



The
DISCIPLINARY BOARD
of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

**November
2023
Newsletter**



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From the Chair

As we welcome another Thanksgiving season, let us all take a moment to remember how thankful we are to be lawyers and to be making a difference in people's lives every day. Let us also be mindful of Madame Chief Justice Todd's recent [open letter](#) to the Bar, honoring the National Celebration of Pro Bono, and let's all take a step, big or small, to lend a pro bono hand to someone in need this month.

Continuing with our year-long theme of education and transparency, I thought I would present you with a reminder about the various rules which govern Pennsylvania's unique disciplinary process. Lawyers in Pennsylvania are governed by three sets of rules:



- [Rules of Professional Conduct \("RPC"\)](#). These rules regulate the **conduct** of Pennsylvania lawyers and set forth minimal ethical standards. The RPC provide mandates in the rule text and guidance in the comments to the rules. The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania adopted these rules in 1988, replacing the old Code of Professional Responsibility, and has the sole authority to amend the rules. The Disciplinary Board often makes recommendations for the Court's consideration.
- [Pennsylvania Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement \("Pa.R.D.E."\)](#). These rules establish and govern the disciplinary system in Pennsylvania and cover a broad set of **procedures** used in discipline, reinstatement, and disability matters as well as attorneys convicted of crimes, conservatorship of the interests of clients, access to disciplinary information and confidentiality, and annual attorney registration and status changes, among other topics. Rules pertaining to the Pennsylvania Lawyers Fund for Client Security are also found in the Pa.R.D.E. The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania adopted these rules in 1972 and, similar to the RPC, has the sole authority to amend the rules.
- [Disciplinary Board Rules and Procedures \("Board Rules"\)](#). These rules **supplement** the Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement by providing extensive detail on procedures governing disciplinary proceedings as well as information on the organization and administration of the Board, Office of Disciplinary Counsel, the Executive Office, and the Hearing

Committees. Unlike the RPC and the Pa.R.D.E., the Board has the authority to adopt Board Rules as long as they are consistent with the Pa.R.D.E.

As lawyers, you are responsible for knowing all of these rules and at least being aware that these three sets of rules exist and what their purpose is. Knowledge of these rules, even generally, can help you stay away from disciplinary mishaps and, ultimately, make any disciplinary process you may become involved with less extensive if you regrettably find yourself outside of the rules.

Of the three sets of rules, the Rules of Professional Conduct are obviously the most impactful, and while all of them apply equally to our lives as lawyers, I thought it would be appropriate to cover some of the more significant ones and ones that have a tendency to surface often within the disciplinary process:

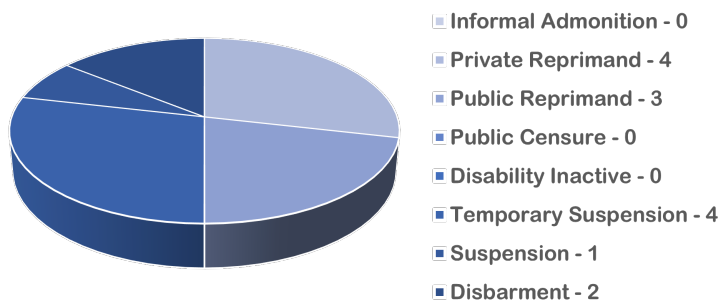
- [Rule 1.1](#) **Competence** – Be prepared and do your work!
- [Rule 1.4](#) **Communication** – The best way for you to avoid any disciplinary interaction is to communicate effectively with your client and promptly inform the client of any material development in the case you are handling.
- [Rule 1.5](#) **Fees** – Learn the right way to be paid as a lawyer!
- [Rules 1.7](#) and [1.8](#) **Conflict of Interest** – Learn these approximately nine pages (Rules and annotations) and read them frequently – these two come up a lot.
- [Rule 1.15](#) **Disputed Property** – Another big one in any type of practice.
- [Rule 3.3](#) **Candor Toward the Tribunal** – Please re-read it if the title is not obvious enough.
- [Rule 4.2](#) **Communication with Person Represented by Counsel** – Don't do it!
- [Rules 7.1](#), [7.2](#), and [7.3](#) **Advertising** – You should review these, especially now with social media.
- [Rule 8.4](#) **Misconduct** – Easy to avoid when you use your common sense.

