

**EXHIBIT A  
HAWAI‘I RULES  
OF PROFESSIONAL  
CONDUCT  
(SCRU-11-0001047)**

*Comments and commentary are provided by the rules committee for interpretive assistance. The comments and commentary express the view of the committee and are not binding on the courts*

**Adopted and Promulgated by  
the Supreme Court  
of the State of Hawai‘i**

**June 25, 2013  
Effective January 1, 2014  
With Amendments as Noted**

**The Judiciary  
State of Hawai‘i**



# HAWAI‘I RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

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**EXHIBIT A  
HAWAII RULES OF  
PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

Adopted June 25, 2013;  
Effective January 1, 2014

**PREAMBLE: A LAWYER'S  
RESPONSIBILITIES**

[1] A lawyer, as a member of the legal profession, is a representative of clients, an officer of the legal system, and a public citizen having special responsibility for the quality of justice.

[2] As a representative of clients, a lawyer performs various functions. As advisor, a lawyer provides a client with an informed understanding of the client's legal rights and obligations and explains their practical implications. As advocate, a lawyer zealously asserts the client's position under the Rules of the adversary system. As negotiator, a lawyer seeks a result advantageous to the client but consistent with requirements of honest dealing with others. As intermediary between clients, a lawyer seeks to reconcile their divergent interests as an advisor and, to a limited extent, as a spokesperson for each client. As an evaluator, a lawyer acts by examining a client's legal affairs and reporting about them to the client or to others.

[3] In addition to these representational functions, a lawyer may serve as a third-party neutral, a nonrepresentational role helping the parties to resolve a dispute or other matter. Some of these Rules apply directly to lawyers who are or have served as third-party neutrals. *See* Rules 1.12, 2.2, and 2.4 of these Rules. In addition, there are Rules that apply to lawyers who are not active in the practice of law or to practicing lawyers even when they are acting in a nonprofessional capacity. For example, a lawyer who commits fraud in the conduct of a business is subject to discipline for engaging in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation. *See* Rule 8.4 of these Rules.

[4] In all professional functions a lawyer should be competent, prompt and diligent. A lawyer should maintain communication with a client concerning the representation. A lawyer should keep in confidence information relating to representation of a client except so far as disclosure is required or permitted by the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law.

[5] A lawyer's conduct should conform to the requirements of the law, both in professional service to clients and in the lawyer's business and personal affairs. A lawyer should use the law's procedures only for legitimate purposes and not to harass or intimidate others. A lawyer should demonstrate respect for the legal system and for those who serve it, including judges, other lawyers and public officials. While it is a lawyer's duty, when necessary, to challenge the rectitude of official action, it is also a lawyer's duty to uphold legal process.

[6] As a public citizen, a lawyer should seek improvement of the law, access to the legal system, the administration of justice, and the quality of service rendered by the legal profession. As a member of a learned profession, a lawyer should cultivate knowledge of the law beyond its use for clients, employ that knowledge in reform of the law and work to strengthen legal education. In addition, a lawyer should further the public's understanding of and confidence in the rule of law and the justice system because legal institutions in a constitutional democracy depend on popular participation and support to maintain their authority. A lawyer should be mindful of deficiencies in the administration of justice and of the fact that the poor, and sometimes persons who are not poor, cannot afford adequate legal assistance. Therefore, all lawyers should devote professional time and resources and use civic influence to ensure equal access to our system of justice for all those who because of economic or social barriers cannot afford or secure adequate legal counsel. A lawyer should aid the legal profession in pursuing these objectives and should help the bar regulate itself in the public interest.

[7] Many of a lawyer's professional responsibilities are prescribed in the Rules of Professional Conduct, as well as substantive and procedural law. However, a lawyer is also guided by personal conscience and the approbation of professional peers. A lawyer should strive to attain the highest level of skill, to improve the law and the legal profession and to exemplify the legal profession's ideals of public service.

[8] A lawyer's responsibilities as a representative of clients, an officer of the legal system, and a public citizen are usually harmonious. Thus, when an opposing party is well represented, a lawyer can be a zealous advocate on behalf of a

client and at the same time assume that justice is being done. So also, a lawyer can be sure that preserving client confidences ordinarily serves the public interest because people are more likely to seek legal advice, and thereby heed their legal obligations, when they know their communications will be private.

[9] In the nature of law practice, however, conflicting responsibilities are encountered. Virtually all difficult ethical problems arise from conflict between a lawyer's responsibilities to clients, to the legal system and to the lawyer's own interest in remaining an ethical person while earning a satisfactory living. The Rules of Professional Conduct often prescribe terms for resolving such conflicts. Within the framework of these Rules, however, many difficult issues of professional discretion can arise. Such issues must be resolved through the exercise of sensitive professional and moral judgment guided by the basic principles underlying the Rules. These principles include the lawyer's obligation zealously to protect and pursue a client's legitimate interests, within the bounds of the law, while maintaining a professional, courteous, and civil attitude toward all persons involved in the legal system.

[10] The legal profession is largely self-governing. Although other professions also have been granted powers of self-government, the legal profession is unique in this respect because of the close relationship between the profession and the processes of government and law enforcement. This connection is manifested in the fact that ultimate authority over the legal profession is vested largely in the courts.

[11] To the extent that lawyers meet the obligations of their professional calling, the occasion for government regulation is obviated. Self-regulation also helps maintain the legal profession's independence from government domination. An independent legal profession is an important force in preserving government under law, for abuse of legal authority is more readily challenged by a profession whose members are not dependent on government for the right to practice.

[12] The legal profession's relative autonomy carries with it special responsibilities of self-government. The profession has a responsibility to assure that its regulations are conceived in the

public interest and not in furtherance of parochial or self-interested concerns of the bar. Every lawyer is responsible for observance of the Rules of Professional Conduct. A lawyer should also aid in securing their observance by other lawyers. Neglect of these responsibilities compromises the independence of the profession and the public interest which it serves.

[13] Lawyers play a vital role in the preservation of society. The fulfillment of this role requires an understanding by lawyers of their relationship to our legal system. The Rules of Professional Conduct, when properly applied, serve to define that relationship.

**SCOPE**

[1] The Rules of Professional Conduct are rules of reason. They should be interpreted with reference to the purposes of legal representation and of the law itself. Some of the Rules are imperatives, cast in the terms "shall" or "shall not." These define proper conduct for purposes of professional discipline. Others, generally cast in the term "may" or "should" are permissive and define areas under the Rules in which the lawyer has discretion to exercise professional judgment. No disciplinary action should be taken when the lawyer chooses not to act or acts within the bounds of such discretion. Other Rules define the nature of relationships between the lawyer and others. The Rules are thus partly obligatory and disciplinary and partly constitutive and descriptive in that they define a lawyer's professional role. Many of the Comments use the term "should." Comments do not add obligations to the Rules but provide guidance for practicing in compliance with the Rules.

[2] The Rules presuppose a larger legal context shaping the lawyer's role. That context includes court rules and statutes relating to matters of licensure, laws defining specific obligations of lawyers and substantive and procedural law in general. The Comments are sometimes used to alert lawyers to their responsibilities under such other law.

[3] Compliance with the Rules, as with all law in an open society, depends primarily upon understanding and voluntary compliance, secondarily upon reinforcement by peer and public opinion, and finally, when necessary, upon enforcement through disciplinary proceedings. The Rules do not,

however, exhaust the moral and ethical considerations that should inform a lawyer, for no worthwhile human activity can be completely defined by legal rules. The Rules simply provide a framework for the ethical practice of law.

