

HAPPENING NOW

Nurse, Mom, Veteran Navigates Unique Journey to Bar Exam

By Csaba Sukosd | February 22, 2022



Christine Pokryfky celebrating her time as a student and graduate of Case Western Reserve University School of Law with her son Jack and husband Ean.

The past two years have been a series of adjustments for law students aspiring to become attorneys. One prospective lawyer's experiences equipped her to handle life's hurdles.

Christine Pokryfky's journey to the February [Ohio Bar Examination](#) has been a constant state of transition since she enrolled in law school in 2018. After several years as a registered nurse (RN) – both on active duty as a member of the U.S. Army and an RN case manager at the Cleveland Clinic – she sought a different way to take care of others.

"During my Army days, I saw the way patients were struggling to navigate their care within the [Veterans Affairs] systems," said Pokryfky. "It was very unsettling to see those problems and wanting to help in some way, but not be able to."

The idea of service is nothing new to the Case Western University School of Law graduate. Pokryfky comes from a long line of veterans. Her family has served in every armed conflict in the United States dating back to the Revolutionary War.

While in law school, she juggled academics, work, and a family. The responsibilities in that dynamic quickly changed in 2020. With no in-person options for school or daycare, and her husband as a frontline worker at the Cleveland Clinic, she became her son's teacher. She guided Jack through his lessons as a kindergartener and first grader during the day, then would do her own schoolwork at night.

"I'm very grateful to have some sort of background with formal leadership where you don't know what each day will be," Pokryfky said, referring to her military training. "I feel fortunate that I was able to be home with my son while finishing school, and although it was hard, it was absolutely worth it."

Having managed a demanding lifestyle for three years, Pokryfky graduated last May and signed up for the July bar exam. Days before testing, she was hospitalized and underwent emergency kidney surgery.

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“It was very bizarre to end up being a patient,” said Pokryfky. “Thankfully, I had good medical care and am feeling much better.”

With no more obstacles in the way for the February exam, she’s relieved to finally to take part. When it’s done, she plans to continue her work with a Cleveland-area law firm that will promote her to an associate attorney if she passes the exam.

Pokryfky hopes to incorporate pro bono work into her practice, and “give back to the patients” who led her down this path. That includes eventually practicing before the [U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims](#).

“I figured out who I was by losing myself in the service of others,” she said.