

# PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY PROGRAM

## FOR THE ETHICAL PRACTICE OF LAW

Ethical behavior is one of a lawyer's foremost concerns. The WSBA Professional Responsibility Program helps members fulfill their ethical obligations by providing informal ethics guidance; offering a database of advisory opinions; links to ethics articles; helpful guides on trust accounts; file retention; and succession planning.

### Sources of Ethical Guidance:

Decisions of the Washington Supreme Court

Rules of Professional Conduct

Advisory Opinions issued by the WSBA Committee on Professional Ethics

For more information please contact:

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Responsibility Counsel*



[http://www.wsba.org/  
Resources-and-Services/  
Ethics](http://www.wsba.org/Resources-and-Services/Ethics)

Ethics Line: **(800) 945-9722**  
ext. 8284

### Washington Supreme Court

The highest authority for ethical guidance is the Washington Supreme Court. It issues orders for all lawyer discipline cases resulting in suspension or disbarment. These decisions are instructive because they illustrate ethical misconduct. The Court also promulgates general rules of ethical behavior — the Rules of Professional Conduct that set the minimum ethical standards that lawyers must follow.

### Rules of Professional Conduct

The official Rules of Professional Conduct (RPCs) are found at the Washington State Courts website, [www.courts.wa.gov/court\\_rules](http://www.courts.wa.gov/court_rules)

### Advisory Opinions

The WSBA assists lawyers in understanding their ethical obligations by promulgating advisory opinions regarding ethical dilemmas. There are over 1,500 opinions ranging from those involving a narrow question to more broader issues of concern.

You can find Washington advisory opinions online, in a searchable database, at [www.wsba.org](http://www.wsba.org). Advisory opinions are issued by the WSBA to assist members in interpreting their ethical obligations in specific circumstances. Users may find an ethics opinion by searching the opinion number, year issued, RPC rule, subject matter or keyword.

### Ethics Consultation

The WSBA operates a confidential Ethics Line for its members **(800) 945-9722 ext. 8284**.

The Ethics Line is staffed by a lawyer, the Professional Responsibility Counsel, who is available to help a member analyze a situation regarding his or her own prospective ethical conduct, apply the appropriate rules, and make an ethically sound decision. The line is open during regular business hours and reasonable efforts are made to return all calls within two business days. The advice given is intended for the education of the inquirer and does not constitute the official position of the Bar.

Members' ethical questions cover the entire range of a lawyer's activities, from advertising to office sharing. The most common concerns are confidentiality, conflicts of interest, trust account management, fees, and termination of legal services. The Professional Responsibility Counsel also speaks on ethics issues at CLEs throughout the state.

**WASHINGTON STATE**  
BAR ASSOCIATION