



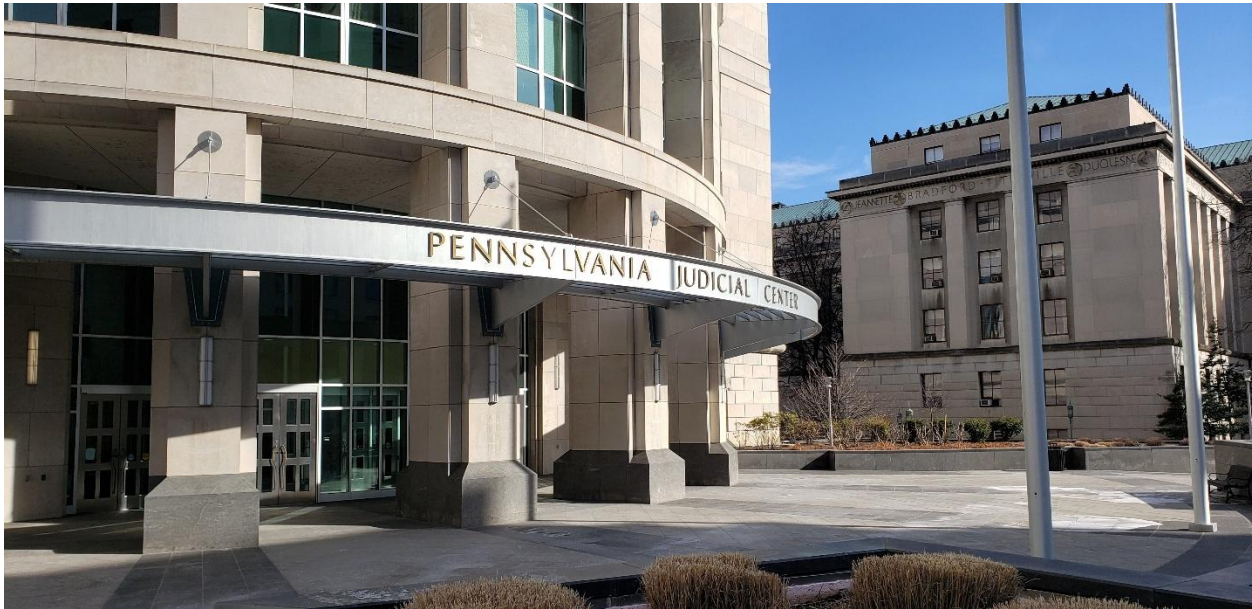
The
DISCIPLINARY BOARD
of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

Resources for Law Students

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to the Disciplinary Board	3
Other Court Agencies to Know	6
Using the Disciplinary Board Website	8
Accessing Pennsylvania Conduct and Discipline Rules	9
Lawyer Well-Being	11
Performing Pro Bono Work	13
Bar Associations in Pennsylvania	14
Frequently Asked Questions	15

Introduction to the Disciplinary Board



The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania has the inherent and exclusive power over the practice of law in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. By Order of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania dated March 21, 1972, the Disciplinary Board was established to regulate attorney conduct.

The mission of the Disciplinary Board is to **protect the public, maintain the integrity of the legal profession, and safeguard the reputation of the courts.**

[Board Members](#) include ten lawyers and two non-lawyers from across the Commonwealth, appointed by the Supreme Court for a term of six years, unless otherwise ordered. The Supreme Court designates one Member as the Board Chair and one Member as the Board Vice-Chair.



Shohin H. Vance, Esq.

