

DUCivR-83-1.5 ATTORNEYS - DISCIPLINE OF ATTORNEYS

Approved by Rules Committee on April 8, 2008

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Reporter's note: This rule is a complete redraft of the attorney discipline rule. It reorganizes the rule into eight separately numbered rules, as follows:

- DUCivR 83-1.5.1 - General Provisions
- DUCivR 83-1.5.2 - Reciprocal Discipline
- DUCivR 83-1.5.3 - Criminal Conviction Discipline
- DUCivR 83-1.5.4 - Referral by a Judicial Officer
- DUCivR 83-1.5.5 - Attorney Misconduct Complaint
- DUCivR 83-1.5.6 - Committee on the Conduct of Attorneys
- DUCivR 83-1.5.7 - Evidentiary Hearing
- DUCivR 83-1.5.8 - Reinstatement

The rule separates the four different types of disciplinary actions and differentiates the procedures used for each type. Reciprocal discipline, when an attorney has already been disciplined by another licensing bar, is generally a simpler process and is handled in a summary manner. Discipline based upon a criminal conviction involves an interim suspension order and examination of the nature of the criminal conviction. A complaint by a judicial officer is subject to less initial screening than a misconduct complaint by an attorney, party or other person.

The role of the Committee on the Conduct of Attorneys is set out in a separate rule for clarity. The prior rule gave the Committee both investigative and the adjudicative functions when a matter involved contested facts or issues of law. This draft provides that any necessary evidentiary hearing could be conducted by a neutral hearing officer, judicial officer or the panel itself.

The rule also adopts provisions from the Utah State Supreme Court's Rules of Lawyer Discipline and Disability.

DUCivR 83-1.5.1 ATTORNEYS - DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS - GENERAL PROVISIONS

(a) Standards of professional conduct. All attorneys practicing before this court, either as members of the bar of this court by pro hac vice admission, must comply with the rules of practice adopted by this court and with the Utah Rules of Professional Conduct as revised, amended, and interpreted by this court.

(b) Grounds for discipline. Any attorney who appears in this court or is a member of the bar of the court is subject to the disciplinary jurisdiction of the court. Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated in this court against an attorney who has been

- (1) disciplined by the Utah State Bar, the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, or other jurisdictions;
- (2) convicted of a serious crime, which includes, without limitation, any felony or any misdemeanor which reflects adversely on the attorney's honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as an attorney;
- (3) referred for discipline by a judicial officer of the court;
- (4) the subject of an attorney misconduct complaint; or
- (5) otherwise charged with violation of an ethical or professional standard of conduct.

(c) Disciplinary Panel. The Chief Judge will designate three judges as the Disciplinary Panel (Panel) for the court. The Panel members may be active or senior district judges, magistrate judges, or bankruptcy court judges. The Chief Judge will designate one Panel member as Panel Chair. If a Panel member must recuse from a disciplinary matter, the remaining members have authority to proceed without the participation of that judge, and one of them will act as Panel Chair. Further, the Chief Judge may appoint a judge to act as a pro tem member of the Panel.

(d) Disciplinary Committee. The Panel must appoint five members of the court's bar to serve as a Committee on the Conduct of Attorneys and must designate one member to serve as Chair. The members will serve staggered three-year terms and may be reappointed. Members will not be compensated but may be reimbursed for incidental expenses.

(e) Clerk of Court. The clerk will receive attorney discipline complaints and referrals and maintain them in confidential files. If a public disciplinary order is entered, the clerk will transmit the notice thereof to any bar association to which the attorney may belong and to the American Bar Association's National Discipline Data Bank.

(f) Confidentiality. If an attorney has been publicly disciplined by another jurisdiction or convicted of a serious crime as defined in (b) (2), the discipline file will be a public record. The file of other disciplinary matters will remain confidential until the Panel orders the file or parts of the file to be publicly available. All suspension and disbarment orders, including interim suspension orders, shall be distributed to the judges of the court by the clerk of court.

