Naus Kelley, LCSW, LCAC, who was promoted to PAP coordinator upon Backer's retirement, came on board

in 2013. In 2018, ISMA hired Jackie Brown as an administrative assistant and, in 2020, Susan M. Kelley, LCSW, LCAC, was hired as case manager for the program.

A national study published in 2008, "Five Year Outcomes in a Cohort Study of Physicians Treated for Substance Use Disorders in the United States," ([www.ismanet.org/FiveYearOutcomes](http://www.ismanet.org/FiveYearOutcomes)) showed that programs such as PAP have truly made a difference. Of 904 doctors with substance use disorders admitted to physician assistance programs in 16 states, including Indiana, approximately 80% had not relapsed after five years.

Backer calls working with physicians over the course of her career a privilege. "It has been a tremendous honor to work with so many gifted and talented physicians," she said. "I'm proud of the work ISMA has done to help develop the national model of best practices in assisting physicians and to see the extraordinary rates of recovery."



Candace Backer, LCSW, LCAC

## Anne Kelley, LCSW, LCAC, named PAP coordinator

Anne Kelley, LCSW, LCAC, has been named coordinator of the Indiana State Medical Association Physician Assistance Program (PAP). She succeeds Candace Backer, LCSW, LCAC, who retired Jan. 4 after 30 years in the post.

"Anne has been an integral part of the PAP team since 2013, and her sound judgment, extensive knowledge of program operations and unwavering dedication to providing compassionate and first-rate monitoring services to our physician participants means our program is in excellent hands," said ISMA General Counsel Chelsea Kurth, JD.

Kelley joined the PAP as case manager and was later promoted to senior case manager. She earned a BA in sociology and social work at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and her Master of Social Work degree at The Ohio State University.

"My overarching goal is to continue to provide compassionate and professional assistance to the physicians that we have the privilege of working with, and to continue building on Candace's work to ensure Hoosier physicians are supported for the next 30 years," Kelley said.

"Their expertise and their passion for medicine are awe-inspiring. Many of the doctors we

work with are the best of the best, but then various things happened. We work with such a high-achieving population, for much of their lives, they've been grinding it out, stressing, trying to take care of others," she said.

"When that shift occurs, we have the privilege of watching them make changes, feel better and get healthy."



Anne Kelley, LCSW, LCAC

# PHYSICIAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM 33 YEARS OF SERVICE

**1987:** ISMA Board of Trustees recognizes the need for a formal, statewide physician health program; part-time physician medical consultant hired.

**1990:** Independent Federation of State Physician Health Programs (FSPHP) is created to bring consistency and objectivity to state programs focusing on the “rehabilitation and monitoring of physicians with psychoactive substance use disorders as well as mental and physical illness.”

**2008:** Study of PAP and other state physician health programs shows 80% of physician participants remained substance-free after five years.

**1990:** Full-time program coordinator hired.

**2013:** Second case manager hired.

**2018:** Administrative assistant hired.

## Susan M. Kelley, case manager

Susan M. Kelley, LCSW, LCAC, joined the ISMA Physician Assistance Program staff in 2020 as a case manager. She has more than a decade of experience as a therapist and addiction counselor and most recently worked as a crisis counselor at Community Health Network in Indianapolis.



Kelley earned a BS in sociology and women’s studies from Ball State University and a Master of Social Work from Indiana University with a concentration in mental health and addictions. She joined ISMA because she was “drawn to the idea of serving society’s most educated and valued healers and helpers.”

Prior to her work at Community Health, she was an adult outpatient therapist at Aspire Indiana Health in Carmel. She has also worked as an adult services counselor at Fairbanks in Indianapolis and as a therapist at addiction treatment facilities in the greater Los Angeles area.

## Donors help ensure program longevity, availability to Hoosier physicians in need

Donations to the ISMA Physician Assistance Program (PAP) help to ensure that Hoosier doctors and physicians in training can continue to confidently turn to the PAP for confidential assistance with substance use disorders, physical or psychiatric illnesses or behavioral concerns.

In 2016, the PAP started its donation campaign as a result of the increased demand for program services and based on feedback received from hospitals around the state saying that they valued the program’s services and welcomed a way to help support the program. Today hospitals, medical staffs and physician groups alike help support the program through donations. The fees paid by participants (who are ISMA members and nonmembers) only cover a portion of program expenses, and the money raised through donations helps defray some of the remaining program costs. The PAP is deeply grateful for the positive response from donors in previous years and during this year’s fundraising campaign, especially given the financial challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has created for many.

The PAP is directed by physicians, for physicians, and provides much-needed and established resources where few exist. Those resources include:

- Consultations with hospital administration, staff and committees.
- Assistance with interventions.
- Education for interested groups.
- Referrals for evaluation and/or treatment.
- Monitoring services for participants, including drug screening.
- Long-term advocacy on behalf of participants.

If you would like to learn more about the program or make a donation, contact PAP Coordinator Anne Kelley, LCSW, LCAC, at 800-257-4762 or [akelley@ismanet.org](mailto:akelley@ismanet.org).

## Jackie Brown, administrative assistant

Before joining the PAP in 2018, Administrative Assistant Jacquelin (Jackie) Brown was a legal assistant or secretary at several law firms and at GEICO insurance company for more than 20 years. She also worked for three years as a certified medical assistant (CMA).



Brown graduated from the University of the Columbians with a BS in business administration and was trained as a CMA at the former Corinthian College. She also earned a certification in counseling from Light University.

“I find that working closely with doctors through the Physician Assistance Program has been a very meaningful way to help those who help others,” Brown said.

## Fred W. Frick, MD, Medical Consultant

ISMA member Fred W. Frick, MD, served as PAP’s medical consultant since 2004. He is an addiction medicine specialist in Indianapolis and is board certified in internal medicine.

As medical consultant, Dr. Frick consults on case reviews and participates in the triage of cases. He also serves as a liaison to the ISMA Commission on Physician

Assistance and occasionally testifies before the Medical Licensing Board. One aspect of his role that he finds extremely gratifying is that the vast majority of physicians served by PAP recover and return to productive careers.

Dr. Frick is a graduate of Washington and Lee University and earned his medical degree at Indiana University School of Medicine.