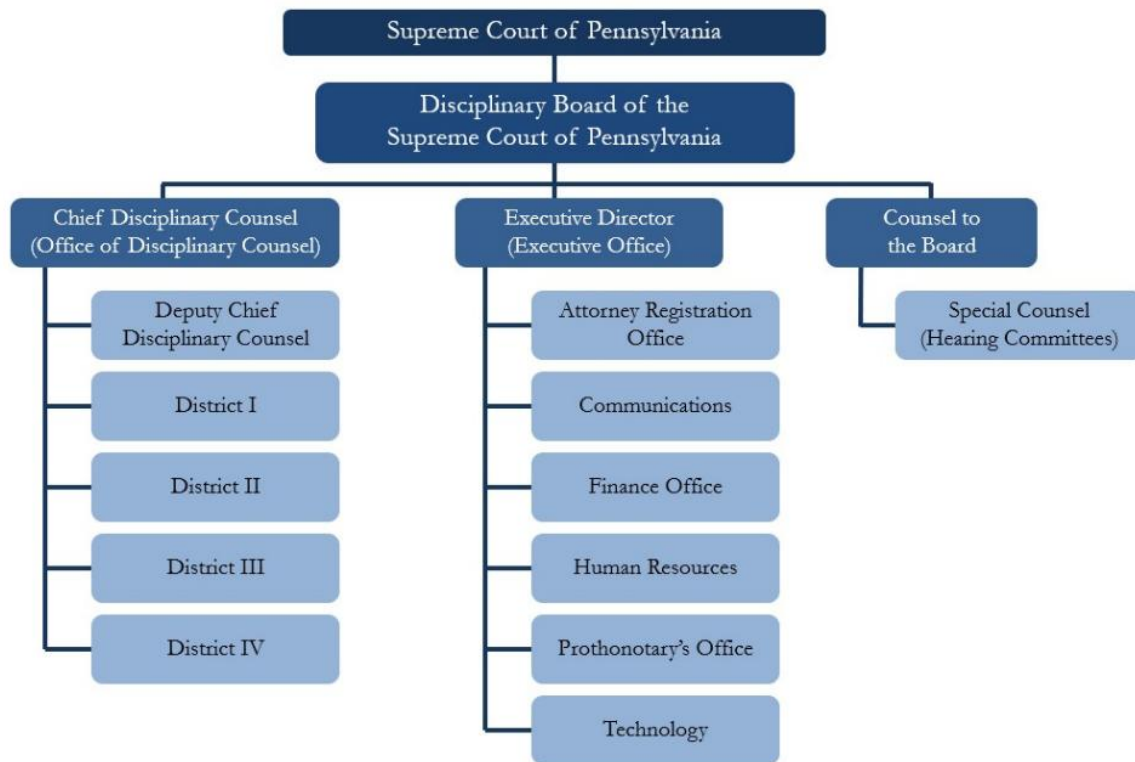
Board Chair, April 1, 2026 - March 31, 2027



Laura E. Ellsworth, Esq.

Board Vice-Chair, April 1, 2026 - March 31, 2027

Hearing Committee Members serve the Board as volunteers to conduct hearings and act as a formal reviewing body to determine if a case might move forward in pursuit of a particular course of discipline. Disciplinary Board Members appoint approximately 150 Hearing Committee members for a term of three years. Hearing Committee Members may be reappointed for a second three-year term.



Office of Disciplinary Counsel, led by the Chief Disciplinary Counsel, investigates and prosecutes attorney misconduct. Complaints are assigned to one of four [geographic districts](#) across the state.

Executive Office, led by the Executive Director, includes operational functions of the Board: the Attorney Registration Office, Board Prothonotary, Communications, Finance, Human Resources, and Technology. Additionally, the Board’s legal counsel, including Counsel to the Board and Special Counsel, are located within the Executive Office. Among many other duties, the Executive Office oversees and facilitates the adjudication of disciplinary matters and annual attorney registration.

Executive Office Contact Information:

601 Commonwealth Avenue, Suite 5600

PO Box 62625

Harrisburg, PA 17106-2625

Phone: 717.231.3380

Attorney Registration Office Email: atty.registration@pacourts.us

Learn more about the Board's **current leadership** at padisciplinaryboard.org/about/leadership.

[Subscribe now](#) to receive the Disciplinary Board's monthly newsletter, The Keystone Lex. View the [Newsletter Archives](#) for all recent past editions.

