

Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Terms Commonly Used in Disciplinary Procedures

Attorney Registration Office: the administration of the Disciplinary Board which governs the annual registration of every attorney admitted to, or engaging in, the practice of law in this commonwealth.

Belief/believes: denotes that the person involved actually supposed the fact in question to be true.

Board: The Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

Complaint: a grievance concerning an attorney communicated to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel or considered by the office of Disciplinary Counsel on its own motion.

Confirmed in writing: when used in reference to the informed consent of a person, denotes an informed consent that is given in writing by the person or a writing that a lawyer promptly transmits to the person confirming an oral informed consent.

Disbarment: Most severe type of discipline given to an attorney. The attorney may not practice law for a minimum of 5 years if disbarred. After 5 years, he or she may apply for reinstatement, but the Board does not guarantee the right to practice again.

Disciplinary Counsel: The investigative and prosecutorial division of the disciplinary system. Their role is to investigate complaints against attorneys and when appropriate prosecute.

Disciplinary District: One of four districts into which this Commonwealth is divided.

Experienced hearing committee member: An attorney who at the time is a member of the panel of hearing committee members in a disciplinary district and who has served as a member of a panel of hearing committee members for at least one year and on a hearing committee that has conducted at least one hearing into formal charges of misconduct by a respondent-attorney

Firm/Law firm: denotes a lawyer or lawyers in a law partnership, professional corporation, sole proprietorship or other association authorized to practice law; or lawyers employed in a legal services organization or the legal department of a corporation or another organization.

Formerly admitted attorney: A disbarred, suspended, administratively suspended, retired or inactive attorney.

Fraud: conduct that has a purpose to deceive.

Hearing Committee: Committee of lawyers who are appointed to a three-year term, and can be reappointed once. They serve on a voluntary, unpaid basis. Each of the [four districts](#) has Hearing Committees composed of three-member panels. The Committees hear cases and review files concerning attorneys located within that district.

Informal Admonition: Private informal form of discipline given by the Chief Disciplinary Counsel when found that the conduct of a lawyer is improper and in violation of the rules. This is the lowest form of private discipline usually administered for first time minor offenses.

Informed consent: consent by a person to a proposed course of conduct after the lawyer has communicated adequate information and explanation about the material risks of and reasonably available to the purposed course of conduct.

Petition for Discipline: A formal pleading filed by the Office of Disciplinary Counsel with the Disciplinary Board, requesting action by the [Board](#) under the [Disciplinary Rules and Enforcement Rules](#). It is similar to a civil complaint.

Prothonotary: The filing office for the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. Disciplinary Board matters are filed in the Western District Office in Pittsburgh.

Public Censure: a form of discipline for misconduct by which the lawyer is called before the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

Public Discipline: A form of discipline that's imposed for more serious violations and in situations where the nature or repetition of conduct causes doubts about the lawyer's fitness to practice law.

Public Reprimand - public discipline ordered and administered by a three-member panel of the Board. This is a form of discipline that falls between a private reprimand and a public censure.

Rules of Professional Conduct: A set of rules governing the ethical conduct of attorneys in the practice of the law. It covers such topics as conflicts of interest, honesty with clients, confidentiality and conduct toward other attorneys and the courts.

Suspension: Discipline given by the Supreme Court to an attorney. The attorney may not practice law for a set period of time not to exceed five years. If a suspension is for more than one year, the attorney is required to petition for reinstatement under Rule 218 of the PA Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement.