

3-7.11 | GENERAL RULE OF PROCEDURE

(a) Time is Directory. Except as provided in this rule, the time intervals required are directory only and are not jurisdictional. Failure to observe these directory intervals may result in contempt of the agency having jurisdiction or of the Supreme Court of Florida, but will not prejudice the offending party, except where provided.

(b) Process. Every member of The Florida Bar must notify The Florida Bar of any change of mailing address, e-mail address (unless the lawyer has been excused by The Florida Bar or the Supreme Court of Florida from e-filing and e-service), and military status. The Florida Bar may serve notice of formal complaints in bar proceedings by certified U.S. Postal Service mail return receipt requested to the bar member's record bar address unless the Supreme Court of Florida directs other service. Every lawyer of another state who is admitted pro hac vice in a specific case before a court of record in Florida may be served by certified U.S. Postal Service mail return receipt requested addressed to the lawyer in care of the Florida lawyer who was associated or appeared with the lawyer admitted pro hac vice or addressed to the Florida lawyer at any address listed by the lawyer in the pleadings in the case.

Service of process and notices must be directed to counsel whenever a person is represented by counsel.

(c) Notice in Lieu of Process. Every member of The Florida Bar is within the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Florida and its agencies under these rules, and service of process is not required to obtain jurisdiction over respondents in disciplinary proceedings. The Florida Bar will serve the complaint on the respondent by certified U.S. Postal Service mail return receipt requested to the respondent's record bar address or a more current address that may be known to the person serving the complaint.

When the respondent is represented by counsel in a referee proceeding, The Florida Bar will serve the formal complaint by certified U.S. Postal Service mail return receipt requested to the record bar address of the respondent's counsel or a more current address that may be known to the person serving the complaint.



All other correspondence between The Florida Bar and respondents or their counsel, including bar inquiries that require responses during the investigative stage of a disciplinary proceeding, may be made by e-mail to the respondent's record bar e-mail address or the record bar e-mail address of respondent's counsel. E-mail correspondence is encouraged in all instances except in service of a formal complaint or subpoena, or where a court directs otherwise. If a lawyer has been excused by The Florida Bar or a court from e-filing and e-service or service cannot be made by e-mail, service by first class U.S. postal service mail is sufficient, except where these rules or a court direct otherwise.

(d) Issuance of Subpoenas. Subpoenas for witnesses' attendance and the production of documentary evidence, except before a circuit court, must be issued as follows.

(1) *Referees.* Subpoenas for witnesses' attendance and production of documentary evidence before a referee must be issued by the referee and must be served either in the manner provided by law for the service of process or by an investigator employed by The Florida Bar.

(2) *Grievance Committees.* Subpoenas for witnesses' attendance and the production of documentary evidence must be issued by the chair or vice-chair of a grievance committee as part of an investigation authorized by the committee. These subpoenas may be served by any member of the grievance committee, by an investigator employed by The Florida Bar, or in the manner provided by law for service of process.

(3) *Bar Counsel Investigations.* Subpoenas for witnesses' attendance and the production of documentary evidence before bar counsel in an initial investigation must be issued by the chair or vice-chair of a grievance committee to which the matter will be assigned, if appropriate. These subpoenas may be served by an investigator employed by The Florida Bar or in the manner provided by law for the service of process.

(4) *After Grievance Committee Action, But Before Appointment of Referee.* Subpoenas for witnesses' attendance and the production of documentary evidence before bar counsel when conducting further investigation after action by a grievance committee, but before appointment of a referee, must be issued by the chair or vice-chair of the grievance committee to which the matter was assigned. These subpoenas may be served by an investigator employed by The Florida Bar or in the manner provided by law for service of process.

(5) *Board of Governors.* Subpoenas for witnesses' and the production of documentary evidence before the board of governors must be issued by the executive director and must be served by an investigator employed by The Florida Bar or in the manner provided by law for service of process.

(6) *Confidential Proceedings.* If the proceeding is confidential, a subpoena must not name the respondent but must style the proceeding as "Confidential Proceeding by The Florida Bar under the Rules of Discipline."

(7) *Contempt.*

(A) Generally. Any persons who, without adequate excuse, fail to obey a subpoena served on them under these rules may be cited for contempt of the Supreme Court of Florida in the manner provided by this rule.

(B) Subpoenas for Trust Accounting Records. Members of the bar are under an obligation to maintain trust accounting records as required by these rules and, as a condition of the privilege of practicing law in Florida, may not assert any privilege personal to the lawyer that may be applicable to production of these records in any disciplinary proceedings under these rules.

(i) A respondent who has been found in willful noncompliance with a subpoena for trust accounting records may be cited for contempt under this rule only if the disciplinary agency that issued the subpoena has found that no good cause existed for the respondent's failure to comply.

(ii) The disciplinary agency that issued the subpoena must hear the issue of noncompliance and issue findings on the noncompliance within 30 days of a request for issuance of the notice of noncompliance.

(8) *Assistance to Other Lawyer Disciplinary Jurisdictions.* On receipt of a subpoena certified to be issued under the rules or laws of another lawyer disciplinary jurisdiction, the executive director may issue a subpoena directing a person domiciled or found within the state of Florida to give testimony or produce documents or other evidence for use in the other jurisdiction's lawyer disciplinary proceedings as directed in the subpoena of the other jurisdiction. The practice and procedure applicable to subpoenas issued under this subdivision will be that of the other jurisdiction, except that:

(A) the testimony or production must be only in the county in which the person resides or is employed, or as otherwise fixed by the executive director for good cause shown; and

(B) compliance with any subpoena issued pursuant to this subdivision and contempt for failure in this respect must be sought under these rules.

(e) Oath of Witness. Every witness in every proceeding under these rules must be sworn to tell the truth. Violation of this oath is an act of contempt of the Supreme Court of Florida.

(f) Contempt. When a disciplinary agency, as defined elsewhere in these rules, finds that a person is in contempt under these rules, that person may be cited for contempt in the following manner.

(1) Generally.

(A) Petition for Contempt and Order to Show Cause. When a person is found in contempt by a disciplinary agency, bar counsel must file a petition for contempt and order to show cause with the Supreme Court of Florida.

(B) Order to Show Cause; Suspension for Noncompliance with Subpoena for Trust Accounting Records. On review of a petition for contempt and order to show cause, the Supreme Court of Florida may issue an order directing the person to show cause why the person should not be held in contempt and appropriate sanctions imposed.

The Supreme Court of Florida may also issue an order suspending the respondent from the practice of law in Florida until the member fully complies with the subpoena and any further order of the Supreme Court of Florida.

The order of the Supreme Court of Florida must fix a time for a response.

(C) Response to Order to Show Cause.

(i) Generally. Any member subject to an order to show cause must file a response as directed by the Supreme Court of Florida.

(ii) Noncompliance with a Subpoena for Trust Account Records. Any member subject to an order to show cause for noncompliance with a subpoena for trust accounting records may request the Supreme Court of Florida:

a. to withhold entry of an order of suspension, if filed within 10 days of the filing of the petition for contempt and order to show cause, or another time the Supreme Court of Florida may direct in the order to show cause; or

b. to terminate or modify the order of suspension at any time after the order of suspension is issued. The Supreme Court of Florida may terminate, modify, or withhold entry of an order of suspension if the member establishes good cause for failure to comply with the subpoena for trust account records.

(D) Failure to Respond to Order to Show Cause. On failure to timely respond to an order to show cause, the matters alleged in the petition are deemed admitted and the Supreme Court of Florida may enter a judgment of contempt and impose appropriate sanctions. Failure to respond may be an additional basis for the Supreme Court of Florida to enter a judgment of contempt and to impose sanctions.

(E) Reply of The Florida Bar. When a timely response to an order to show cause is filed, The Florida Bar will have 10 days, or another time period as the Supreme Court of Florida may order, from the date of filing to file a reply.

(F) Supreme Court of Florida Action. The Supreme Court of Florida will review the matter and issue an appropriate judgment after the time to respond to an order to show cause has expired and no response is timely filed, or after the reply of The Florida Bar has been filed, or the time has expired without any filing. This judgment may include any sanction that a court may impose for contempt and, if the person found in contempt is a member of The Florida Bar, may include any disciplinary sanction authorized under these rules.

If the Supreme Court of Florida requires factual findings, it may direct appointment of a referee as provided in these rules. Proceedings for contempt referred to a referee must be processed in the same manner as disciplinary proceedings under these rules, including, but not limited to, the procedures provided in these rules for conditional guilty pleas for consent judgments. If the Supreme Court of Florida determines it necessary to refer a request to terminate, modify, or withhold entry

of an order of suspension based on a petition for contempt and order to show cause for noncompliance with a subpoena for trust account records to a referee for receipt of evidence, the referee proceedings must be expedited and conducted in the same manner as proceedings before a referee on a petition to terminate, modify, or withhold an order of emergency suspension, as provided in these rules.

(G) Preparation and Filing of Report of Referee and Record. The referee must prepare and file a report and the record in cases brought under this rule. The procedures provided for in the rule on procedure before a referee under these rules apply to the preparation, filing, and review of the record.

(H) Appellate Review of Report of Referee. Any party to the contempt proceedings may seek review of the report of referee in the manner provided in these rules for appellate review of disciplinary proceedings.

(2) *Failure to Respond to Official Bar Inquiries.*

(A) Petition for Contempt and Order to Show Cause. When a respondent is found in contempt by a disciplinary agency for failure to respond to an official bar inquiry without good cause shown, bar counsel must file a petition for contempt and order to show cause with the Supreme Court of Florida.

(B) Response to Petition for Contempt and Order to Show Cause. The respondent will have 10 days from the date of filing of a petition authorized by this subdivision to file a response.

(C) Supreme Court of Florida Action.

(i) Entry of Suspension Order. The Supreme Court of Florida will enter an order suspending the respondent for failure to respond to an official bar inquiry after the respondent files a response to the order to show cause or the time for filing a response has expired, unless it orders otherwise.



(ii) Assignment to Referee. If the Supreme Court of Florida requires factual findings, it may direct appointment of a referee as provided in these rules. Proceedings for contempt referred to a referee must be processed in the same manner as disciplinary proceedings under these rules, including, but not limited to, the provisions provided for conditional guilty pleas for consent judgments.

(g) Court Reporters. Court reporters who are employees of The Florida Bar may be appointed to report any disciplinary proceeding. If the respondent objects at least 48 hours in advance of the matter to be recorded, an independent contract reporter may be retained. Reasonable costs for independent court reporter service will be taxed to the respondent for payment to The Florida Bar.

(h) Disqualification as Trier and Lawyer Due to Conflict.

(1) Representation Prohibited. Lawyers may not represent a party other than The Florida Bar in disciplinary proceedings authorized by these rules if they are:

(A) currently serving on a grievance committee or the board of governors;

(B) employees of The Florida Bar; or

(C) former members of a grievance committee, former members of the board of governors, or former employees of The Florida Bar if personally involved to any degree in the matter while a member of a grievance committee or the board of governors, or while an employee of The Florida Bar.



(2) *Representation Permitted With Consent by the Board of Governors.* Lawyers may represent a party other than The Florida Bar in disciplinary proceedings authorized by these rules only after receiving consent from the executive director or board of governors if they are:

(A) former members of a grievance committee, former members of the board of governors, or former employees of The Florida Bar who did not participate personally in any way in the matter or in any related matter in which the lawyer seeks to be a representative and who did not serve in a supervisory capacity over the matter within 1 year of the service or employment;

(B) a partner, associate, employer, or employee of a member of a grievance committee or a member of the board of governors; or

(C) a partner, associate, employer, or employee of a former member of a grievance committee or a former member of the board of governors within 1 year of the former member's service on the grievance committee or board of governors.

(i) Proceedings after Disbarment. The respondent may consent to or the Supreme Court of Florida may order further proceedings after disbarment, which may include: an audit of trust, operating, or personal bank accounts, the cost of which may be assessed as provided in these rules; a requirement that the respondent provide a financial affidavit attesting to personal and business finances; and maintenance of a current mailing address for a stated period of time.

(Former Rule 3-7.10 amended June 8, 1989 (544 So.2d 193). Renumbered as Rule 3-7.11 and amended March 16, 1990, effective March 17, 1990 (558 So.2d 1008); Amended: July 23, 1992, effective Jan. 1, 1993 (605 So.2d 252); July 17, 1997 (697 So.2d 115); May 20, 2004 (SC03-705) (875 So.2d 448); October 6, 2005, effective January 1, 2006 (SC05-206), (916 So.2d 655); December 20, 2007, effective March 1, 2008 (SC06-736) (978 So.2d 91); November 19, 2009 SC08-1890, (34 Fla.L.Weekly S628a), effective February 1, 2010. Amended May 21, 2015, corrected June 25, 2015, effective October 1, 2015 (SC14-2107); amended Jan. 4, 2019, effective March 5, 2019 (267 So.3d 891).)