Other Court Agencies to Know

Under the Pennsylvania Constitution, the Supreme Court has the sole power to regulate lawyers and the practice of law throughout the Commonwealth. Several court-appointed boards assist the court in carrying out this function. In addition to the Disciplinary Board, below are four agencies that directly regulate law practice in PA.

Pennsylvania Board of Law Examiners oversees the admission of lawyers to the PA bar and administers the bar examination for lawyers entering the profession. The Board of Law Examiners recommends the admission of persons to the bar and the practice of law in the Commonwealth. It also recommends rules pertaining to bar admission and practice and administers the bar examination for lawyers entering the profession.

Pennsylvania Board of Law Examiners
601 Commonwealth Avenue, Suite 3600
PO Box 62535
Harrisburg, PA 17106-2535
Phone: (717) 231-3350

Website: pabarexam.org

Pennsylvania Continuing Legal Education Board administers ongoing education programs for lawyers. PA is committed to the quality administration and regulation of the rules for continuing legal education, rules which were adopted to assure that lawyers admitted to practice in PA continue their education to maintain the required knowledge and skill necessary to fulfill their professional responsibilities.

Pennsylvania Continuing Legal Education Board
601 Commonwealth Avenue, Suite 3400
PO Box 62495
Harrisburg, PA 17106-2495
Phone: (717) 231-3250

Website: pacle.org

Pennsylvania Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) Board provides funds for civil legal services to the poor and disadvantaged of Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania IOLTA Board
601 Commonwealth Avenue, Suite 2400
PO Box 62445
Harrisburg, PA 17106-2445
Phone: (717) 238-2001

Website: paiolta.org

Pennsylvania Lawyers Fund for Client Security Board ensures clients will be repaid when lawyers misappropriate funds. The Lawyers Fund for Client Security reimburses clients who have suffered a loss as a result of a misappropriation of funds by their PA attorney.

Pennsylvania Lawyers Fund for Client Security
601 Commonwealth Avenue, Suite 5400
PO Box 62585
Harrisburg, PA 17106-2585
Phone: (717) 231-9510

Website: palawfund.com

Judicial Conduct Board of Pennsylvania investigates complaints of misconduct against judges of PA's Unified Judicial System and, where appropriate, files formal charges against those judges found to have engaged in unethical behavior.

Judicial Conduct Board
601 Commonwealth Avenue, Suite 3500
P.O. Box 62525
Harrisburg, PA 17106-2525
Phone: (717) 234-7911

Website: judicialconductboardofpa.org

Using the Disciplinary Board Website



100%

Search the website

The DISCIPLINARY BOARD
of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

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Protecting the
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 **padisciplinaryboard.org**

The Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania is dedicated to protecting the public, maintaining the integrity of the legal profession, and safeguarding the reputation of the courts.

Visit padisciplinaryboard.org to access the Disciplinary Board's official website. With a myriad of pages at users' fingertips, the site serves as a resource hub for both Pennsylvania's legal profession as well as the general public.

Resources for attorneys include [rule books](#), a wide variety of administrative [forms](#), information on [lawyer well-being](#) and performing [pro bono](#) legal work, details about the disciplinary process and the workings of the Board, a portal for [updating attorney contact information](#), a [public proceedings schedule](#), the [Case Research Collection](#), and much more.

Here, you can subscribe to the Board's monthly newsletter, *The Keystone Lex*, and access an [archive](#) of past issues. Users will also find links to the Board's [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and [Bluesky](#) accounts. All public proceedings are livestreamed via the Board's [YouTube channel](#).

Accessing Pennsylvania Conduct and Discipline Rules

All Pennsylvania conduct and discipline rules are available on the Disciplinary Board’s “Rules” webpage as searchable text, PDF file, and interactive booklet at padisciplinaryboard.org/for-attorneys/rules.

To navigate to the “Rules” webpage, visit padisciplinaryboard.org. Select “For Attorneys” from the site’s main navigation tabs, and then select “Rules”.