Compliance with all of the aforementioned rules guarantees that your role in the disciplinary process will be limited to that of a keen and interested observer as opposed to an active participant. Keep them handy, and thank you for reading. And, of course, remember that the Disciplinary Board is here to help, not hurt, Pennsylvania lawyers.

Dion G. Rassias
Board Chair

Discipline Imposed

October 2023



Public Reprimand

[John McDanel](#)
[Mark Steven Pearlstein](#)
[Tiarra Taylor](#)

Temporary Suspension

[Jason Guy Beardsley](#)
[Peter Andrew Galick](#)
[Daniel Liam Glennon](#)
[Christopher John Martini](#)

Suspension

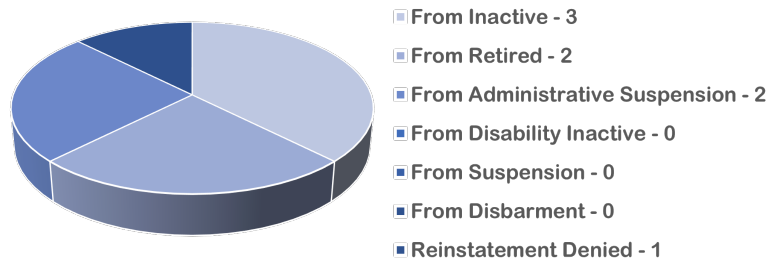
[George Louis Farmer](#)

Disbarment

[Megan Anne Kerrigan](#)
[David Tevis Shulick](#)

Reinstatements

October 2023

**From Inactive**

[Charles Patrick Renegar](#)
[Jane Chadwell Trueper](#)
[Alison Chase Vannoy](#)

From Retired

[Jennifer Johnson](#)
[Lamont G. McClure, Jr.](#)

From Administrative Suspension

[Maura P. McCarthy](#)
[Kenneth Everett McPherson](#)

Reinstatement Denied

[Neil E. Jokelson](#)

Note: The above-listed granted reinstatement matters reflect only those granted by Supreme Court Order. An attorney listed as reinstatement granted, but whose current license status does not reflect reinstatement, has yet to submit the fees necessary to finalize reinstatement.

Disciplinary Board News

Disciplinary Board Releases 2023-2024 Annual Attorney Registration Demographic and Succession Planning Data

The Disciplinary Board has released the aggregate results of demographic and succession planning data collected during the 2023-2024 Annual Attorney Registration process.

Read more about this year's [demographic results](#) and [succession planning results](#) on the Board's website.

Is Retirement Near?

Retirement tends to be a common end-of-year event. If you are considering ending your practice in Pennsylvania, what should you do about your license? One thing is for sure: **do NOT do nothing!** Your retirement from the practice of law only affects your license status if you effect a change. If you simply choose to not complete your annual registration or your CLE requirement, you will receive late penalties and ultimately be administratively suspended. Instead, pursue one of the following options:

- **Continue maintaining active status.** If you would like to maintain your ability to practice law, you should complete all requirements of an actively-licensed attorney (annual registration, CLE, etc.).
- **Assume inactive status.** While inactive status still requires annual registration, assuming such status automatically defers your CLE requirement. If you are unsure of your need to practice law in the future, consider maintaining inactive status. Please see the Board's [Reinstatement page](#) for information about reinstatement from inactive status.
- **Assume retired status.** If you believe that your need to practice law in Pennsylvania has concluded, assuming retired status will end your annual requirements (annual registration, CLE, etc.). Please see the Board's [Reinstatement page](#) for information about reinstatement from retired status.
- **Assume emeritus status.** After assuming retired status, an attorney may request to assume emeritus status. Emeritus status allows a retired attorney to provide pro bono services to eligible Legal Aid Organizations. For more information, please see the [FAQs](#) regarding emeritus status and the Board's [Pro Bono page](#).