(g) Waiver and Consent. Any attorney who is the subject of an ongoing disciplinary action may file a waiver with the clerk and consent to have discipline entered. An attorney may also, with the approval of the Panel, resign his or her membership in the bar of the court.

(h) Interim Suspension. The Panel may order interim suspension of an attorney who has been convicted of a serious crime or is suspended or disbarred from the Utah State Bar or other jurisdictions pending final adjudication of disciplinary proceedings in this court. In disciplinary matters originating with a judicial referral or private complaint, the Panel may suspend the attorney during the disciplinary process if the attorney's ability to practice in the interim may pose a substantial threat of irreparable harm to the public.

(i) Reinstatement from Interim Suspension. Any attorney under interim suspension for having been convicted of a serious crime as defined in (b) (2) may apply to the Panel for reinstatement upon the filing of a certificate demonstrating that the conviction has been reversed. This reinstatement will not, in and by itself, terminate the pending disciplinary proceeding.

(j) Participant Immunity. Participants in disciplinary proceedings under these rules shall be entitled to the same protections for statements made in the course of the proceedings as participants in judicial proceedings. Committee members, neutral hearing examiner, investigators and attorneys who prosecute complaints shall be immune from suit for conduct committed in the course of their official duties including those undertaken in the investigatory stage. There is no immunity from civil suit for intentional misconduct.

DUCivR 83-1.5.2 RECIPROCAL DISCIPLINE

(a) Notice to the Court. Any member of the bar of this court who has been disciplined by another jurisdiction must notify the clerk of that discipline by sending a copy of the disciplinary order to the clerk. The clerk may also receive notice of disciplinary action from the disciplining jurisdiction. The clerk will assign the matter a disciplinary case number, review the order, review the attorney's membership status with the court, and transmit the matter to the Panel Chair for review and action pursuant to section (b) of this rule.

(b) Procedure. The Panel Chair will issue an order to show cause why reciprocal discipline should not be imposed by this court. The clerk must serve the order to show cause on the attorney by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the attorney at the last known address as found in the court's records. The attorney will have twenty days to respond.

At the conclusion of the response period for the order to show cause, the Panel will review any response received from the attorney. The Panel may then

- (1) impose different or no discipline;
- (2) impose reciprocal discipline;
- (3) refer the matter to the Committee for review and recommendations; or
- (4) set the matter for hearing before a neutral hearing examiner, a judicial officer designated by the Chief Judge upon recommendation by the Panel, or before the Panel itself.

Similar discipline will be imposed unless the attorney clearly demonstrates or the Panel finds that the other jurisdiction's procedure constituted a deprivation of due process, the evidence establishing the misconduct warrants different discipline, or the imposition of discipline would result in a grave injustice.

DUCivR 83-1.5.3 CRIMINAL CONVICTION DISCIPLINE

(a) Notice to the court. Any member of the bar of this court must notify the clerk of any conviction of a serious crime as defined by DUCiv R 83-1.5.1 (b) (2). The clerk may also receive notice of conviction from other sources. The clerk will assign the matter a disciplinary case number, review the conviction, review the attorney's membership status, and transmit the matter to the Panel Chair for review and action pursuant to section (b) of this rule.

(b) Procedure. The Panel Chair will issue an order to show cause why discipline should not be imposed by this court and a notice that the attorney will be subject to interim suspension under DUCivR 83-1.5.1 (h). The clerk must serve the order to show cause and notice of suspension on the attorney by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the attorney at the last known address as found in the court's records. The attorney will have twenty days to respond to the order to show cause.

At the conclusion of the response period for the order to show cause, the Panel shall review any response received from the attorney. The Panel may then

- (1) impose no discipline;
- (2) impose discipline;
- (3) refer the matter to the Committee for review and recommendations; or
- (4) set the matter for hearing before the Panel, a neutral hearing examiner or a judicial officer designated by the Chief Judge upon recommendation by the Panel.

(c) Sanctions. The Panel may impose sanctions which include but are not limited to

- (1) disbarment;
- (2) suspension;
- (3) imposition of conditions for continuing to practice law in this jurisdiction;
- (4) mandatory continuing legal education;
- (5) public reprimand;
- (6) private reprimand; or
- (7) other discipline as deemed appropriate.