The screenshot shows the website for The Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. The page is titled "Rules" and is specifically for "FOR ATTORNEYS". The main heading is "Rules" followed by "Conduct & Discipline Rules". There are three main sections: "The Rules of Professional Conduct", "The Pennsylvania Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement", and "Disciplinary Board Rules and Procedures". Each section includes a brief description and three buttons: "VIEW & SEARCH RULES", "DOWNLOAD RULES", and "INTERACTIVE BOOKLET". There is also a section for "Other Relevant Provisions" with "The Pennsylvania Bar Admission Rules". The left sidebar contains navigation links like "In this Section", "Quick Links", "BROWSE RULES", "FILE A COMPLAINT", "LOOK UP AN ATTORNEY", "SEARCH OPINIONS", and "RECENT CASES".

The Rules of Professional Conduct set forth the minimum ethical standards for the practice of law and constitute a set of Rules that all attorneys must follow. These Rules were originally promulgated by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania on April 1, 1988.

The Pennsylvania Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement establish the attorney disciplinary system in Pennsylvania and set forth a broad set of procedural Rules governing attorney discipline. These Rules were originally adopted by the Supreme Court in November 1972.

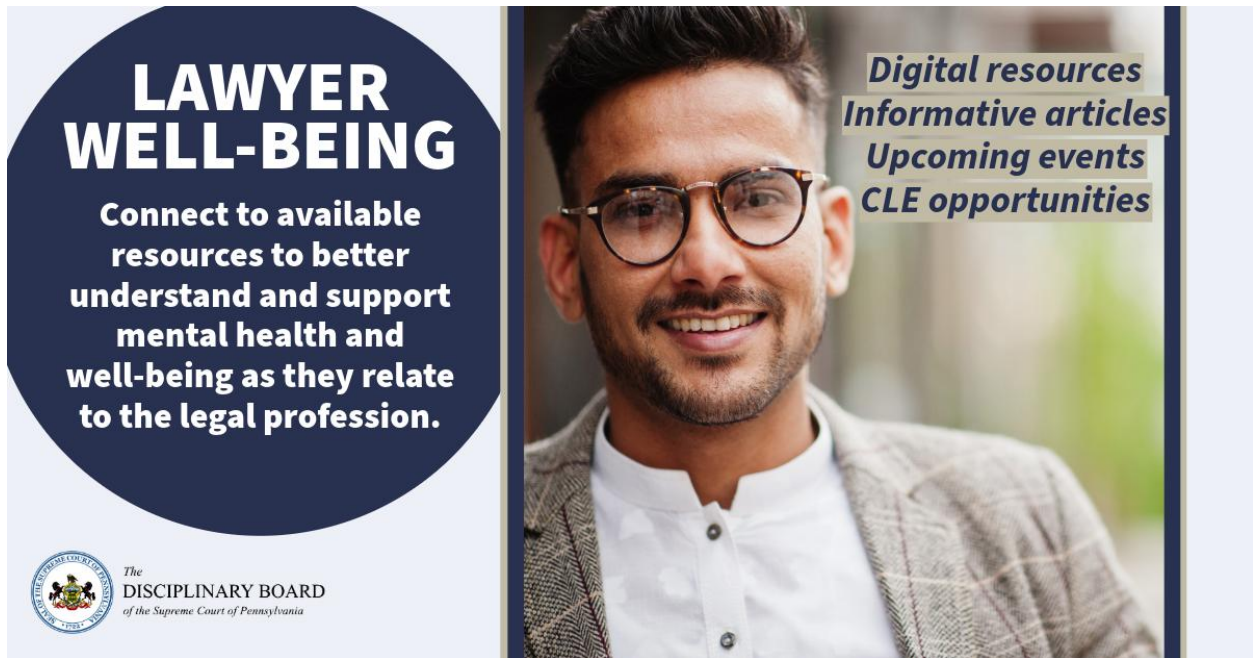
Disciplinary Board Rules and Procedures supplement and implement the Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement and govern proceedings before the Disciplinary Board. These Rules are promulgated by the Disciplinary Board.