[4] Furthermore, for purposes of determining the lawyer's authority and responsibility, principles of substantive law external to these Rules determine whether a client-lawyer relationship exists. Most of the duties flowing from the client-lawyer relationship attach only after the client has requested the lawyer to render legal services and the lawyer has agreed to do so. But there are some duties, such as that of confidentiality under Rule 1.6 of these Rules, that may attach when the lawyer agrees to consider whether a client-lawyer relationship shall be established. *See* Rule 1.18 of these Rules. Whether a client-lawyer relationship exists for any specific purpose can depend on the circumstances and may be a question of fact.

[5] Under various legal provisions, including constitutional, statutory, and common law, the responsibilities of government lawyers may include authority concerning legal matters that ordinarily reposes in the client in private client-lawyer relationships. For example, a lawyer for a government agency may have authority on behalf of the government to decide upon settlement or whether to appeal from an adverse judgment. Such authority in various respects is generally vested in the attorney general and the state's attorney in state government, and their federal counterparts, and the same may be true of other government law officers. Also, lawyers under the supervision of these officers may be authorized to represent several government agencies in intragovernmental legal controversies in circumstances where a private lawyer could not represent multiple private clients. These Rules do not abrogate any such authority.

[6] Failure to comply with an obligation or prohibition imposed by a Rule is a basis for invoking the disciplinary process. The Rules presuppose that disciplinary assessment of a lawyer's conduct will be made on the basis of the facts and circumstances as they existed at the time of the conduct in question and in recognition of the fact that a lawyer often has to act upon uncertain or incomplete evidence of the situation. Moreover, the Rules presuppose that whether or not discipline should be imposed for a

violation, and the severity of a sanction, depend on all the circumstances, such as the willfulness and seriousness of the violation, extenuating factors, and whether there have been previous violations.

[7] Violation of a Rule should not itself give rise to a cause of action against a lawyer nor should it create any presumption in such a case that a legal duty has been breached. In addition, violation of a Rule does not necessarily warrant any other nondisciplinary remedy, such as disqualification of a lawyer in pending litigation. The Rules are designed to provide guidance to lawyers and to provide a structure for regulating conduct through disciplinary agencies. They are not designed to be a basis for civil liability. Furthermore, the purpose of the Rules can be subverted when they are invoked by opposing parties as procedural weapons. The fact that a Rule is a just basis for a lawyer's self-assessment, or for sanctioning a lawyer under the administration of a disciplinary authority, does not imply that an antagonist in a collateral proceeding or transaction has standing to seek enforcement of the Rule. Nevertheless, since the Rules do establish standards of conduct by lawyers, a lawyer's violation of a Rule may be evidence of breach of the applicable standard of conduct.

[8] The Comment accompanying each Rule explains and illustrates the meaning and purpose of the Rule. The Preamble and this note on Scope provide general orientation. The Comments are intended as guides to interpretation, but the text of each Rule is authoritative.

**Rule 1.0. TERMINOLOGY.**

(a) “Belief” or “believes” denotes that the person involved actually supposed the fact in question to be true. A person's belief may be inferred from circumstances.

(b) “Confirmed in writing,” when used in reference to consent after consultation, denotes consent that is given in writing or a writing that a lawyer promptly transmits, confirming an oral consent obtained after consultation. *See* Rule 1.0(c) for the definition of “consultation.” If it is not feasible to obtain or transmit the writing at the time consent is given, then the lawyer must obtain or transmit it within a reasonable time thereafter.

(c) “Consult” or “consultation” denotes communication of information reasonably sufficient to permit the client to appreciate the significance of the matter in question.

(d) “Firm” or “law firm” denotes a lawyer or lawyers in a professional business organization, *see* Rule 6 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai‘i, or lawyers employed in a legal services organization or the legal department of a corporation or other organization. *See* Comment [1], Rule 1.10.

(e) “Fraud” or “fraudulent” denotes conduct having a purpose to deceive and not merely negligent misrepresentation or failure to apprise another of relevant information.

(f) “Knowingly,” “known,” or “knows” denotes actual knowledge of the fact in question. A client’s, an attorney’s, or a third-party’s knowledge may be inferred from circumstances.

(g) “Partner” denotes a member of a partnership, a shareholder in a law firm organized as a professional corporation, or person with an owner interest in a lawyer’s professional business organization of any kind. *See* Rule 6 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai‘i.

(h) “Qualified legal assistance organization” means a legal aid, public defender, or military assistance office, or a bona fide organization that recommends, furnishes, or pays for legal services to its members or beneficiaries, provided the office, service, or organization receives no profit from the rendition of legal services, is not designed to procure financial benefit or legal work for a lawyer as a private practitioner, does not infringe the individual member's freedom as a client to challenge the approved counsel or to

select outside counsel at the client's expense, and is not in violation of any applicable law.

(i) “Reasonable” or “reasonably,” when used in relation to conduct by a lawyer, denotes the conduct of a reasonably prudent and competent lawyer.

(j) “Reasonable belief” or “reasonably believes,” when used in reference to a lawyer, denotes that the lawyer believes the matter in question and that the circumstances are such that the belief is reasonable.

(k) “Reasonably should know,” when used in reference to a lawyer, denotes that a lawyer of reasonable prudence and competence would ascertain the matter in question.

(l) “Screened” denotes the isolation of a lawyer from any participation in a matter through the timely imposition of procedures within a firm that are reasonably adequate under the circumstances to protect the information that the isolated lawyer is obligated to protect under these Rules or other law.

(m) “Substantial,” when used in reference to degree or extent, denotes a material matter of clear and weighty importance.

(n) “Tribunal” denotes a court, an arbitrator in a binding arbitration proceeding, or a legislative body, administrative agency, or other body acting in an adjudicative capacity. A legislative body, administrative agency or other body acts in an adjudicative capacity when a neutral official, after the presentation of evidence or legal argument by a party or parties, will render a binding order directly affecting a party's interests in a particular matter.

(o) “Writing” or “written” denotes a tangible or electronic record of a communication or representation, including handwriting, typewriting, printing, photostating, photography, audio or video recording, and e-mail. A “signed” writing includes an electronic sound, symbol, or process attached to or logically associated with a writing and executed or adopted by a person with the intent to sign the writing.

**COMMENTS:*****Confirmed in Writing***

[1] *If it is not feasible to obtain or transmit a written confirmation at the time the client gives consent after consultation, the lawyer must obtain or transmit written consent within a reasonable time thereafter.*

*If a lawyer has obtained the client's consent, the lawyer may act in reasonable reliance on that consent as long as the consent is confirmed in writing within a reasonable time thereafter.*

#### **Consent After Consultation**

*[2] Many of the Rules of Professional Conduct require the lawyer to engage in reasonable consultation and to obtain consent from a client or other person (including a former client or a prospective client) before accepting or continuing representation or pursuing a course of conduct. See Rules 1.2(c), 1.6(a), and 1.7(b) of these Rules. The communication necessary to obtain such consent will vary according to the Rule involved and the circumstances giving rise to the need to obtain consent. The lawyer must make reasonable efforts to ensure that the client or other person possesses information reasonably adequate to make an informed decision. Ordinarily, this will require communication that includes a disclosure of the facts and circumstances giving rise to the situation, any explanation reasonably necessary to inform the client or other person of the material advantages and disadvantages of the proposed course of conduct, and a discussion of the client's or other person's options and alternatives. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for a lawyer to advise a client or other person to seek the advice of other counsel. A lawyer need not inform a client or other person of facts or implications already known to the client or other person; nevertheless, a lawyer who does not personally inform the client or other person assumes the risk that the client or other person is inadequately informed as to all relevant factors and the consent may therefore be invalid. In determining whether the information and explanation provided are reasonably adequate, relevant factors include whether the client or other person is experienced in legal matters generally and in making decisions of the type involved, and*

*whether the client or other person is independently represented by other counsel in giving the consent. Usually, such persons need less information and explanation than others, and generally a client or other person who is independently represented by other counsel in giving the consent should be assumed to have given valid consent.*

#### **Firm**

*[3] Whether two or more lawyers constitute a firm within paragraph (d) depends, essentially, upon how the lawyers present themselves, from the point of view of the public. For example, practitioners who share office space and occasionally consult or assist each other ordinarily would not be regarded as constituting a firm. However, if they present themselves to the public in a way that suggests they are a firm or conduct themselves as a firm, they should be regarded as a firm for purposes of the Rules. The terms of any formal agreement between associated lawyers are relevant to determining whether they are a firm, as is the fact that they have mutual access to information concerning clients they serve. Furthermore, it is relevant in doubtful cases to consider the underlying purpose of the Rule that is involved. A group of lawyers could be regarded as a firm for purposes of the Rule so that the same lawyer should not represent opposing parties in litigation, while it might not be so regarded for purposes of the Rule that information acquired by one lawyer is attributed to another.*

*[4] With respect to the law department of an organization, including the government, there is ordinarily no question that the members of the department constitute a firm within the meaning of the Rules of Professional Conduct. There can be uncertainty, however, as to the identity of the client. For example, it may not be clear whether the law department of a corporation represents a subsidiary or an affiliated corporation, while at the same time existing as a part of the original corporation by*

which the members of the department are directly employed. A similar question can arise concerning an unincorporated association and its local affiliates.

[5] Similar questions can also arise with respect to lawyers in legal aid and legal services organizations. Depending upon the structure of the organization, the entire organization or different components of it may constitute a firm or firms for purposes of these Rules.

#### **Fraud**

[6] When used in these Rules, the terms "fraud" or "fraudulent" refer to conduct that is characterized as such under the substantive law of the applicable jurisdiction and has a purpose to deceive. This does not include mere negligent misrepresentation or negligent failure to apprise another of relevant information. For purposes of these Rules, it is not necessary that anyone has suffered damages or relied on the misrepresentation or failure to inform.

[7] Obtaining valid consent will usually require an affirmative response by the client or other person. In general, a lawyer may not assume consent from a client's or other person's silence. Consent may be inferred, however, from the conduct of a client or other person who has reasonably adequate information about the matter. A number of Rules require that a client's consent be confirmed in writing. See Rules 1.7(b) and 1.9(a) of these Rules. For a definition of "writing" and "confirmed in writing," see Rule 1.0(o) and 1.0(b) of these Rules, respectively. Other Rules require that a client's consent be obtained in a writing signed by the client. See Rules 1.8(a) and (g) of these Rules. For a definition of "signed," see Rule 1.0(o) of these Rules.

#### **Screened**

[8] This definition applies to situations where screening of a personally disqualified lawyer is permitted to remove

imputation of a conflict of interest under Rules 1.11 or 1.12.

[9] The purpose of screening is to protect the confidences of the client and assure independent legal counsel acting in the interest of the client. The disqualified lawyer should acknowledge the obligation not to communicate with any of the other lawyers in the firm with respect to the matter. Similarly, other lawyers in the firm who are working on the matter should be informed that the screening is in place and that they may not communicate with the disqualified lawyer with respect to the matter. Additional screening measures that are appropriate for the particular matter will depend on the circumstances. To implement, reinforce, and remind all affected lawyers of the presence of the screening, it may be appropriate for the firm to undertake such procedures as a written pledge by the screened lawyer to avoid any communication with other firm personnel and any contact with any firm files or other materials relating to the matter, written notice and instructions to all other firm personnel forbidding any communication related to the screened matter with the disqualified lawyer, denial of access by the screened lawyer to firm files or other materials relating to the matter, and periodic reminders of the screen to the screened lawyer and all other firm personnel. See Rules 1.6, 1.7, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11, and 1.12 of these Rules.

[10] To be effective, screening measures must be implemented as soon as practical after a lawyer or law firm knows or reasonably should know that there is a need for screening.

**Rule 1.1. COMPETENCE.**

A lawyer shall provide competent representation to a client. Competent representation requires the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness, and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation.

**COMMENTS:*****Legal Knowledge and Skill***

[1] *In determining whether a lawyer employs the requisite knowledge and skill in a particular matter, relevant factors include the relative complexity and specialized nature of the matter, the lawyer's general experience, the lawyer's training and experience in the field in question, the preparation and study the lawyer is able to give the matter, and whether it is feasible to refer the matter to, or associate with, or consult with, a lawyer of established competence in the field in question. In many instances, the required proficiency is that of a general practitioner. Expertise in a particular field of law may be required in some circumstances.*

[2] *A lawyer need not necessarily have special training or prior experience to handle legal problems of a type with which the lawyer is unfamiliar. A newly admitted lawyer can be as competent as a practitioner with long experience. Some important legal skills, such as the analysis of precedent, the evaluation of evidence, and legal drafting, are required in all legal problems. Perhaps the most fundamental legal skill consists of determining what kind of legal problems a situation may involve, a skill that necessarily transcends any particular specialized knowledge. A lawyer can provide adequate representation in a wholly novel field through necessary study. Competent representation can also be provided through the association of a lawyer of established competence in the field in question.*

[3] *In an emergency a lawyer may give advice or assistance in a matter in which the lawyer does not have the skill ordinarily required where referral to or consultation or association with another lawyer would be impractical. Even in an*

*emergency, however, assistance should be limited to that reasonably necessary in the circumstances, for ill-considered action under emergency conditions can jeopardize the client's interest.*

[4] *A lawyer may accept representation where the requisite level of competence can be achieved by reasonable preparation. This applies as well to a lawyer who is appointed as counsel for an unrepresented person. See also Rule 6.2 of these Rules.*

***Thoroughness and Preparation***

[5] *Competent handling of a particular matter includes inquiry into and analysis of the factual and legal elements of the problem, and use of methods and procedures meeting the standards of competent practitioners. It also includes adequate preparation. The required attention and preparation are determined in part by what is at stake; major litigation and complex transactions ordinarily require more elaborate treatment than matters of lesser consequence.*

***Maintaining Competence***

[6] *To maintain the requisite knowledge and skill, a lawyer should engage in continuing study and education and keep abreast of changes in the law and its practice, including the benefits and risks associated with relevant technology. See comments [18] and [19] of Rule 1.6.*

*(Amended August 18, 2021, effective January 1, 2022.)*

**Rule 1.2. SCOPE OF REPRESENTATION AND ALLOCATION OF AUTHORITY BETWEEN CLIENT AND LAWYER.**

(a) Subject to paragraphs (c) and (d), a lawyer shall abide by a client's decisions concerning the objectives of representation, and, as required by Rule 1.4, shall consult with the client as to the means by which the objectives are to be pursued. A lawyer may take such action on behalf of the client as is impliedly authorized to carry out the representation. A lawyer shall abide by a client's decision whether to settle a matter. In a criminal case, the lawyer shall abide by the client's decision, after consultation with the lawyer, as to a plea to be entered, whether to waive jury trial, and whether the client will testify.

(b) A lawyer's representation of a client, including representation by appointment, does not constitute an endorsement of the client's political, economic, social, or moral views or activities.

(c) A lawyer may limit the scope of the representation if the limitation is reasonable under the circumstances and the client gives consent after consultation.

(d) A lawyer shall not counsel a client to engage, or assist a client, in conduct that the lawyer knows is criminal or fraudulent, but a lawyer may discuss the legal consequences of any proposed course of conduct with a client and may counsel or assist a client to make a good faith effort to determine the validity, scope, meaning, or application of the law, and may counsel or assist a client regarding conduct expressly permitted by Hawai'i law, provided that the lawyer counsels the client about the legal consequences, under other applicable law, of the client's proposed course of conduct.

(e) When a lawyer knows or reasonably should know that a client expects assistance not permitted by the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law, the lawyer shall consult with the client regarding the relevant limitations on the lawyer's conduct. See Rule 1.4(a)(5) of these Rules.

**COMMENTS:**

***Allocation of Authority Between Client and Lawyer***

[1] Paragraph (a) confers upon the client the ultimate authority to determine the purposes to be served by legal

*representation, within the limits imposed by law and the lawyer's professional obligations. The decisions specified in paragraph (a), such as whether to settle a civil matter, must be made by the client. See Rule 1.4(a)(1) of these Rules for the lawyer's duty to communicate with the client about such decisions. With respect to the means by which the client's objectives are to be pursued, the lawyer shall consult with the client as required by Rule 1.4(a)(2) and may take such action as is impliedly authorized to carry out the representation.*

[2] *On occasion a lawyer and a client may disagree about the means to be used to accomplish the client's objectives. Clients usually defer to the special knowledge and skill of their lawyer with respect to the means to be used to accomplish their objectives, particularly with respect to technical, legal, and tactical matters. Conversely, lawyers usually defer to the client regarding such questions as the expense to be incurred and concern for third persons who might be adversely affected. Because of the varied nature of the matters about which a lawyer and client might disagree and because the actions in question may implicate the interests of a tribunal or other persons, this Rule does not prescribe how such disagreements are to be resolved. Other law, however, may be applicable and should be consulted by the lawyer. The lawyer should also consult with the client and seek a mutually acceptable resolution of any disagreement. If such efforts are unavailing and the lawyer has a fundamental disagreement with the client, the lawyer may withdraw from the representation. See Rule 1.16(b)(4) of these Rules. Conversely, the client may resolve the disagreement by discharging the lawyer. See Rule 1.16(a)(3) of these Rules.*

[3] *At the outset of representation, the client may authorize the lawyer to take specific action on the client's behalf without further consultation. Absent a material change in circumstances and subject to Rule 1.4 of these Rules, a lawyer may rely on such*

*an advance authorization. The client may, however, revoke such authority at any time.*

[4] *In a case in which the client appears to be suffering diminished capacity, the lawyer's duty to abide by the client's decisions is to be guided by reference to Rule 1.14 of these Rules.*

[5] *Legal representation should not be denied to people who are unable to afford legal services, or whose cause is controversial, or the subject of popular disapproval. By the same token, representing a client does not constitute approval of the client's views or activity.*

[6] *The scope of services to be provided by a lawyer may be limited by agreement with the client or by the terms under which the lawyer's services are made available to the client. For example, representation provided through a legal aid agency may be subject to limitations on the types of cases the agency handles or, when a lawyer has been retained by an insurer to represent an insured, representation may be limited to matters related to the insurance coverage. In addition, the terms upon which representation is undertaken may exclude specific means that might otherwise be used to accomplish the client's objectives. Such limitations may exclude actions that the client thinks are too costly or the lawyer regards as repugnant or imprudent.*

[7] *Although this Rule affords the lawyer and client substantial latitude to limit the representation, the limitation must be reasonable under the circumstances. If, for example, a client's objective is limited to securing general information about the law the client needs in order to handle a common and typically uncomplicated legal problem, the lawyer and client may agree that the lawyer's services will be limited to a brief telephone consultation. Such a limitation, however, would not be reasonable if the time allotted was not sufficient to yield advice upon which the client could rely. Although an agreement for a limited representation does not exempt a lawyer from the duty to provide competent representation, the*

*limitation is a factor to be considered when determining the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness, and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation. See Rule 1.1 of these Rules.*

[8] *All agreements concerning a lawyer's representation of a client must accord with the Rules of Professional Conduct and other law. See, e.g., Rules 1.1, 1.8, and 5.6 of these Rules. Where the client is a fiduciary, the lawyer may be charged with special obligations in dealing with a beneficiary. See, e.g., Rule 42 of the Hawaii Probate Rules.*

### **Criminal, Fraudulent and Prohibited Transactions**

[9] *Paragraph (d) prohibits a lawyer from knowingly counseling or assisting a client to commit a crime or fraud. This prohibition, however, does not preclude the lawyer from giving an honest opinion about the actual consequences that appear likely to result from a client's conduct. Nor does the fact that a client uses advice in a course of action that is criminal or fraudulent of itself make a lawyer a party to the course of action. There is a critical distinction between presenting an analysis of legal aspects of questionable conduct and recommending the means by which a crime or fraud might be committed with impunity.*

[10] *When the client's course of action has already begun and is continuing, the lawyer's responsibility is especially delicate. The lawyer is required to avoid assisting the client, for example, by drafting or delivering documents that the lawyer knows are fraudulent or by suggesting how the wrongdoing might be concealed. A lawyer may not continue assisting a client in conduct that the lawyer originally supposed was legally proper but then discovers is criminal or fraudulent. The lawyer must, therefore, withdraw from the representation of the client in the matter. See Rule 1.16(a) of these Rules. In some cases, withdrawal alone might be insufficient. See Rules 1.6 and 4.1 of these Rules. It may be necessary*

*for the lawyer to give notice of the fact of withdrawal and to disaffirm any opinion, document, affirmation or the like.*

*[11] Paragraph (d) applies whether or not the defrauded party is a party to the transaction. Hence, a lawyer must not participate in a sham transaction; for example, a transaction to effectuate criminal or fraudulent avoidance of tax liability. Paragraph (d) does not preclude undertaking a criminal defense incident to a general retainer for legal services to a lawful enterprise. The last clause of paragraph (d) recognizes that determining the validity or interpretation of a statute or regulation may require a course of action involving disobedience of the statute or regulation or of the interpretation placed upon it by governmental authorities.*

*[12] If a lawyer comes to know or reasonably should know that a client expects assistance not permitted by the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law, or if the lawyer knows he or she cannot comply with client instructions due to the duties imposed by these Rules or other law, the lawyer must consult with the client regarding the limitations on the lawyer's conduct. See Rule 1.4(a)(5) of these Rules.*

*(Amended October 20, 2015, effective October 20, 2015.)*

### **Rule 1.3. DILIGENCE.**

A lawyer shall act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client.

#### **COMMENTS:**

*[1] A lawyer should pursue a matter on behalf of a client despite opposition, obstruction, or personal inconvenience to the lawyer, and take whatever lawful and ethical measures are required to vindicate a client's cause or endeavor. A lawyer must also act with commitment and dedication to the interests of the client and with zeal in advocacy upon the client's behalf. A lawyer is not bound, however, to press for every advantage that might be realized for a client. For example, a lawyer may have authority to*

*exercise professional discretion in determining the means by which a matter should be pursued. See Rule 1.2 of these Rules. The lawyer's duty to act with reasonable diligence does not require the use of offensive tactics or preclude the treating of all persons involved in the legal process with courtesy and respect.*

*[2] A lawyer's work load must be controlled so that each matter can be handled adequately.*

*[3] Perhaps no professional shortcoming is more widely resented than procrastination. A client's interests often can be adversely affected by the passage of time or the change of conditions; in extreme instances, as when a lawyer overlooks a statute of limitations, the client's legal position may be destroyed. Even when the client's interests are not affected in substance, however, unreasonable delay can cause a client needless anxiety and undermine confidence in the lawyer's trustworthiness. A lawyer's duty to act with reasonable promptness, however, does not preclude the lawyer from agreeing to a reasonable request for a postponement that will not prejudice the lawyer's client.*

*[4] Unless the relationship is terminated as provided in Rule 1.16, a lawyer should carry through to conclusion all matters undertaken for a client. If a lawyer's employment is limited to a specific matter, the relationship terminates when the matter has been resolved. If a lawyer has served a client over a substantial period in a variety of matters, the client sometimes may assume that the lawyer will continue to serve on a continuing basis unless the lawyer gives notice of withdrawal. Doubt about whether a client-lawyer relationship still exists should be clarified by the lawyer, preferably in writing, so that the client will not mistakenly suppose the lawyer is looking after the client's affairs when the lawyer has ceased to do so. For example, if a lawyer has handled a judicial or administrative proceeding that produced a result adverse to the client, and the lawyer and the client have*

*not agreed that the lawyer will handle the matter on appeal, the lawyer must consult with the client about the possibility of appeal before relinquishing responsibility for the matter. See Rule 1.4(a)(2) of these Rules. Whether the lawyer is obligated to prosecute the appeal for the client depends on the scope of the representation the lawyer has agreed to provide to the client. See Rule 1.2 of these Rules.*

*[5] To prevent neglect of client matters in the event of a sole practitioner's death or disability, the duty of diligence may require that each sole practitioner prepare a plan, in conformity with applicable rules, that designates another competent lawyer to review client files, notify each client of the lawyer's death or disability, and determine whether there is a need for immediate protective action.*

*(Amended August 5, 2020, effective January 1, 2021.)*

**Rule 1.4. COMMUNICATION.**

**(a)** A lawyer shall:

(1) promptly inform the client of any decision or circumstance with respect to which the client's consent after consultation, as defined in Rule 1.0(c), is required by these Rules;

(2) reasonably consult with the client about the means by which the client's objectives are to be accomplished;

(3) keep the client reasonably informed about the status of the matter;

(4) promptly comply with reasonable requests for information;

(5) consult with the client about any relevant limitation on the lawyer's conduct when the lawyer knows that the client expects assistance not permitted by the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law; and

(6) promptly inform the client of a written offer of settlement in a civil controversy or a proffered plea bargain in a criminal case which the lawyer receives.

**(b)** A lawyer shall explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions regarding the representation.

**COMMENTS:**

*[1] Reasonable communication between the lawyer and the client is necessary for the client effectively to participate in the representation.*

**Communicating with Client**

*[2] If these Rules require that a particular decision about the representation be made by the client, such as when a lawyer receives an offer of a settlement in a civil controversy or is proffered a plea bargain in a criminal case, paragraph (a)(1) requires that the lawyer promptly inform the client of its substance and secure the client's consent prior to taking action, unless prior discussions with the client have left it clear that the proposal will be unacceptable. See Rule 1.2(a) of these Rules.*

*[3] Paragraph (a)(2) requires the lawyer to reasonably consult with the client about the means to be used to accomplish the client's objectives. In some situations – depending on both the importance of the action under consideration and the feasibility of consulting with the client – this duty will require consultation prior to taking action. In other circumstances, such as during a trial when an immediate decision must be made, the exigency of the situation may require the lawyer to act without prior consultation. In such cases the lawyer must nonetheless act reasonably to inform the client of actions the lawyer has taken on the client's behalf. Additionally, paragraph (a)(3) requires that the lawyer keep the client reasonably informed about the status of the matter, such as significant developments affecting the timing or the substance of the representation, or any serious unauthorized or inadvertent disclosures of confidential information as covered by Rule 1.6.*

*[4] A lawyer's regular communication with clients will minimize the occasions on which a client will need to request information concerning the representation. When a client makes a reasonable request for information,*

however, paragraph (a)(4) requires prompt compliance with the request, or if a prompt response is not feasible, that the lawyer, or a member of the lawyer's staff, acknowledge receipt of the request and advise the client when a response may be expected. Client telephone calls should be promptly returned or acknowledged.

#### **Explaining Matters**

[5] The client should have sufficient information to participate intelligently in decisions concerning the objectives of the representation and the means by which they are to be pursued, to the extent the client is willing and able to do so. Adequacy of communication depends in part on the kind of advice or assistance that is involved. For example, when there is time to explain a proposal made in a negotiation, the lawyer should review all important provisions with the client before proceeding to an agreement. In litigation, a lawyer should explain the general strategy and prospects of success and ordinarily should consult the client on tactics that are likely to result in significant expense or to injure or coerce others. On the other hand, a lawyer ordinarily will not be expected to describe trial or negotiation strategy in detail. The guiding principle is that the lawyer should fulfill reasonable client expectations for information consistent with the duty to act in the client's best interests, and the client's overall requirements as to the character of representation. In certain circumstances, such as when a lawyer asks a client to consent to a representation affected by a conflict of interest, the client must give consent after consultation, as defined in Rule 1.0(c).

[6] Ordinarily, the information to be provided is that appropriate for a client who is a comprehending and responsible adult. However, fully informing the client according to this standard may be impracticable, for example, where the client is a child or suffers from diminished capacity. See Rule 1.14 of these Rules. When

the client is an organization or group, it is often impossible or inappropriate to inform every one of its members about its legal affairs; ordinarily, the lawyer should address communications to the appropriate officials of the organization. See Rule 1.13 of these Rules. Where many routine matters are involved, a system of limited or occasional reporting may be arranged with the client.

#### **Withholding Information**

[7] In some circumstances, a lawyer may be justified in delaying transmission of information when the client would be likely to react imprudently to an immediate communication. A lawyer might withhold a psychiatric diagnosis of a client when the examining psychiatrist indicates that disclosure would harm the client. A lawyer may not withhold information to serve the lawyer's own interest or convenience or the interests or convenience of another person. Rules of court or court orders governing litigation may provide that information supplied to a lawyer may not be disclosed to the client. Rule 3.4(e) directs compliance with such Rules or orders.

(Amended August 18, 2021, effective January 1, 2022.)

#### **Rule 1.5. FEES.**

**(a) Reasonableness of Fee.** A lawyer shall not make an agreement for, charge, or collect an unreasonable fee or an unreasonable amount for expenses. The factors to be considered in determining the reasonableness of a fee include the following:

- (1) the time and labor required, the novelty and difficulty of the questions involved, and the skill requisite to perform the legal service properly;
- (2) the likelihood, if apparent to the client, that the acceptance of the particular employment will preclude other employment by the lawyer;
- (3) the fee customarily charged in the locality for similar legal services;
- (4) the amount involved and the results obtained;

(5) the time limitations imposed by the client or by the circumstances;

(6) the nature and length of the professional relationship with the client;

(7) the experience, reputation, and ability of the lawyer or lawyers performing the services; and

(8) whether the fee is fixed or contingent, and in contingency fee cases the risk of no recovery and the conscionability of the fee in light of the net recovery to the client.

**(b) Manner In Which Fees are Earned.** The scope of the representation and the basis or rate of the fee and expenses for which the client will be responsible shall be communicated to the client in writing before or within a reasonable time after commencing the representation, except when the lawyer will charge a regularly represented client on the same basis or rate, or if it is reasonably foreseeable that the total cost of representation to the client, including attorney's fees, will be \$250.00 or less. Any changes in the basis or the rates of the fee or expenses shall also be communicated to the client in writing. Fee payments received by a lawyer before legal services have been rendered are presumed to be unearned and shall be held in a trust account pursuant to Rule 1.15 of these Rules. Fee agreements may not describe any fee as non-refundable or earned upon receipt.

**(c) Special Duties Regarding Flat Fees.** A lawyer may charge a flat fee for specified legal services, which constitutes complete payment for such services. If a lawyer charges a flat fee that, in total, exceeds \$1,500.00 for the entire representation, the lawyer shall create a written fee agreement, signed by the client (or the person paying the lawyer to render services for another), that provides notice of the following:

(1) the nature and scope of the services to be provided;

(2) the total amount of the fee and the terms of payment;

(3) the basis or rate at which the flat fee may be incrementally earned before completion of the representation, either by reference to milestones in the contemplated representation or expressed as a specific hourly rate;

(4) that the fee will be held in a trust account until earned;

(5) the client is entitled, upon request, to an accounting of the tasks performed by the lawyer during the course of the representation; and

(6) if the engagement is terminated before completion of the representation, the client will be entitled to a refund of the unearned portion of the flat fee, if any, in accordance with the terms of the written fee agreement.

In accordance with the written fee agreement, upon attainment of a discrete milestone of the representation or when a certain portion of the flat fee has been earned on an hourly basis, the lawyer shall withdraw the earned amount, make reasonable effort to notify the client of the disbursement, and, if requested by the client, provide an accounting.

**(d) Contingency Fees; Requirements.** A fee may be contingent on the outcome of the matter for which the service is rendered, except in a matter in which a contingent fee is prohibited by paragraph (e) of this Rule or other law. A contingent fee agreement shall be in writing signed by the client and shall state the method by which the fee is to be determined, including the percentage or percentages that shall accrue to the lawyer in the event of settlement, trial, or appeal; litigation and other expenses to be deducted from the recovery; and whether such expenses are to be deducted before or after the contingent fee is calculated. The agreement must clearly notify the client of any expenses for which the client will be liable whether or not the client is the prevailing party. Upon conclusion of a contingent fee matter, the lawyer shall provide the client with a written statement stating the outcome of the matter and, if there is a recovery, showing the remittance to the client and the method of its determination.

**(e) When Contingency Fees are Prohibited.** A lawyer shall not enter into an arrangement for, charge, or collect:

(1) any fee in a domestic relations matter, the payment or amount of which is contingent upon the securing of a divorce or upon the amount of alimony or support, or property settlement in lieu thereof; or

(2) a contingent fee for representing a defendant in a criminal case.

**(f) Division of Fees Amongst Lawyers.** A division of fees between lawyers who are not in the same firm may be made only if:

(1) the division is in proportion to the services performed by each lawyer and, by written agreement with the client, each lawyer assumes joint responsibility for the representation;

(2) the client is advised of and does not object to the participation of all the lawyers involved; and

(3) the total fee is reasonable.

**(g) Termination and Accounting.** Whenever a client-lawyer relationship is terminated before a fee is fully earned, the lawyer shall provide the client an accounting, upon request, and shall refund to the client the unearned portion of the fee. If a client disputes the amount of the fee that has been earned, the lawyer shall take reasonable and prompt action to resolve the dispute.

**(h) Inapplicability of This Rule.** This Rule does not prohibit payment to a former partner or associate pursuant to a separation or retirement agreement.

**COMMENTS:**

***Reasonableness of Fee and Expenses***

[1] Paragraph (a) requires that lawyers charge fees that are reasonable under the circumstances. The factors specified in (1) through (8) are not exclusive. Nor will each factor be relevant in each instance. Paragraph (a) also requires that expenses for which the client will be charged must be reasonable. A lawyer may seek reimbursement for the cost of services performed in-house, such as copying, or for other expenses incurred in-house, such as telephone charges, either by charging a reasonable amount to which the client has agreed in advance or by charging an amount that reasonably reflects the cost incurred by the lawyer.

***Basis or Rate of Fee***

[2] When the lawyer has regularly represented a client, they ordinarily will have evolved an understanding concerning the basis or rate of the fee, and the expenses for which the client will be responsible. Pursuant to Rule 1.5(b), however, in a new client-lawyer relationship, an agreement as to the fee and expenses must be promptly established in writing, for example by

*furnishing the client with at least a simple memorandum or a copy of the lawyer's customary fee arrangements that states the general nature of the legal services to be provided; the basis, rate, or total amount of the fee (if applicable); and whether and to what extent the client will be responsible for any costs, expenses, or disbursements in the course of the representation. A written statement concerning the terms of the engagement reduces the possibility of misunderstanding.*

[3] *Contingent fees, like any other fees, are subject to the reasonableness standard of paragraph (a) of this Rule. In determining whether a particular contingent fee is reasonable, or whether it is reasonable to charge any form of contingent fee, a lawyer must consider the factors that are relevant under the circumstances. Applicable law may impose limitations on contingent fees, such as a ceiling on the percentage allowable, or may require a lawyer to offer clients an alternative basis for the fee. Applicable law also may apply to situations other than a contingent fee, for example, government regulations regarding fees in certain tax matters.*

***Terms of Payment***

[4] *A lawyer may require advance payment of a fee, but is obliged to return any unearned portion. See Rule 1.16(d) of these Rules. A lawyer may accept property in payment for services, such as an ownership interest in an enterprise, providing this does not involve acquisition of a proprietary interest in the cause of action or subject matter of the litigation contrary to Rule 1.8(i) of these Rules. However, a fee paid in property instead of money may be subject to the requirements of Rule 1.8(a) of these Rules because such fees often have the essential qualities of a business transaction with the client.*

[5] *An agreement may not be made whose terms might induce the lawyer improperly to curtail services for the client or perform them in a way contrary to the*

client's interest. For example, a lawyer should not enter into an agreement whereby services are to be provided only up to a stated amount when it is foreseeable that more extensive services probably will be required, unless the situation is adequately explained to the client. Otherwise, the client might have to bargain for further assistance in the midst of a proceeding or transaction. However, it is proper to define the extent of services in light of the client's ability to pay. A lawyer should not exploit a fee arrangement based primarily on hourly charges by using wasteful procedures. When there is doubt whether a contingent fee is consistent with the client's best interest, the lawyer should offer the client alternative bases for the fee and explain their implications. Applicable law may impose limitations on contingent fees, such as Haw. Rev. Stat. § 607-15.5.

Contingency fee agreements may be proper in proceedings to enforce or satisfy a judgment for property distribution or past due alimony or child support.

#### **Prohibited Contingent Fees**

[6] Paragraph (d) prohibits a lawyer from charging a contingent fee in a domestic relations matter when payment is contingent upon the securing of a divorce or upon the amount of alimony or support or property settlement to be obtained. This provision does not preclude a contract for a contingent fee for legal representation in connection with the recovery of post-judgment balances due under support, alimony, or other financial orders because such contracts do not implicate the same policy concerns.

