

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY ETHICS

OF THE

SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY



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Dear Counsel,

I hope that 2019 finds each of you healthy and happily engaged in the honorable practice of law or another endeavor that utilizes your unique talents. The New Year also marks the time to complete your Annual Attorney Registration Statement and pay your assessment as mandated by the New Jersey Supreme Court. Our online registration process is in full swing.

The annual assessment - - among the lowest in the country - - supports the New Jersey Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection, the Lawyers' Assistance Program, the Board on Continuing Legal Education, and the various components of the attorney disciplinary system.

Please review and timely complete the online Attorney Registration Statement, which collects essential demographic and practice information utilized by the Supreme Court. All admitted New Jersey attorneys must complete the online statement with accurate information, keep the data updated throughout the year, and promptly pay the annual assessment. See *New Jersey Court Rule 1:20-1(c)*. The same duty to promptly update applies to the financial institution names and account numbers for the primary trust and business accounts. *R. 1:20-1(c)*.

After you complete your registration, I suggest that you review the *New Jersey Rules of Professional Conduct*, and *R. 1:21-6* on trust and business account record keeping. Please visit <https://www.judiciary.state.nj.us/attorneys/assets/rules/rpc.pdf>. These Rules govern our behavior as lawyers and your understanding of each one is essential to your practice.

As the stresses of modern life and the practice of law, in particular, have been increasingly recognized as factors in attorney health and wellness, I urge any member of the bar struggling with mental health challenges or lawyer well-being to contact the NJ Lawyers' Assistance Program. Please visit <http://www.njlap.org/> to learn about the important programs offered. Services are confidential.

I sincerely wish each member of the New Jersey bar success in your endeavors. I would be remiss not to specifically thank the many dedicated volunteers who serve as the backbone of the attorney disciplinary system in the district ethics and fee committees. I also thank members of the bar who provide *pro bono* legal assistance or otherwise freely give their time and talent to any number of worthwhile charitable or non-profit organizations. The New Jersey bar is truly exceptional, and each one of you should be proud of your contribution to its excellence.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles Centinaro".

Charles Centinaro
Director

CC/bc

2019 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Practice of New Jersey Law:

1. What must I do if I want to engage in the private practice of New Jersey law?

In order to engage in private practice in New Jersey, you must:

- a. be current in payment of the annual assessment;
- b. complete the annual registration and billing form by going to www.njcourtsonline.com and keeping the data current throughout the year;
- c. fulfill the requirements of *R. 1:21-6*, including trust and business accounts in an approved New Jersey financial institution;
- d. keep trust accounts IOLTA-compliant (*R. 1:28A*);
- e. meet the CLE requirements; and
- f. maintain required levels of malpractice insurance under Court Rules if practicing in a P.A., P.C., L.L.P., or L.L.C.

2. I am a per diem attorney and work for law firms or the public defender. I don't have any personal clients of my own. Do I need to have trust and business accounts?

Per diem attorneys are considered in private practice and therefore are required to fulfill the requirements of *R.1:21-6*.

3. I do not have my own law practice but occasionally I provide legal services to friends and family on a pro bono basis. Am I considered to be engaged in the private practice of NJ law?

Yes. Even if you do not collect fees for your services, you would be considered to be engaged in the private practice of NJ law and would be subject to the requirements as listed under Question 1.

4. I am currently employed by a law firm and also work Of Counsel for another firm. How can I list both firms?

Currently, you can only associate yourself to your primary law firm through the on-line system. If you need to be associated to additional firms, you must call the Office of Attorney Ethics at 609-403-7800 or via email at

OAECAMS.mailbox@judiciary.state.nj.us for assistance.

5. I don't practice New Jersey law and I don't want to pay the fees. I want to be placed on inactive status. What are my options?

There is no "inactive status" in New Jersey. Your options are as follows:

- a. if you meet the standards on the registration form, you can claim an exemption from payment by completing the certification (without alteration or qualification) for (i) Military, AmeriCorps, or Peace Corps or (ii) Retired completely from the practice of law. If you are not exempt and do not pay the required fees, you will be declared ineligible and not in good standing in New Jersey; or
- b. you may formally resign from the New Jersey Bar as noted in the answer to Question 6.

6. How do I resign from the New Jersey Bar?

First, please review Court Rule 1:20-22. In particular, note that you cannot resign if any disciplinary or criminal proceeding is pending in any jurisdiction to which you are admitted. If you qualify, and if you comply with the notice requirements set forth in the form, you may complete the original form of Resignation Without Prejudice (pdf) printable from our website, www.njcourts.gov > Licensed Attorneys > Office of Attorney Ethics > FAQs and mail it to: Resignation Without Prejudice Unit, Office of Attorney Ethics, P.O. Box 963, Trenton, NJ 08625. If your resignation is accepted by the Supreme Court, it will terminate your membership in the bar. To be readmitted, you will have to retake the New Jersey Bar Examination.

7. Where can I find information about mandatory licensing of In-House Counsel pursuant to *R. 1:27-2*?

Please visit the Board of Bar Examiners' website at www.njbarexams.org, or call them at (609) 815-2911.

8. How do I change my name or correct my name on my registration statement?

For either situation, the same name change certification/affidavit must be used. You can download this form from the Board of Bar Examiners' website at www.njbarexams.org.

9. If the information submitted on my registration form changes before the next billing cycle, what must I do?

Within 30 days, update changes in home address, employment status, primary law office address, main law office telephone, or trust and business account information by returning to www.njcourts.gov, selecting Licensed Attorneys > Online Attorney Registration and Payment and editing your information.

10. I have a question not addressed here. Where can I find help?

The answers to most questions can be found on the Judiciary's website at www.njcourts.gov. You can access the home pages for Pro Bono, Continuing Legal Education, the Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection and the Office of Attorney Ethics. You can also find information on eCourts (Judiciary Electronic Filing System) and the Judiciary Account Charge System (JACS) on the www.njcourts.gov home page.