Other relevant provisions are also available on the Board's website via padisciplinaryboard.org/for-attorneys/rules. Among these texts are:

- [The Pennsylvania Bar Admission Rules](#);
- [The Pennsylvania Continuing Legal Education Rules and Regulations](#);
- [The Pennsylvania Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts Board Rules and Regulations](#);
- [The Pennsylvania Lawyers Fund for Client Security](#); and
- [The Code of Civility](#).

Lawyer Well-Being

The Disciplinary Board's "Lawyer Well-Being" webpage 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 "Lawyer Well-Being" page, visit padisciplinaryboard.org/for-attorneys/well-being.



Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers of Pennsylvania

[Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers](#) (LCL) is a **free, 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. With over three decades of experience, LCL has provided compassionate, confidential support to thousands of legal professionals and their families across PA.

Our friends at LCL provide a confidential hotline at **1-888-999-1941** open to all PA lawyers, judges, law students, and family members of legal professionals in need of support. Among their offered resources and services are:

- General information, resources, and free literature;

- Referral to a qualified healthcare provider for a free and confidential consultation and diagnosis;
- Development of a personalized treatment plan, if indicated, by a healthcare professional;
- Assistance with treatment admissions;
- Peer support from a recovering law student or lawyer who has faced and overcome similar mental health or substance use challenges;
- Resource coordination and ongoing support by LCL staff; and
- Information on lawyer- and law student-only support groups.

Learn more about LCL and their services and resources at lclpa.org. Follow LCL on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

LCL 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 or the Pennsylvania Board of Law Examiners.



*Tailored to the unique experiences of law students, LCL offers general **information, resources,** and free **literature**; referral to a qualified **healthcare provider** for a free and confidential consultation and diagnosis; development of a personalized **treatment plan**; assistance with **treatment admissions**; **peer support** from a recovering law student or lawyer who has faced and overcome similar mental health or substance use challenges; and information on **law student-only support groups**.*

Performing Pro Bono Work

The availability of free, high-quality legal services has the power to improve Pennsylvania communities. The Disciplinary Board offers a hub of resources to connect Pennsylvania attorneys with available resources to perform pro bono service and to advance equal access to justice for all Pennsylvanians.

The Board hosts a “Pro Bono” webpage for attorneys, highlighting pro bono resources and opportunities through the Board, the PA IOLTA and CLE Boards, and other legal organizations throughout the Commonwealth.

The Office of Disciplinary Counsel and the Pennsylvania Bar Association (PBA) have organized a program whereby attorneys have volunteered to represent respondent-attorneys who are financially unable to hire counsel in the early, informal stage of disciplinary investigations.



The PA IOLTA Board provides critical grant funding to legal aid organizations delivering free civil legal aid to low-income Pennsylvanians facing a legal crisis where a basic human need is at stake. Training and support not typically provided in their regular practice is extended to volunteer attorneys. The PA CLE Board offers a program allowing attorneys to receive CLE credit for pro bono service completed through Accredited Pro Bono CLE Providers.

Other resources featured on the “Pro Bono” webpage connect users to opportunities through the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network, PProbono.net, the PBA, and the American Bar Association. The webpage presents helpful links, documents, and news items to interested attorneys. Visit paddisciplinaryboard.org/for-attorneys/pro-bono to learn more about pro bono.

Current law students are welcome and encouraged to lend their own time and unique expertise to [Pennsylvania Free Legal Answers](#), a program offered by the PA Bar Association in partnership with ABA Free Legal Answers. This valuable service provides free basic legal advice to web users without expectation of extended representation.

Bar Associations in Pennsylvania

Does Pennsylvania have a “unified bar”?

No. All bar associations in Pennsylvania are voluntary. No lawyer licensed to practice law in Pennsylvania is required to be a member of the state (or a local) bar association. Bar associations play no official or formal role in the admissions or disciplinary processes in Pennsylvania.

States with a unified bar include Alaska, Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Wyoming. The District of Columbia also has a unified bar.

What types of bar associations are available in Pennsylvania?