DUCivR 83-1.5.4 REFERRAL BY A JUDICIAL OFFICER

(a) Referral. A judicial officer may make a referral in writing to the Panel recommending that an attorney be subject to discipline. The referral must be forwarded to the clerk who will assign a disciplinary case number and refer the matter to the Panel chair for review and action pursuant to section (b) of this rule.

(b) Procedure. The Panel Chair must review the referral with other Panel members. With

the concurrence of the Panel members, the Panel Chair must issue an order to show cause why discipline should not be imposed by this court. The clerk will serve the judicial referral and order to show cause on the attorney by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the attorney at the last known address as found in the court's records. The attorney will have twenty days to respond.

At the conclusion of the response period for the order to show cause, the Panel will review any response received from the attorney. The Panel may then

- (1) dismiss the referral;
- (2) impose discipline;
- (3) refer the matter to the Committee for review and recommendations; or
- (4) set the matter for hearing before the Panel, a neutral hearing examiner or a judicial officer designated by the Chief Judge upon recommendation by the Panel.

(c) Sanctions. The Panel may impose sanctions which include but are not limited to

- (1) disbarment;
- (2) suspension;
- (3) imposition of conditions for continuing to practice law in this jurisdiction;
- (4) mandatory continuing legal education;
- (5) public reprimand;
- (6) private reprimand; or
- (7) other discipline as deemed appropriate.

DUCivR 83-1.5.5 ATTORNEY MISCONDUCT COMPLAINT

(a) Complaint. Any person with a complaint based upon conduct directly related to practice in this court against an attorney who is either a member of the bar of this court or has been admitted to practice pro hac vice, must sign and submit the complaint in writing and under oath. The complaint must be in the form prescribed by the court and available from the clerk. The clerk will review the complaint, review the attorney's membership status, and transmit the matter to the Panel Chair for review and action pursuant to section (b) of this rule.

(b) Procedure. The Panel will review the complaint and determine whether the complaint should be served or should be dismissed as frivolous or for asserting a claim which is not disciplinary in nature. If the complaint is dismissed, the complainant will be informed by mail. The Panel must issue an order to show cause for other complaints. The clerk will serve the complaint and order to show cause on the attorney by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the attorney at the last known address as found in the court's records. The attorney will have twenty days to respond.

At the conclusion of the response period for the order to show cause, the Panel must review any response received from the attorney. The Panel may then

- (1) dismiss the complaint;
- (2) impose discipline;
- (3) refer the matter to the Committee for review and recommendations; or
- (4) set the matter for hearing before the Panel, neutral hearing examiner or a judge designated by the Chief Judge upon recommendation by the Panel.

(c) **Sanctions**. The Panel may impose sanctions which include but are not limited to

- (1) disbarment;
- (2) suspension;
- (3) imposition of conditions for continuing to practice law in this jurisdiction;
- (4) mandatory continuing legal education;
- (5) public reprimand;
- (6) private reprimand; or
- (7) other discipline as deemed appropriate.

DUCivR 83-1.5.6 COMMITTEE ON THE CONDUCT OF ATTORNEYS

(a) **Procedure**. The Committee Chair will review the original complaint or referral and the response of the attorney. The Chair may then refer the matter to one or more Committee members to investigate and prepare a recommendation to the Committee as a whole.

(b) **Investigation**. The Committee may request further information from the clerk concerning court records. In addition, the Committee or one or more members of the Committee may contact the complaining party and/or the attorney for further information and can interview persons with information regarding the alleged misconduct.

(c) **Report and Recommendation**. The Committee must review the recommendation of the investigating member(s) and prepare a report and recommendation to the Panel which may contain recommendations for possible sanctions or for dismissal. The report and recommendation will contain the factual basis for the misconduct allegation and the response of the attorney and other information which has been considered by the Committee. A majority of Committee members must sign the report and recommendation. A member or members of the Committee in the minority may file a dissenting report. The Committee Chair will transmit the report and recommendation and any dissenting reports to the clerk who will serve the attorney and the complaining party, and will also transmit a copy of the report and recommendation and any dissenting report to the Panel. The attorney may file objections to the report and recommendation within ten days of the date of service.