Visit the Board's [Forms page](#) to find appropriate forms to request the above status changes and, as always, make sure that your [contact information](#) is always up-to-date.

Rules

Disciplinary Board Adopts Conflicts Rule for Board Members

By an Order dated November 11, 2023, published at [53 Pa.B. 6997](#) (11/11/23), the Disciplinary Board adopted a new Section 93.30 to the Rules and Procedures of the Disciplinary Board, which sets forth certain classes of representation in which Board members are prohibited from engaging.

The rule provides that during their terms of office, members of the Disciplinary Board may not:

- represent a respondent or petitioner in any disciplinary proceeding in the Pennsylvania disciplinary system;
- testify as an expert witness in any Pennsylvania disciplinary proceeding;
- serve as an expert witness in a legal professional liability dispute, absent exigent circumstances and prior Board approval; or
- serve as an expert witness on ethics in litigation or trial in any state or federal court or before any other tribunal.

Upcoming Public Proceedings

We encourage you to observe our public disciplinary and reinstatement hearings, oral arguments, and public reprimands on the [Board's YouTube channel](#). You can also view "Upcoming Public Proceedings" at the bottom of the Board's [home page](#).

Scheduled proceedings begin at 9:30 am unless otherwise noted.

November		
November 16	J. Michael Farrell	Reinstatement Hearing
November 20 November 21	Thomas Gregory G. Coppolo	Disciplinary Hearing
November 28	Shelley L. Fant	Disciplinary Hearing
November 29	George Paul Chada (cont.)	Disciplinary Hearing
December		
December 6 December 7	Kelton Merrill Burgess	Disciplinary Hearing
January		
January 10 January 11	Lisa Ann Johnson	Disciplinary Hearing
February		
February 1	J. Michael Farrell (cont.)	Reinstatement Hearing
February 26 February 28	Milton E. Raiford	Disciplinary Hearing
March		
March 6 March 7	Jimmie Moore	Reinstatement Hearing
To Be Scheduled		
Patrick C. Carey - Disciplinary Hearing		
Brian F. Levine - Public Reprimand		
Michael J. O'Neill - Public Reprimand		

Articles of Interest

Reinstatement Denied for Disbarred Former Lawyer

A former lawyer who was disbarred on consent in 2015 lost his bid for reinstatement after the Disciplinary Board found that he failed to meet his burden to prove rehabilitation from the issues that led to his disbarment.

[Neil E. Jokelson](#) of Philadelphia was disbarred in 2015 after signing a Statement of Resignation in which he admitted to conversion of client funds. The disbarment followed a disciplinary history that included two informal admonitions, two private reprimands, and a public censure for courses of conduct that included neglect and failures to communicate, to refund unearned fees, to return client files, and to abide by court orders.

After seven years out of practice, Jokelson filed a Petition for Reinstatement. The Disciplinary Board found that his petition and accompanying questionnaire contained misstatements and failed to disclose material facts including discipline in other jurisdictions, lawsuits in the hundreds, and unsatisfied judgments.

In his testimony at his reinstatement hearing, contrary to the resignation statement he signed, Jokelson did not acknowledge that he converted client funds and objected to Disciplinary Counsel's questions based on that premise. He only admitted to being bad at law office management. Jokelson's testimony at the hearing focused on events occurring before his disbarment, and the Disciplinary Board found scant evidence of anything he had done to address the issues that led to his disbarment. He testified that he spent the period from 2018 to 2022 caring for his terminally-ill wife and later a disabled friend, but he offered no information on what he did between 2015 and 2018.

Jokelson called ten character witnesses, but all spoke only of his pre-disbarment skills, and none were familiar with the circumstances of his disbarment or were able to address his rehabilitation. One witness was unaware Jokelson had been disbarred, believing he was retired. The Disciplinary Board concluded that the character witnesses were well-meaning, but little weight could be given to their testimony as to Jokelson's current fitness.

After an independent review of the record, the Disciplinary Board concluded that Jokelson had not offered the type of evidence that has generally been found to support a finding of rehabilitation. That failure, along with conflicting evidence of remorse, failure to address his practice issues, and lack of candor in his reinstatement questionnaire led the Disciplinary Board to conclude that Jokelson had not met his burden of proof. The Disciplinary Board recommended denial of his petition to the Supreme Court. On October 6, 2023, the Supreme Court entered a per curiam [Order](#) denying Jokelson's reinstatement.

Lawyer: If You're Going to Keep My Client Jailed, Lock Me Up with Him

A Kentucky lawyer, frustrated with long delays in getting a competency evaluation for his client, came up with a startling [suggestion](#): if you're going to keep my client in jail pending an evaluation, put me in with him.

In a motion, attorney Matt Pippin alleges that his client, Jacob Gonzalez, has already been imprisoned for more than a year which would be the maximum possible sentence he would face if convicted of the charges against him. He has been waiting for the state to schedule an evaluation to determine whether he is fit to stand trial. He has not had access to medication or treatment during this time.

In August of last year, a judge threatened to hold Kentucky Correctional Psychiatric Center officials in contempt of court for repeatedly failing to follow orders or perform competency evaluations. Hundreds of defendants have remained imprisoned indefinitely with their criminal cases on hold across the state. A KCPC official testified that there is a waiting list of over three hundred for evaluations, up from about eighty before the pandemic. Waiting periods were about

eight weeks before the pandemic but have stretched out to a year or more. The system has resorted to performing evaluations by video conferencing to cut the backlog, but the steps taken have only reduced the backlog by about ten percent.

Pippin's proposal is dramatic; he requests to be jailed in the same cell as his client with work release during the day so he can continue to represent clients.

"The point is to try to ease my client's suffering," Pippin said in an interview. "He is stuck and alone, and it has gone on long enough without any solution that it's become a moral issue . . . I don't know how to fix it, but I know how to make it a little better in the short term. And if I was there with him, I know that I could at least make him more comfortable."

Pippin acknowledges that his real goal is not to spend time in jail but to goad the system into performing Gonzales's evaluation. "If KCPC knows that I'm sitting there waiting on them too, then they may be able to make an accommodation for him. I don't want to be incarcerated, but I don't want this on my conscience anymore. And I do think that there is a better chance of this being expedited . . . if there is some attention paid to it in any way."

Hip-Hop Star: My Lawyer Was Ineffective for Using AI to Draft a Closing Argument

Prakazrel "Pras" Michel, a member of the hip-hop trio The Fugees, is [seeking to overturn](#) his conviction on federal conspiracy charges by arguing that his trial counsel was ineffective, in part because he used generative artificial intelligence to draft a closing argument.

Prosecutors [alleged](#) that Michel took millions of dollars from Malaysian businessman Jho Low to enhance Low's image in the United States and to influence the administrations of Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump to derail the investigation and prosecution of fraud charges against Low.

In a new [trial motion](#) filed with the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, new counsel for Michel argues that his trial counsel, among other errors, drafted his closing argument using an experimental AI program which made frivolous arguments, conflated the schemes, and failed to highlight weaknesses in the Government's case. The motion further argues that counsel had a financial stake in the program and publicly boasted about it. A [press release](#) for the product, EyeLevel.AI, highlights the use of the software in Michel's trial and contains a quotation from his former trial counsel stating that the program "turned hours or days of legal work into seconds".

CaseFile Connect, the company that produces EyeLevel.AI, sent a statement to [Reuters](#) denying the allegation that trial counsel had a financial interest in the company. Michel's current lawyers assert that the company uses addresses in Encino, California, and New York which are also associated with Michel's trial defense counsel.

The company's press release promotes the use of AI as a tool to enhance the effectiveness of lawyers, but the allegations of the motion for new trial also serve as a cautionary tale that such technology is a tool – not a substitute for the lawyer's professional judgment.

Shoeless Joe Transcript Reveals: Maybe It Was So

As America's attention turned to the World Series again, a new book sheds fresh light on one of baseball's darkest moments: the Black Sox scandal arising from the Chicago White Sox losing the

1919 World Series. In the aftermath of the series, stories emerged that several of the White Sox players, including their brightest star, “Shoeless Joe” Jackson, had taken money from gamblers to throw the series. Although Jackson batted .375 during the series, he and seven other players were banned from baseball in the aftermath.

The case has been much romanticized in American folklore including its portrayal of Jackson as an unintelligent man drawn into a conspiracy without understanding it in the film [Eight Men Out](#). One legend suggests a boy implored Jackson, “Say it ain’t so, Joe.” Later in life Jackson asserted, “I would have told him it ain’t so.”

A new [book](#) reveals that a trial transcript from a 1924 suit Jackson filed against the White Sox has been revealed and casts Jackson in a different light. In 1957, a court clerk cleaning out old files found the 300,000-word transcript and turned it over to Robert Cannon, the son of Jackson’s lawyer in the case. Eventually, a copy of the transcript made its way to Jerome Holtzman, a longtime Chicago sportswriter and Major League Baseball’s Official Historian. In 2007, Dr. David Fletcher, a board-certified physician in occupational medicine and founder of the Chicago Baseball Museum, acquired Holtzman’s private papers, including the transcript. It provides the story for a new book, [Joe Jackson, Plaintiff, vs. Chicago American League Baseball Club, Defendant—Never-Before-Seen Trial Transcript](#), edited by Jacob Pomrenke and Fletcher.

Pomrenke and Fletcher note that far from being the uneducated rube he was portrayed as in the film, Jackson was a capable businessman who ran several businesses including a pool hall, a barbeque, and a liquor store. They report that the transcript reveals that Jackson admitted multiple times in his testimony before a grand jury probing the scandal that he was paid to throw the series. In fact, he complained that he was promised \$25,000 but only received \$5,000. At trial, Jackson testified that he couldn’t remember this testimony and denied that he sought or received any money. Pomrenke and Fletcher cite testimony from a banker in Savannah, Georgia, that a \$5,400 deposit was made by Jackson’s wife in December 1919, two months after the World Series. Despite this evidence, the jury found in Jackson’s favor and awarded a verdict of \$16,711 in favor of Jackson.

The trial judge was unimpressed. He criticized the jury for its failure to do its duty and set aside the verdict. He also threatened to refer Jackson to law enforcement for perjury charges due to the discrepancy between his grand jury and trial testimony, but no perjury charges were brought.

Maryland Supreme Court Posthumously Admits Black Lawyer Denied Admission 166 Years Ago

Over a century after his death, a Black man from Maryland finally won admission to the bar.

In a [ceremony](#) held on October 26, 2023, the Supreme Court of Maryland granted admission to the state bar to [Edward Garrison Draper](#) whose application was denied in 1857 solely because he was Black. Draper had [outstanding qualifications](#) for the time. He was a graduate of Dartmouth in a time when few lawyers even held college degrees. He applied for admission to the bar in 1857, but the odds were long. Only four Black lawyers had been admitted in the entire country, and Maryland was a particularly hostile jurisdiction. A statute adopted in 1832 barred anyone other than white males from admission as lawyers. That law would remain on the books until 1888, although the first Black lawyer, Everett J. Waring, was admitted to the bar in 1885.

Draper’s application was denied by Judge Zacheus Collins Lee, a slave owner and first cousin of Robert E. Lee. However, Draper informed Judge Lee that he intended to depart for the African nation of Liberia and persuaded him to issue a certificate stating, “I have found him intelligent and

well-informed in his answer to the questions propounded by me, and qualified in all respects to be admitted to the Bar in Maryland, if he was a free white citizen of this state.”

Armed with this document, Draper set off for his new home. Sadly, he passed away from tuberculosis barely a year after arriving in Liberia.

Former Texas Appellate Justice John G. Browning, who was involved in presenting the petition for Draper’s posthumous admission, said, “Maryland was not at the forefront of welcoming Black applicants to the legal profession. But by granting posthumous bar admission to Edward Garrison Draper, this court places itself and places Maryland in the vanguard of restorative justice and demonstrates conclusively that justice delayed may not be justice denied.”

Attorney Well-Being

Free and Confidential Support Sessions for Law Students

Did you know? Law students can register for free, virtual, *confidential* support sessions with Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers of Pennsylvania (LCL). Law students can schedule a thirty-minute session with Laurie Besden, Executive Director of LCL, during their school’s designated day and times. Every appointment will be assigned a unique Microsoft Secure Teams Meeting link for the confidential meeting; the Teams Secure Platform is one of the most secure communication and collaboration apps. *For your school’s registration link, please see the your Dean of Students or contact LCL at info@lclpa.org.*

Visit LCL’s [website](https://www.lclpa.org/) for more information on resources tailored to law students’ experiences.

Explore the Disciplinary Board’s Lawyer Well-Being Webpage

Earlier this year, the Disciplinary Board released a new “[Lawyer Well-Being](https://www.padisciplinaryboard.org/for-attorneys/well-being)” webpage that connects Pennsylvania attorneys with pertinent resources, [articles](#), events, and CLE opportunities to better understand and support their mental health and well-being. To access the Board’s new “Lawyer Well-Being” page, visit [padisciplinaryboard.org/for-attorneys/well-being](https://www.padisciplinaryboard.org/for-attorneys/well-being).

The image shows a composite of the Lawyer Well-Being webpage. On the left is a dark blue sidebar with the text "LAWYER WELL-BEING" in large white letters, followed by "Connect to available resources to better understand and support mental health and well-being, particularly as they relate to the legal profession." Below this is the URL "padisciplinaryboard.org/for-attorneys/well-being" and the Disciplinary Board logo. The main content area features a header with the Disciplinary Board logo and navigation tabs for "FOR ATTORNEYS", "FOR THE PUBLIC", and "CASES". A "Lawyer Well-Being" section includes a sub-header "To connect Pennsylvania attorneys with available health and well-being, particularly as they relate to the legal profession." and a featured article titled "MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING WITHIN THE LEGAL PROFESSION" with a photo of four professionals. A sidebar on the left lists links like "Rules", "Firming", "Attorney Registration", "Pro Bono", "Attorney Gateway", "Update My Information", "Successionship", "Lawyer Well-Being", "FAQs & Resources", "Child Links", "BRIEF RULES", "LOOK UP AN ATTORNEY", "SEARCH OPINIONS", and "RECENT CASES". On the right, a dark blue box lists "Digital resources", "Informative articles", "Upcoming events", and "CLE opportunities". At the bottom, there is a "RESOURCES" section with links for "LCLPA", "General", "Lawyer", and "BIPOC & LGBTQ".

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers is a confidential and safe resource for Pennsylvania attorneys and their family members who may be struggling with their mental health or substance use. Since 1988, LCL has confidentially assisted and supported thousands of individuals who have faced a myriad of challenges (including grief, stress, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, gambling problems, problematic alcohol or prescription drug use, etc.), helping them navigate through dark and difficult times. If you or someone you know is struggling, please call us. You may save a life.



There is help, and there is hope.



LAWYERS CONCERNED FOR LAWYERS
PENNSYLVANIA

lclpa.org | 1-888-999-1941

**Evaluation by a
healthcare professional
Information and literature
Peer and staff support
Assistance with interventions
Recovery meetings
Online resources and CLE**

[Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers](#) is a confidential assistance program for the Pennsylvania legal community and their family members. LCL may not report information about a subject attorney back to the Disciplinary Board.