There are three types of bar associations in Pennsylvania: state, local, and affinity.

Membership in the statewide [Pennsylvania Bar Association](#) (PBA) is open to all lawyers who are in good standing and licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In concurrence with a general membership, the PBA offers participation in numerous [committees and commissions](#), eighteen practice-focused [sections](#), and a [Young Lawyers Division](#). Learn more about the PBA and their complimentary membership for newly admitted attorneys at [pabar.org](#).

There are over sixty county bar associations throughout Pennsylvania. View the county bar directory [here](#).

There are also several affinity bar associations throughout the Commonwealth. Such organizations include [Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Pennsylvania](#), the [Hispanic Bar Association of Pennsylvania](#), [Barristers’ Association of Philadelphia](#), the [Philadelphia LGBTQ Bar Association](#), and more.

Does the Disciplinary Board recommend joining a bar association?

While membership in a bar association is not required in Pennsylvania, bar associations across the state offer their members invaluable resources, opportunities, and networking to enhance their legal careers.

Frequently Asked Questions

How can I learn more about the disciplinary process?

The Board's website provides a wealth of information. A detailed overview of the discipline process can be found at padisciplinaryboard.org/about/the-discipline-process. Also on the website, you can review recent and pending cases, search the Case Research collection, and view upcoming public proceedings at padisciplinaryboard.org/cases. Public proceedings are live streamed on the Board's YouTube page (youtube.com/@disciplinaryboard2813).

What are the different types of attorney discipline?

Attorneys who engage in misconduct may be disciplined by either public or private discipline.

Public discipline implies that the public is entitled to know that discipline was imposed. There are five types of public discipline:

- **Disbarment of the attorney from the practice of law:** The attorney is prohibited from practicing law for at least five years and must petition for reinstatement to the bar and prove fitness to resume the practice of law.
- **Suspension of the attorney's license for up to and including five years:** The attorney is prohibited from practicing law for a specified period of time, the length of which will depend on the nature of the misconduct. If an attorney is suspended for more than one year, he or she must petition for reinstatement to the bar and prove fitness to resume the practice of law.
- **Public Censure:** The attorney must appear before the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania to be censured for misconduct but is permitted to continue practicing law.
- **Probation:** The Order of the Supreme Court imposes conditions that are related to the misconduct (*e.g.*, periodic reports to the Board, psychological treatment, supervision of trust accounts, restitution, compliance with income tax laws, practice limitations, etc.). The probation may or may not be imposed in conjunction with a suspension (stayed or otherwise).
- **Public Reprimand:** The attorney must appear before the Disciplinary Board to be reprimanded for misconduct but is permitted to continue practicing law.

Private discipline indicates that the public is not entitled to know that the attorney engaged in misconduct. There are two types of private discipline:

- **Private Reprimand:** The attorney must appear before the Disciplinary Board to be reprimanded for misconduct but is allowed to continue practicing law.

- **Informal Admonition:** The attorney must appear before the Chief Disciplinary Counsel to be admonished for misconduct but is allowed to continue practicing law.

How can I view live public disciplinary and reinstatement proceedings?

In an effort to increase public access to the Board's proceedings, all public proceedings are live-streamed on the [Board's YouTube channel](#).

How can I access data on concluded disciplinary and reinstatement cases as well as public documents?

The [Case Research Collection](#) (CRC) is a database of concluded proceedings before the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, making available case information and documents. Entries from January 2016 through the present are currently included in the CRC. Users can search the CRC using a wide variety of available criteria to narrow findings. All entries in the CRC provide a basic set of information, including [keywords](#), rule violations, and disposition. A [user manual](#) and [video tutorial](#) are available as guidance.



The
DISCIPLINARY BOARD
of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

ETHICAL LAW PRACTICE IS EMPOWERING

The Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania offers free resources to help you prepare and stay ahead of the curve. Learn the Rules of Professional Conduct, understand expectations, support your mental health and well-being, and stay informed about cases and precedents.



padboard.org



bit.ly/dboardnews



The Disciplinary Board of the
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