#### **Division of Fee**

[7] A division of fee is a single billing to a client covering the fee of two or more lawyers who are not in the same firm. A division of fee facilitates association of more than one lawyer in a matter in which neither alone could serve the client as well, and most often is used when the fee is contingent and the division is between a referring

lawyer and a trial specialist. Paragraph (e) does not require disclosure to the client of the share that each lawyer is to receive, though contingent fee agreements must be in a writing signed by the client and must otherwise comply with paragraph (c) of this Rule. Joint responsibility for the representation entails financial and ethical responsibility for the representation as if the lawyers were associated in a partnership. See Rule 5.1 of these Rules. A lawyer should refer a matter only to a lawyer the referring lawyer reasonably believes is competent to handle the matter. See Rule 1.1 of these Rules.

[8] Paragraph (e) does not prohibit or regulate division of fees to be received in the future for work done when lawyers were previously associated in a law firm.

#### **Disputes over Fees**

[9] If a procedure has been established for resolution of fee disputes, such as an arbitration or mediation procedure established by the bar, the lawyer must comply with the procedure when it is mandatory, and, even when it is voluntary, the lawyer should conscientiously consider submitting to it. Law may prescribe a procedure for determining a lawyer's fee, for example, in representation of an executor or administrator, a class, or a person entitled to a reasonable fee as part of the measure of damages. The lawyer entitled to such a fee and a lawyer representing another party concerned with the fee should comply with the prescribed procedure.

#### **Special Duties Regarding Flat Fees**

[10] A lawyer accepting a flat fee must reduce the agreement to a writing that includes the information specified in Rule 1.5(c)(1) through (6) of these Rules. Compliance benefits both the client and the lawyer, as the information is vital for reconciling future disputes should the representation terminate before the ultimate goal of the representation is achieved. The right to an accounting upon request,

*referred to in Rule 1.5(c)(5), above, ensures the client will receive information concerning the work performed by the lawyer sufficiently detailed to aid in the resolution of any fee dispute or request for a refund by the client.*

*(Amended September 25, 2018, effective January 1, 2019; further amended June 7, 2019, effective July 1, 2019; further amended January 25, 2022, effective January 25, 2022.)*

### **Rule 1.6. CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION.**

(a) A lawyer shall not reveal confidential information relating to the representation of a client unless the client consents after consultation, the disclosure is impliedly authorized in order to carry out the representation, or as stated in paragraph (b) or (c).

(b) A lawyer may reveal information relating to the representation of a client to the extent the lawyer reasonably believes necessary:

(1) to prevent the client from committing a criminal or fraudulent act that the lawyer reasonably believes is likely to result in death or substantial bodily harm, or in substantial injury to the financial interests or property of another;

(2) to rectify the consequences of a client's act which the lawyer reasonably believes to have been criminal or fraudulent and in the furtherance of which the lawyer's services had been used;

(3) to secure legal advice about the lawyer's compliance with these Rules;

(4) to establish a claim or defense on behalf of the lawyer in a controversy between the lawyer and the client, to establish a defense to a criminal charge or civil claim against the lawyer based upon conduct in which the client was involved, or to respond to allegations in any proceeding concerning the lawyer's representation of the client;

(5) to prevent a public official or public agency from committing a criminal or illegal act that a government lawyer reasonably believes is likely to result in harm to the public good;

(6) to rectify the consequences of a public official's or a public agency's act which the government lawyer reasonably believes to have been criminal or illegal and harmful to the public good; or

(7) to the extent strictly necessary to comply with other law, fiduciary obligations, or court orders.

(c) A lawyer shall reveal information that clearly establishes a criminal or fraudulent act of the client in the furtherance of which the lawyer's services had been used, to the extent reasonably necessary to rectify the consequences of such act, where the act has resulted in substantial injury to the financial interests or property of another.

### **COMMENTS:**

[1] *This Rule governs the disclosure by a lawyer of information relating to the representation of a client during the lawyer's representation of the client. See Rule 1.18 of these Rules for the lawyer's duties with respect to information provided to the lawyer by a prospective client, Rule 1.9(c)(2) for the lawyer's duty not to reveal information relating to the lawyer's prior representation of a former client and Rules 1.8(b) and 1.9(c)(1) for the lawyer's duties with respect to the use of such information to the disadvantage of clients and former clients.*

[2] *A fundamental principle in the client-lawyer relationship is that, in the absence of the client's consent after consultation, the lawyer must not reveal information relating to the representation. See Rule 1.0(c) of these Rules for the definition of consultation. This contributes to the trust that is the hallmark of the client-lawyer relationship. The client is thereby encouraged to seek legal assistance and to communicate fully and frankly with the lawyer even as to embarrassing or legally damaging subject matter. The lawyer needs this information to represent the client effectively and, if necessary, to advise the client to refrain from wrongful conduct. Almost without exception, clients come to lawyers in order to determine their rights and what is, in the complex of laws and regulations, deemed to be legal and correct. Based upon experience, lawyers know that almost all clients follow the advice given, and the law is upheld.*

[3] *The principle of client-lawyer confidentiality is given effect by related bodies of law: the client-lawyer privilege, the work-product doctrine, and the rule of confidentiality established in professional ethics. The client-lawyer privilege and work-product doctrine apply in judicial and other proceedings in which a lawyer may be called as a witness or otherwise required to produce evidence concerning a client. The rule of client-lawyer confidentiality applies in situations other than those where evidence is sought from the lawyer through compulsion of law. The confidentiality rule, for example, applies not only to matters communicated in confidence by the client but also to all information relating to the representation, whatever its source. A lawyer may not disclose such information except as authorized or required by the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law. See also Scope.*

[4] *Paragraph (a) prohibits a lawyer from revealing information relating to the representation of a client. This prohibition also applies to disclosures by a lawyer that do not in themselves reveal protected information but could reasonably lead to the discovery of such information by a third person. A lawyer's use of a hypothetical to discuss issues relating to the representation is permissible so long as there is no reasonable likelihood that the listener will be able to ascertain the identity of the client or the situation involved.*

#### **Authorized Disclosure**

[5] *Except to the extent that the client's instructions or special circumstances limit that authority, a lawyer is impliedly authorized to make disclosures about a client when appropriate in carrying out the representation. In some situations, for example, a lawyer may be impliedly authorized to admit a fact that cannot properly be disputed or to make a disclosure that facilitates a satisfactory conclusion to a matter. Lawyers in a firm may, in the course of the firm's practice, disclose to each other*

*information relating to a client of the firm, unless the client has instructed that particular information be confined to specified lawyers.*

#### **Disclosure Adverse to Client**

[6] *The confidentiality rule is subject to limited exceptions. In becoming privy to information about a client, a lawyer may realize that the client has used or intends to use the lawyer's services in the furtherance of criminal or fraudulent conduct. The lawyer may not counsel or assist a client in conduct that is criminal or fraudulent. See Rule 1.2(d) of these Rules. Similarly, a lawyer has a duty under Rule 3.3(a)(4) of these Rules not to use false evidence, which is but one example of the more general duty prescribed in Rule 1.2(d) to avoid assisting a client in criminal or fraudulent conduct.*

[7] *The lawyer may have been innocently involved in past conduct by the client that was criminal or fraudulent. In such a situation, the lawyer has not violated Rule 1.2(d) of these Rules because to "counsel or assist" criminal or fraudulent conduct requires knowing that the conduct is of that character. Nevertheless, to extend the protection of Rule 1.6 to information possessed by the lawyer with respect to such conduct would have the effect of assisting the client in such conduct in violation of the policy expressed in Rule 1.2(d).*

[8] *Where the lawyer's information falls short of clearly establishing a criminal or fraudulent act by the client, but supports a reasonable belief by the lawyer that a criminal or fraudulent act has occurred, the discretionary disclosure provisions of Rule*