Confidential 24/7 Helpline: 1-888-999-1941

Last year, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania adopted amendments to the Pennsylvania Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement (Pa.R.D.E.) relating to confidentiality of proceedings, providing for three exceptions to the requirement of confidentiality under [Pa.R.D.E. 402\(d\)](#). Included in these exceptions is the allowance for Disciplinary Counsel to make a referral of an attorney to [Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers of Pennsylvania](#) (LCL) and share information as part of the referral. *However*, it is crucial to note that LCL may *not* report information about a subject attorney back to the Disciplinary Board. LCL is a **confidential** assistance program for the Pennsylvania legal community and their family members.

Around the Court



Chief Justice Todd Authors Letter to Bar Honoring 2023 National Celebration of Pro Bono

Chief Justice Debra Todd has published an [open letter](#) to Pennsylvania attorneys honoring the 2023 [National Celebration of Pro Bono](#) and encouraging support of pro bono legal work across the Commonwealth.

This year's celebration was observed throughout the week of October 22nd-28th. First begot under the sponsorship of the American Bar Association by Pennsylvania lawyer Sharon Browning, the celebration urges the importance of pro bono legal services provided by attorneys helping to advance equal access to justice. This year's theme, "Voices of Democracy: Ensuring Justice for All", illuminates ways in which access to legal assistance affects historically-excluded and low-income individuals.

Acknowledging the celebration's Commonwealth roots, Chief Justice Todd highlights PA lawyers' ethical duty to pro bono service under [Rule of Professional Conduct 6.1](#):

A lawyer should render public interest legal service. A lawyer may discharge this responsibility by providing professional services at no fee or a reduced fee to persons of limited means or to public service or charitable groups or organizations, by service in activities for improving the law, the legal system or the legal profession, and by financial support for organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means.

Read Chief Justice Todd's full letter [here](#).



Chief Justice Todd Announces New Leadership for Supreme Court Advisory Council on Elder Justice in the Courts

In October, Chief Justice Debra Todd announced new leadership for the Supreme Court Advisory Council on [Elder Justice in the Courts](#). Montgomery County Judge Lois Murphy and Philadelphia County Administrative Judge Sheila Woods-Skipper have been named the Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively. They replace Senior Superior Court Judge Paula Francisco Ott and former Pennsylvania Court Administrator Zygmunt Pines who have served on the council since its launch.

Judge Murphy affirmed, "I am delighted to continue the important mission of the Advisory Council on Elder Justice in the Courts, as we advance the goals of reforming guardianship, promoting alternatives to guardianship and improving due process and access to justice. The work we are engaged in to increase access to justice and improve outcomes for older Pennsylvanians is critical and meaningful work that will make a tremendous difference in improving the lives of older Pennsylvanians and their families."

Read the full [press release](#) and learn more about [Elder Justice in the Courts](#) on the Unified Judicial System's website.

Unified Judicial System Publishes Recording of CLE Event Exploring the Intersection of Autism and the Practice of Law

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Kevin M. Dougherty recently hosted a free CLE event to deepen participants' understanding of the autism spectrum and explore ways to better serve individuals on the spectrum within the legal system. This event was held in partnership with the Pennsylvania Bar Institute, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, the ASERT Collaborative, and Drexel University.

A [recording](#) of the program is available on the PA Courts' YouTube channel.

Learn more about [Autism and the Courts](#) on the Unified Judicial System's website.



Allegheny County Opens Trauma-Informed Courthouse

Last month, the Allegheny County Courts celebrated the opening of its trauma-informed courthouse. Converted from their Family Law Center, the courthouse has been designed to “ease the burden of going to court, particularly on children and those who have experienced trauma or are navigating the court system for the first time”. Partnering with Allegheny County Department of Human Services and Carnegie Mellon University's human-centered design graduate class, the Courts transformed the space to better support the needs of the community it serves.

