

§ 1103.14

§ 1103.14 Private communications with the Board are prohibited.

To the extent that the Board acts in a quasi-judicial capacity, it is improper for litigants, directly or through any counsel or representative, to communicate privately with a Board Member, administrative law judge, or other representative of the Board about a pending case, or to argue privately the merits thereof in the absence of the adversaries or without notice to them. Practitioners at all times shall scrupulously refrain from going beyond *ex parte* representations which are clearly proper in view of the administrative work of the Board in their communication with the Board and its staff.

THE PRACTITIONER'S DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD A CLIENT

§ 1103.15 The practitioner's duty to clients, generally.

The practitioner shall be respectful of the law and its official ministers, and shall not be involved in corruption of public officials or deception of the public. In giving improper service or advice, the practitioner invites and deserves stern condemnation. The practitioner shall observe and advise all clients to observe the statutory law to the best of his knowledge or as interpreted by competent adjudication. The practitioner owes a general duty to practice candor toward his client with respect to all aspects to his service to the client.

§ 1103.16 Adverse influences and conflicting interests.

(a) At the time of the retainer, the practitioner shall disclose to the client all circumstances of his relations to the parties, and any interest in or connection with the case.

(b) It is unethical for a practitioner to represent conflicting interests, except by express consent of all concerned given after a full disclosure of the facts. Within the meaning of this section, a practitioner represents conflicting interest, when on behalf of one client, it is his duty to contend for that which duty to another client requires him to oppose.

(c) The obligation to represent the client with undivided fidelity and not

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to divulge secrets or confidence forbids also the subsequent acceptance of retainers or employment from others in matters adversely affecting any interest of the client with respect to which confidence has been reposed.

§ 1103.17 Joint association of practitioners and conflicts of opinion.

(a) A client's offer of the assistance of an additional practitioner should not be regarded as evidence of lack of confidence, but the matter should be left to the determination of the client. A practitioner shall decline association as colleague if it is objectionable to the practitioner first retained, but if the client should relieve the practitioner first retained, another may come into the case.

(b) When practitioners jointly associated in a case cannot agree as to any matter vital to the interest of the client the conflict of opinion should be frankly stated to the client for final determination. The client's decision should be accepted by them unless the nature of the difference makes it impracticable for the practitioner whose judgment has been overruled to cooperate effectively. In that event, it is the practitioner's duty to ask the client to relieve him of his obligation.

(c) It is the right of any practitioner to give proper advice to those seeking relief against an unfaithful or neglectful practitioner. The practitioner against whom the complaint is made should be notified of such action.

§ 1103.18 Withdrawal from employment.

The right of a practitioner to withdraw from employment, once begun, arises only from good cause. The desire or consent of the client is not always sufficient cause for withdrawal. The practitioner shall not abandon the unfinished task to the detriment of the client except for reasons of honor, or the client's persistence over the practitioner's remonstrance in presenting frivolous defenses, or the client's deliberate disregard of an obligation as to fees or expenses. In these cases, the practitioner may be warranted in withdrawing after due notice to the client with time allowed for the employment of another practitioner. Other reasons

for withdrawal might include instances in which a practitioner discovers that his client has no cause and the client is determined to continue the cause, or the practitioner's own inability to conduct a case effectively. Upon withdrawing from a case, the practitioner shall refund any part of a retainer which clearly has not been earned.

§ 1103.19 Advising upon the merits of a client's cause.

A practitioner shall try to obtain full knowledge of his client's cause before advising thereon. The practitioner shall give a candid opinion of the merits and probable result of bringing the case or of any related pending or contemplated litigation. The practitioner shall beware of bold and confident assurances to clients, especially where employment may depend upon such assurances. Whenever a fair settlement can be reached, the client shall be advised to avoid or to end litigation.

§ 1103.20 Practitioner's fees and related practices.

(a) *Establishing fees.* In establishing fees, a practitioner shall avoid charges which overestimate the value of his advice and services. A client's ability to pay cannot justify a charge in excess of the value of the service although a client's poverty may require a lesser charge or even no charge at all. Publicly quoted fees should be adhered to when actual charges are made. Practitioners are bound to charge no more than the quoted rates for 30 days following the date of their quotations unless a different period of time for the effectiveness of such rates is clearly specified when quoted, or unless permission to charge a higher rate is obtained from the Vice Chairman of the Board.

(b) *Compensation, Boards and rebates.* A practitioner shall accept no compensation, Boards, rebates or other advantages from the parties in a proceeding other than his client without the knowledge and consent of his client after full disclosure.

(c) *Contingent fees.* Contingent fees should be only those sanctioned by law. In no case, except a charity case, should fees be entirely contingent upon success.

(d) *Division of fees.* Fees for services should be divided only with another member of the bar of practitioners and should be based upon a division of service or responsibility. It is unethical for a practitioner to retain laymen to solicit his employment in pending or prospective cases, and to reward them by a share of the fees. Such a practice cannot be too severely condemned.

(e) *Suing clients for fees.* Controversies with clients concerning compensation are to be entered into only insofar as they are compatible with self-respect and with the right to receive reasonable compensation for services. Lawsuits against clients should be resorted to only to prevent injustice, imposition or fraud.

(f) *Acquiring interest in litigation.* The practitioner shall not purchase or otherwise acquire any pecuniary interest in the subject matter of litigation which the practitioner is conducting.

(g) *Expenses.* A practitioner may not properly agree with a client that the practitioner shall pay or bear the expenses of litigation. He may in good faith advance expenses as a matter of convenience but must do so subject to reimbursement by the client. A practitioner shall bill and collect from a client, and thereafter retain only such payments and reimbursements for expenses as have actually been incurred in behalf of the client.

(h) *Witnesses' compensation.* Compensation of a witness is not to be made contingent on the success of a case in which the witness is called.

(i) *Dealing with trust property.* Money of the client or other trust property coming into the possession of the practitioner should be reported promptly, and, except with the client's knowledge and consent, should not be commingled with the practitioner's private property or be put to the practitioner's private use.

§ 1103.21 How far a practitioner may go in supporting a client's cause.

A practitioner shall put forth his best effort to maintain and defend the rights of his client. Fear of disfavor of the Board or public unpopularity should not cause a practitioner to refrain from the full discharge of his