(d) **Recommendation for Evidentiary Hearing**. If the Committee finds that the facts

underlying the complaint or referral are in dispute, or that there are questions of law about the application of the ethical standards to the conduct alleged, the Committee may include a recommendation that the matter be referred by the Panel for an evidentiary hearing.

DUCivR 83-1.5.7 EVIDENTIARY HEARING

(a) Appointment of Hearing Examiner. If the Panel determines that the matter will be best resolved by appointment of a neutral hearing examiner to conduct an evidentiary hearing, the Panel will select a member of the court's bar to conduct the hearing.

(b) Appointment of a Judicial Officer. If the Panel determines that the matter will be best resolved by the appointment of a judicial officer to conduct a hearing, the Panel will consult with the Chief Judge who will appoint a judicial officer to conduct the hearing.

(c) Appointment of Prosecutor. The panel may appoint a member of the Committee or another attorney to prosecute the complaint at the hearing.

(d) Panel Hearing. The Panel may, in an appropriate case, conduct the hearing sitting as a three-judge panel. If the Panel conducts the hearing, the Panel will issue a final order at the conclusion of the hearing.

(e) Hearing Process. All hearings will be recorded verbatim by electronic or non-electronic means. The examiner or judicial officer may issue subpoenas for witnesses, production of documents, or other tangible things. Testimony will be taken under oath. Disciplinary proceedings are administrative rather than judicial in nature. Accordingly, the Federal Rules of Evidence will not be applicable in the evidentiary hearing unless otherwise ordered by the hearing examiner or appointed judicial officer. Evidentiary rules that are commonly accepted in administrative hearings will apply. The burden of establishing the charges of misconduct will rest with the prosecutor, who must prove the misconduct by a preponderance of the evidence.

(f) Report and Recommendation. After the hearing has been concluded, the examiner or judicial officer shall prepare a report including findings of fact and conclusions of law with a recommendation regarding the imposition of sanctions to the clerk who will serve it on the attorney and the complainant and transmit it to the Panel. The attorney may file objections to the report and recommendation within ten days of the date of service. The Panel will enter the final order.

(g) Fees and Costs. The Panel may authorize payment of attorney's fees and expenses to an investigator or prosecutor or to an appointed hearing examiner. The Panel may tax the costs of disciplinary proceedings under these rules to the attorney subject to discipline or the attorney petitioning for reinstatement. All costs and reimbursements will be deposited in the Court's Bar Fund. Other expenses of disciplinary proceeds may be paid by the clerk from the Court's Bar Fund when approved by the Panel or Chief Judge.

DUCivR 83-1.5.8 REINSTATEMENT

(a) Reinstatement from Reciprocal Discipline Matters. Reinstatement in this court is not automatic upon reinstatement in the court which initially imposed the discipline. An attorney who has been disciplined under DUCivR 83-1.5.2 may petition the court for reinstatement after having been reinstated by the initial disciplining jurisdiction.

(b) Reinstatement from Other Disciplinary Orders. An attorney who has been suspended by this court for a period of less than three months must be reinstated upon notification to the clerk that the suspension period is complete. An attorney who has been suspended for a period longer than three months must file a petition for reinstatement and may not practice until the petition has been reviewed and approved by the Panel. An attorney who has been disbarred may not petition for reinstatement until five years after the effective date of the disbarment.

(c) Contents of the Petition. An attorney seeking reinstatement must demonstrate to the Panel that the conditions for reinstatement have been fully satisfied and that the resumption of the attorney's practice will not be detrimental to the integrity of the bar of this court, the interests of justice, or the public.

(d) Procedure. The Panel will review petitions for reinstatement. If the Panel needs further information, it may refer the petition to the Committee for further investigation. The Committee will proceed as provided in DUCivR 83-1.5.6.