Chief Justice Debra Todd lauded the project, proclaiming, “By prioritizing accessibility, compassion, and the well-being of court users, we are not only building a more inclusive legal system but also fostering a place where healing, trust, and fairness can flourish. This innovative approach exemplifies the essence of our justice system – to remove barriers, embrace empathy, and empower every individual in their pursuit of justice.”

Read the full [press release](#) on the Unified Judicial System's website.

From the Pennsylvania Bar Association



Best Practices to Help Every Lawyer Reduce Risk of Legal Malpractice, Exposure to Cyber Threats, and Complaints to the Disciplinary Board

The Pennsylvania Bar Association (PBA) provides numerous programs and resources to help PA lawyers manage their law practice. Below are a few such resources through which a small investment of time now can save hundreds, even thousands, of dollars and many hours of time if sued for malpractice, computer systems are breached, or a disciplinary complaint is filed. Any of these resources serve as helpful reminders always to be vigilant and protect the practice and reputation that the profession has dedicated so many years to building.

Through the Pennsylvania Bar Institute (PBI), **“Avoiding Legal Malpractice” CLE event** (2.0 ethics) will be presented live online on November 29th from 9:00-11:00 am. The program then will be available on-demand to fit any schedule. It also qualifies toward the USI professional liability PBA-member-exclusive insurance premium discount. [Learn more and register](#) at the special price of only \$50 (or free for ProPass subscribers or unit county members).

Ransomware attacks occur every ten seconds, and approximately one in four law firms have already fallen victim to a data breach. However, only about half of all law firms have taken measures to prevent a data breach and have developed a data breach response plan. Devote one-hour of time to watching [“Cyber Exposure: How to Prepare and Protect Your Firm Against Cyber Liability Claims”](#), a **free, on-demand webinar**. The webinar will offer important information to help make informed business decisions to prepare and protect firms, clients, and professional reputations. Takeaways can be immediately put into action to reduce cyber risks. Even those who already have cyber liability insurance will benefit from this program and gain a deeper understanding of ever-evolving cyber threats and cyber insurance market trends, a critical component to the successful management of today’s law practice.

In an [article](#) in the September 25th *Bar News*, Disciplinary Board Chief Disciplinary Counsel Tom Farrell stated that IOLTA noncompliance is “the No. 1 issue for which we suspend and disbar attorneys.” No one wants to see attorneys reprimanded because they don’t know or understand their obligations under the Pennsylvania Rules of Professional Conduct and failed to handle their IOLTA funds properly. The July/August 2023 edition of *The Pennsylvania Lawyer* published [“Everything You Need to Know About Your IOLTA Account”](#), a checklist for ethical rule compliance by Daniel J. Siegel, Chair of the PBA Committee on Legal Ethics and Professional Responsibility. The IOLTA Board and Mr. Siegel also offer a **one-hour, on-demand CLE program** through the PBI.

There are many more resources available to members; these are just a few. Take advantage of benefits that help members to be better lawyers. The PBA invites all who are not already members to [join now](#) and enjoy fourteen months of membership for the price of twelve months.

Please note that the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Bar Association (PBA) are separate organizations. For more information about PBA, visit their [website](#).

We Want To Hear From You...

We are always on the lookout for stories of interest relating to legal ethics, new issues in the practice of law, lawyer wellness, and funny or just plain weird stories about the legal profession. If you come across something you think might be enlightening, educational, or entertaining to our readers or social media followers, [pass it along](#). If you are our original source, there may be a hat tip in it for you.

Resources

[Pending Cases](#)

[Recent Cases](#)

[Case Research Collection](#)

[Attorney Gateway](#)

[Rules](#)

[Search Opinions](#)

[FAQs – For the Public](#)

[FAQs – For Attorneys](#)

[Lawyer Well-Being](#)

[Pro Bono](#)

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