

McLean County Bar Association Principles of Professionalism

The practice of law in McLean County has an honorable tradition. We choose to honor that tradition by stating our shared expectations for the level of professional conduct we owe our colleagues, clients and the community. The Principles of Professionalism are not rules, but rather ideals that can be passed from one generation to the next so as to promote civil, courteous and conciliatory relations between attorneys, judges, clients, adversaries and the community.

As attorneys and judges we will:

1. Be Honest.

We will always be honest, we will not engage in half-truths, and will not knowingly allow clients to engage in dishonesty. We will not misrepresent the law or facts.

2. Be Courteous, Punctual and Prepared.

We will be courteous. We will be punctual for appointments and hearings, and will file all pleadings in a timely fashion. We will return all phone calls and answer correspondence with reasonable promptness. We will be considerate of the time constraints and pressures inherent within the legal process, including advising others of unexpected delay. We will be prepared for all legal matters and court appearances with knowledge of the relevant law and facts.

3. Respect the Legal Process.

We will comply with the obligations of confidentiality and avoid conflicts of interest. We will be loyal to clients.

We will not file pleadings for a frivolous purpose. We will use the discovery process for the purpose for which it was intended, to determine the facts. We will not use the legal process to place an undue burden or expense on a party.

4. Be Professional and Exercise Civility.

We will engage in behavior that demonstrates our dedication to our profession.

We will exercise civility and decorum, both in and outside of the courtroom, including language, demeanor and attire. Courtroom attire includes appropriate professional attire for attorneys. We will encourage our clients and witnesses to wear appropriate attire.

5. Advocate for our Clients.

We will provide objective and independent counsel to clients. With due regard to our role as advocates, we will make a good faith effort to resolve disputes prior to litigation early in the legal process. We will strive to reach agreement on procedural and discovery matters. We will only dispute matters which are in contention among the parties. We will advise clients about all forms of dispute resolution and the value of cooperation as a productive means of obtaining resolution.

6. Communicate Clearly.

We will communicate promptly and clearly with clients about our relationship with them. The communication should include the status of their cases and the nature, extent and scope of our representation, including the expected fees and expenses. We will draft documents, pleadings, orders and other legal papers so as to be clear, concise and understandable. When speaking in court, or in issuing rulings, we will be brief, to the point, and will not waste time on irrelevant issues.

7. Treat Every Person with Dignity and Respect.

We will treat every person with dignity and respect, regardless of race, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation or ethnicity. We will encourage clients to adhere to these principles.

8. Engage in Activities that Improve our Profession.

We will foster the development of new attorneys and judges through mentoring relationships. We will elevate the competence and professionalism of our peers by assisting one another with practical skills, legal customs, social development and professional judgment. We will attend and teach continuing education programs. We will provide pro bono services. We will use our personal and professional skills to serve our community. We will work with our local Bar Association to accomplish the goals of this Code.

As attorneys and judges, we will honor these Principles of Professionalism.