

ABA Journal Highlights Bazelon's Success Fighting Discrimination Based on Bar Applicants' Mental Health

June 19, 2014 – Following an investigation into a complaint filed by the Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, the U.S. Department of Justice has put bar associations across the country on notice that assessing applicants' fitness to practice law based on their mental health status may be discriminatory and in violation of federal law, an article in the June issue of the *ABA Journal* reports.

The magazine published by the American Bar Association quotes Bazelon Legal Director Ira Burnim as saying the DOJ has given "a pretty clear statement that it violates federal law to inquire into mental health diagnosis and treatment, rather than conduct, during the attorney licensing process. The disability community is excited about the Justice Department's action, and we support the position they took."

The Bazelon Center filed the complaint in January of 2011 on behalf of a young attorney who was granted only a "conditional admission" to practice law in Louisiana because of her mental health diagnosis. DOJ's position after looking into the complaint was first laid out in a letter to Louisiana officials in February. Now bar associations around the country are taking note, according to the *ABA Journal* article.

Read the ABA Journal article [here . . .](#)