

Who We Are and What We Do

The Office of Lawyer Regulation is an attorney disciplinary agency that enforces the Rules of Professional Conduct for Attorneys (the "Rules"), as directed by Chapter 20 of the Wisconsin Supreme Court Rules*.

The Rules include an attorney's ethical duties:

- owed to a client, such as diligence, communication, and safekeeping property
- owed to opposing parties and the courts
- in dealing with other persons who are not their clients
- in maintaining the integrity of the profession

Unethical conduct does not include a disagreement with the attorney, your displeasure with the case's outcome, or an attorney's honest mistake. In order to discipline an attorney, the attorney's conduct must be serious and supported by evidence.

If you have concerns regarding a Wisconsin-licensed attorney or an attorney practicing law in Wisconsin (but licensed elsewhere), you can submit a grievance to our office and we will evaluate your concerns. We review the available evidence to determine whether it is sufficient to demonstrate that the attorney has violated the Rules and, if so, whether discipline should be imposed.

Our office is limited to regulation review and is unable to provide legal advice, has no involvement in your underlying case, and cannot advise you as to whether you should file a grievance.

*www.wicourts.gov/supreme/sc_rules.jsp

CONTACT INFORMATION

Mailing address:

Office of Lawyer Regulation
110 East Main Street, Suite 315
P.O. Box 1648
Madison, WI 53701-1648

Telephone:

877-315-6941 (toll-free)
or 608-267-7274

Fax:

608-267-1959

Email:

OLR.intake@wicourts.gov

Website:

www.wicourts.gov/OLR

Other Resources

State Bar of Wisconsin

- **Fee Arbitration**
(800) 444-9404, ext. 6624
www.wisbar.org/feearb
- **Wisconsin Lawyer's Fund for Client Protection**
(800) 444-9404, ext. 6623
www.wisbar.org/needalawyer

Judicial Commission (for grievances against judges or court commissioners):

110 E. Main Street, Suite 700
Madison, WI 53703
(608) 266-7637

Supreme Court of Wisconsin

Office of Lawyer Regulation



Attorney Grievances

This brochure focuses on how to file a grievance and intake procedures. For more detailed information regarding what happens beyond the initial evaluation of a grievance, please visit our website.

How to File a Grievance

You can file a grievance by mail, email, fax, or telephone. See contact information on back. Please note: An incarcerated person must file in writing.

What should my grievance include?

- Your contact information (name, address, phone number, and email)
- The name and contact information of the attorney you are filing the grievance about (Please note: We cannot accept a grievance against a law firm; you must name an individual attorney(s).)
- A detailed summary of your concerns regarding the attorney's conduct, including dates if possible
- The court and case number (if applicable)
- Letters, agreements, or other available documents supporting your grievance

To ensure accuracy, typed grievances are preferred. If submitting a handwritten grievance, please ensure it is legible.

Although no special form is necessary, we do have a grievance form you may use. You can request a copy from our office or find it on the following website:

www.wicourts.gov/services/public/lawyerr eg/file.htm

When should I file a grievance?

As soon as you become aware of the attorney's conduct, while your memory is fresh and before any important document or evidence is destroyed. Our office is limited to investigating information no more than 6 years after you became aware of the attorney's conduct.

What to Expect After Filing

1. After you file, we will promptly send you a grievance confirmation.
2. **Your grievance will be assigned to an intake investigator** who will conduct an initial review of the grievance to determine whether the attorney's conduct potentially violates the Rules of Professional Conduct.

It may take several weeks for the investigator to contact you, depending on caseloads. **Please be patient as you wait for the investigator to contact you.**

3. The intake investigator may have additional follow-up questions or requests for documentation prior to contacting the attorney involved. The investigator may then contact the attorney involved for their response.
4. Once the investigator is finished gathering and reviewing information, the investigator makes a recommendation, based on the evidence provided, as to whether the Rules of Professional Conduct have been violated.
5. The intake investigator's recommendation is reviewed and approved by the Director of Central Intake. Both you and the attorney involved will receive written notification of the result.

Our standard is to complete the initial review within 60 days, although it could take longer due to the complexity of the grievance or the need to obtain more information.

All grievances filed with our office are confidential. Be aware, in fairness to the attorney being investigated, our office shares a copy of the grievance and supporting documentation with the named attorney.

What if intake staff finds the attorney may have engaged in unethical conduct?

The OLR Director may:

- Offer an alternatives to discipline program.
- Resolve the matter with a private or public reprimand.
- Refer the matter to a formal investigator would then contact you regarding next steps.

After formal investigation and/or subsequent litigation, discipline may be imposed. Forms of discipline include a private or public reprimand, license suspension, and license revocation.

What if intake staff does not find an ethical violation warranting discipline?

- Your grievance may be closed for insufficient evidence.
- The attorney involved may receive a letter of advice addressing concerns regarding the attorney's conduct.
- If you have a fee dispute, intake staff may have the attorney offer fee arbitration with the State Bar of WI.
- If your grievance extends beyond the role of our office, you may be referred to another agency better able to address your concerns.

If your grievance is closed and you disagree with the closure you can request that OLR's Director review your case within 30 days of the date of the closing letter.

Your request for Director review must be made in writing and can be sent via mail, fax, or email to the Director's attention. The Director's decision after the review is final.