



## Where do I file a grievance against a lawyer or judge?

An ethics grievance against a lawyer or a judge must be in writing and filed with one of the following organizations:

### Office of Disciplinary Counsel

*Grievances statewide against attorneys and judges*  
250 Civic Center Drive, Suite 325  
Columbus, OH 43215  
614/461.0256 or 800/589.52563

### Ohio State Bar Association

*Grievances against judges only*  
1700 Lake Shore Dr.  
P.O. Box 16562  
Columbus, OH 43216  
614/487.2050 or 800/282.6556

### Columbus Bar Association

**\*Grievances against attorneys practicing in Franklin County**

175 S. Third St., Suite 1100  
Columbus, OH 43215  
614/221.4112  
<http://www.cbalaw.org/relationships/public>

*\*For the address and telephone number of an approved local bar association near you, please contact the Board of Commissioners on Grievances and Discipline.*

### The Board of Commissioners on Grievances and Discipline

Supreme Court of Ohio  
65 S. Front St., 5th Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215  
614/387.9370



**Columbus Bar Association**  
175 S. Third St., Suite 1100  
Columbus, OH 43215

*Columbus Bar Association*

## GRIEVANCES AGAINST LAWYERS & JUDGES



**Brochure prepared by the Board of Commissioners on Grievances and Discipline, Supreme Court of Ohio**

*Modified and distributed by the Columbus Bar Association*



THE COLUMBUS BAR ASSOCIATION

*Ethics  
Grievances*

# GRIEVANCES AGAINST LAWYERS & JUDGES



The information in this brochure is general in nature and not intended to give specific advice for an individual legal problem. Please contact one of the organizations listed in this brochure if you have a grievance against a judge, lawyer, or the legal services you received.

## ? What rules do Ohio lawyers and judges have to follow?

All Ohio lawyers take an oath to effectively represent their clients without compromise and conflict. The Supreme Court of Ohio regulates the conduct of lawyers and judges through “Rules of Professional Conduct” and a “Code of Judicial Conduct.” Ohio lawyers and judges must obey their oaths of office and the Rules. These Rules include ethical standards that each lawyer must follow.

For example, an Ohio lawyer may not:

- knowingly mislead or lie to a client or a court;
- reveal a client’s confidence or secret without the client’s permission;
- misuse or take money or property that belongs to a client;
- settle, file, or dismiss a case without the client’s permission;
- repeatedly neglect a client’s legal problems after the lawyer has agreed to represent the client.

## ? May I file a grievance?

If you have an ethics grievance against an Ohio lawyer or judge for violating a Rule of Professional Conduct or the Code of Judicial Conduct, you may report it for investigation. When you file a written grievance, an investigation is made to determine if the attorney or judge did or did not violate the ethical rules.

## ? How do I recover money damages or losses?

Filing an ethics grievance against a lawyer will not result in a recovery of the money you lost. If you suffer monetary damages or out-of-pocket losses as a result of your lawyer’s mistakes or negligence, you may have a legal malpractice claim.

Malpractice lawsuits require a client to sue the lawyer generally within one year of the discovery of the malpractice. If you wish to file a malpractice claim against a lawyer, you should immediately consult with a different lawyer about the one year limitation and the damages you believe you have suffered.

## ? Can I recover money if I don’t sue my lawyer?

If your lawyer has illegally taken or misused your money or property, you may be eligible to recover the loss caused by the dishonest conduct by filing a claim with the Clients’ Security Fund of Ohio, 65 S. Front St., 5th Floor, Columbus, OH 43215, telephone 1.800/231.1680 or 614/387.9390. You do not need the assistance of a lawyer to file this claim; you may file it yourself.

## ? Should I file a grievance in more than one office?

A grievance should be filed with only *one* office. For grievances against lawyers you may file with either the Office of Disciplinary Counsel, or an approved local bar association such as the Columbus Bar Association. For grievances against judges, you may file with the Office of Disciplinary Counsel or the Ohio State Bar Association.

## ? What can I expect?

The investigating Committee or Disciplinary Counsel will gather evidence about your grievance and decide whether the lawyer or judge violated the ethical rules. If the Committee or Disciplinary Counsel finds enough evidence of wrongdoing, it will file a formal Complaint charging misconduct against the lawyer or judge. The Board of Commissioners on Grievances and Discipline, which is an independent board appointed by the Supreme Court of Ohio, will then hold a public hearing, and you may be required to testify. In some cases, however, a matter may be submitted on stipulations or an Agreement to Discipline by Consent. Based on the result of this hearing, the Supreme Court of Ohio may take action against the lawyer or judge to protect the public by limiting or prohibiting the lawyer from practicing law or serving as a judge. If there is not enough evidence of misconduct after the hearing is held, the charges will be dismissed by the Board.

## ? What is not covered by the grievance?

Ordinarily, disputes between you and your lawyer over fees are not a basis for an ethics grievance. The Columbus Bar Association and other Certified Grievance Committees have Fee Arbitration Programs to resolve such disputes. Contact the Bar Association for more information.

If you have a pending court case and you file a grievance, the grievance process will not have any effect on the course of the court case. The grievance process is completely separate from the court process. You will still need to take all necessary actions *in the court* to preserve your rights in the legal proceeding. The lawyers investigating or prosecuting a grievance filed by you cannot represent or advise you regarding any aspect of the court matter or recover money damages for you. The grievance process is designed solely to determine if an attorney should be sanctioned for ethics violations.



# COLUMBUS BAR ASSOCIATION GRIEVANCE FORM

175 S. Third St., Suite 1100, Columbus, OH 43215 | Phone: 614/221.4112 | Fax: 614/221.4850

## PLEASE:

- Read the pamphlet first.
- Use a separate form for each attorney if your grievance involves more than one attorney.
- Write legibly and only on one side of the paper.
- Note that our office must receive the original, signed grievance. We cannot accept fax or email copies.
- Provide **your** address / phone number / email address below.

CBA Use Only

Recv. \_\_\_\_\_

Case # \_\_\_\_\_

## INFORMATION ABOUT YOU:

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Best time/place to contact you: \_\_\_\_\_

Person who will know how to reach you: Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Info. \_\_\_\_\_

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE ATTORNEY:

Attorney's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Firm: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Phone(s): \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE LEGAL MATTER:

What kind of legal matter is/was this?

Divorce/Custody  Bankruptcy  Personal Injury  Probate  Criminal  Tax

Landlord/Tenant  Employment  Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Whom did the attorney represent?

You: If so, approx. when did the representation begin: \_\_\_\_\_ end: \_\_\_\_\_

A relative or friend: If so, whom: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Info.: \_\_\_\_\_

An opposing party: If so, whom: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Info.: \_\_\_\_\_

What fees have been paid to the attorney? \$ \_\_\_\_\_ When: \_\_\_\_\_ Have receipts? \_\_\_\_\_

What fees are still claimed by attorney? \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Have you received bills? \_\_\_\_\_



