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### **Mental health in a legal workplace – A story from the inside**

This hour-long presentation starts with Beth Beattie sharing her personal story of living with bipolar disorder while working as a lawyer. She addresses the prevalence of mental illness in law offices and discusses the isolation and stigma associated with it especially during the era of COVID-19. She discusses the array of reasons why lawyers choose not to disclose mental illness and how certain barriers can be overcome. Tips for getting well, staying well and developing resilience during the pandemic are provided. Beth talks about signs to look for in colleagues who may not be doing well and how best to support them. She explores the topic of concealing and revealing mental illness at work. Beth typically uses live polling software in order to have the audience actively engage in the presentation.

This program has been accredited by the Law Society of Ontario for **1.0 EDI hour**.

#### **Bio – Beth Beattie**

Beth started her legal career as a student and associate in the litigation department of Fasken Campbell Godfrey. She was called to the bar in 1994.

Beth is currently Senior Counsel at the Ministry of the Attorney General Civil Law Division, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Long-Term Care Branch. Beth has a broad-based health law litigation practice and has expertise in the areas of human rights, forensic and civil mental health, OHIP eligibility, Coroner's inquests, and long-term care home compliance. Beth has a Master of Laws from Osgoode Hall Law School in alternative dispute resolution.

In 2002 Beth was diagnosed with bipolar disorder following a psychotic episode that led her to being hospitalized for two weeks at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto. Because of the prevalence of the stigma surrounding mental illness, she hid her illness for 14 years, telling only her family and closest friends about her condition. Given the stigma surrounding mental illness, Beth endured much angst at the thought that her colleagues, clients and opposing counsel would find out about her illness and hospitalization.

In 2017 Beth made the decision to come out of the “mental health closet” and started speaking publicly. Since January 2018 Beth has been a Friend of the Bell Let’s Talk campaign. Her story of living and working with bipolar disorder has been featured on television, radio, print media and billboards across the country. Television appearances include The Marilyn Denis Show, CTV News, CP24 and a CTV prime time special, “In Their Own Words”.

Beth is a founding member of the Voices for Mental Health which is a group of employees at the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General who have lived mental health experience or have cared for someone who has lived experience. The Voices provide programming in the Ministry of the

Attorney General and beyond on topics relating to mental health. In 2019 the Voices were awarded the Deputy's Award of Excellence, the highest honour awarded in the ministry.

Beth is a founding member and captain of The Bipolar Express, a team that raises money for a youth mental health program operated by the Canadian Mental Health Association. The Bipolar Express has been the top fundraising team in the country in the CMHA's annual fundraising event Ride Don't Hide (also called Mental Health in Motion) in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Beth has written articles for The Globe and Mail and Lexpert Magazine on the topic of mental health.

Beth has made presentations to thousands of people, primarily lawyers in the public and private sectors. She has made presentations at the majority of Canada's 20 largest law firms. Beth has made presentations to all levels of government, schools, corporations and social clubs.

When retained to make a presentation for a for-profit organization, Beth does not require a speaker's fee but requests that a donation be made to The Bipolar Express in the range of \$4,000-\$5,000. A tax receipt for the full amount will be issued by the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Beth is on a mission to help improve the lives of those living with mental illness as well those who care for them.

## **Media Links**

### **Bell Let's Talk 2018-2021**

<https://letstalk.bell.ca/en/our-initiatives/team/beth-beattie>

**CTV North News, January 28, 2021,**

<https://northernontario.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=2128358>

**Turning Point with Priya Sam, January 20, 2021, "Beth Beattie on living, working, and thriving with bipolar disorder"**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZlsqG08j1I> and Apple podcast <https://apple.co/2NttkS9>

**Marilyn Denis Show, January 29, 2020, "How to navigate mental health discussions in the workplace"**

<https://www.marilyn.ca/Health/Articles/January2020/How-to-navigate-mental-health-in-the-workplace>

**CP24, January 29, 2020, “Stigma was much worse than the illness” and the need for leaders to disclose**

<https://www.cp24.com/video?binId=1.4787239>

**Lexpert article published August 29, 2019, “Hypocrite, Heretic or Heroine? Why I believe senior lawyers should disclose their mental illnesses at work”**

<https://www.lexpert.ca/article/hypocrite-heretic-or-heroine/?p=&sitecode=lex>

**Podcast “Shaking off the mental health stigma” March 26, 2019, interview with Dr. Julie Macfarlane**

<https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/shaking-off-the-mental-health-stigma/id1285293274?i=1000433510483>

**CBC Metro Morning Radio, June 21, 2018, interview with Matt Galloway**

<https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-39-metro-morning/clip/15551973-beth-beattie-and-the-bipolar-express>.

**CTV primetime special aired January 31, 2018, “In Their Own Words”**

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=6y3YQIGTd14>

**Globe and Mail article published August 29, 2017, “I’m finally out of the mental health closet and have never felt so free”**

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/facts-and-arguments/im-finally-out-of-the-mental-illness-closet-and-ive-never-felt-morefree/article36115714/>

## Contacts

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