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1.6(b)(2) of these Rules may be applicable. Where the lawyer's information clearly establishes the criminal or fraudulent act, the mandatory disclosure requirement of Rule 1.6(c) may be applicable. The requirement that the lawyer's services must have been used by the client in the furtherance of the criminal or fraudulent act means that the services must have been a substantial element in enabling the client to accomplish the criminal or fraudulent enterprise. The term "rectify" as used in Rule 1.6(b)(2) and (c) means that if the lawyer reasonably believes or where information clearly establishes a client's act to have been criminal or fraudulent and in the furtherance of which the lawyer's services have been used, the lawyer may or shall promptly call upon the client to make right what is wrong. If the client refuses or is unable to right the wrong, the lawyer may or shall reveal confidential information to the affected person or entity to the extent reasonably necessary to remedy the consequences of the criminal or fraudulent activity. The application of the discretionary "may" of Rule 1.6(b)(2) or the mandatory "shall" of Rule 1.6(c) will depend on the quality of information in the lawyer's possession. In terms of the discretionary disclosure provisions of Rule 1.6(b)(6), the term "rectify" means that if the government lawyer reasonably believes that a public official's or a public agency's act was criminal or illegal and harmful to the public, the lawyer may promptly call upon the public official or the public agency to make right what is wrong, and if the official or agency refuses or is unable to do so, the government lawyer may reveal confidential information to the person or entity affected by the official's or agency's criminal or fraudulent act which is harmful to the public good, to the extent reasonably necessary to remedy the consequences of such acts. See also Comments [14]-[16] to this Rule.

[9] The lawyer may learn that a client intends prospective conduct that is criminal or fraudulent and likely to result in

death, substantial bodily harm, or substantial injury to the financial interests or property of another. As stated in Rule 1.6(b)(1), the lawyer has professional discretion to reveal information in order to prevent such consequences. The lawyer may make a disclosure in order to prevent such consequences which the lawyer reasonably believes are intended by a client. It is very difficult for a lawyer to know when such a heinous purpose will actually be carried out, for the client may have a change of mind.

[10] A lawyer's confidentiality obligations do not preclude a lawyer from securing confidential legal advice about the lawyer's personal responsibility to comply with these Rules. In most situations, disclosing information to secure such advice will be impliedly authorized for the lawyer to carry out the representation. Even when the disclosure is not impliedly authorized, paragraph (b)(3) permits such disclosure because of the importance of a lawyer's compliance with the Rules of Professional Conduct.

[11] Where a legal claim or disciplinary charge alleges complicity of the lawyer in a client's conduct or other misconduct of the lawyer involving representation of the client, the lawyer may respond to the extent the lawyer reasonably believes necessary to establish a defense. The same is true with respect to a claim involving the conduct or representation of a former client. Such a charge can arise in a civil, criminal, disciplinary, or other proceeding and can be based on a wrong allegedly committed by the lawyer against the client or on a wrong alleged by a third person, for example, a person claiming to have been defrauded by the lawyer and client acting together. The lawyer's right to respond arises when an assertion of such complicity has been made. Paragraph (b)(4) does not require the lawyer to await the commencement of an action or proceeding that charges such complicity, so that the defense may be established by responding directly to a third party who has made such

*an assertion. The right to defend also applies, of course, where a proceeding has been commenced.*

*[12] A lawyer entitled to a fee is permitted by paragraph (b)(4) to prove the services rendered in an action to collect it. This aspect of the Rule expresses the principle that the beneficiary of a fiduciary relationship may not exploit it to the detriment of the fiduciary.*

*[13] Other law may require that a lawyer disclose information about a client. Whether such a law supersedes Rule 1.6 is a question of law beyond the scope of these Rules. When disclosure of information relating to the representation appears to be required by other law, the lawyer must discuss the matter with the client to the extent required by Rule 1.4 of these Rules. If, however, the other law supersedes this Rule and requires disclosure, paragraph (b)(7) permits the lawyer to make such disclosures as are necessary to comply with the law.*

*[14] A lawyer may be ordered to reveal information relating to the representation of a client by a court or by another tribunal or governmental entity claiming authority pursuant to other law to compel the disclosure. Absent consent of the client, after consultation, to do otherwise, the lawyer should assert on behalf of the client all nonfrivolous claims that the order is not authorized by other law or that the information sought is protected against disclosure by the client-lawyer privilege. The client-lawyer privilege is differently defined in various jurisdictions. If a lawyer is called as a witness to give testimony concerning a client, absent waiver by the client, Rule 1.6(a) requires the lawyer to invoke the privilege when it is applicable. Under Rule 1.6(b)(7), the lawyer must comply with the final orders of a court or other tribunal of competent jurisdiction requiring the lawyer to give information about the client.*

*[15] Paragraph (b) permits, and paragraph (c) requires, disclosure only to the extent the lawyer reasonably believes the*

*disclosure is necessary to accomplish one of the purposes specified. Where practicable, the lawyer should first seek to persuade the client to take suitable action to obviate the need for disclosure. In any case, a disclosure adverse to the client's interest should be no greater than the lawyer reasonably believes necessary to accomplish the purpose. If the disclosure will be made in connection with a judicial proceeding, the disclosure should be made in a manner that limits access to the information to the tribunal or other persons having a need to know it and appropriate protective orders or other arrangements should be sought by the lawyer to the fullest extent practicable.*

*[16] Paragraph (b) permits, but does not require, the disclosure of information relating to a client's representation if the lawyer reasonably believes the disclosure is necessary to accomplish the purposes specified in paragraphs (b)(1) through (b)(7). In exercising the discretion conferred by this Rule, the lawyer may consider such factors as the nature of the lawyer's own involvement in the transaction and factors that may mitigate or partially excuse the conduct in question. A lawyer's decision not to disclose the information, as permitted by the discretion provided in paragraph (b), does not violate this Rule. Disclosure may be required, however, by other Rules. For example, some Rules require disclosure if such disclosure would be permitted by paragraph (b). See Rules 4.1(b), 8.1 and 8.3(c) of these Rules. Rule 3.3, on the other hand, requires disclosure in some circumstances regardless of whether such disclosure is permitted by this Rule. See Rule 3.3(b) of these Rules.*

#### **Withdrawal**

*[17] If the lawyer's services will be used by the client in materially furthering a course of criminal or fraudulent conduct, the lawyer must withdraw, as stated in Rule 1.16(a)(1) of these Rules. Furthermore, neither this Rule nor Rule 1.8(b) nor Rule 1.16(d) prevent the lawyer from giving*

notice of the fact of withdrawal, and the lawyer may also withdraw or disaffirm any opinion, document, affirmation, or the like.

**Acting Competently to Preserve Confidentiality**

[18] A lawyer must act competently to safeguard information relating to the representation of a client against inadvertent or unauthorized disclosure by the lawyer or other persons who are participating in the representation of the client or who are subject to the lawyer's supervision. See Rules 1.1, 5.1 and 5.3 of these Rules.

[19] When transmitting a communication that includes information relating to the representation of a client, the lawyer must take reasonable precautions to prevent the information from coming into the hands of unintended recipients. This duty, however, does not require that the lawyer use special security measures if the method of communication affords a reasonable expectation of privacy. Special circumstances may warrant special precautions. Factors to be considered in determining the reasonableness of the lawyer's expectation of the recipient maintaining confidentiality include the sensitivity of the information and the extent to which the privacy of the communication is protected by law or by a confidentiality agreement. A client may require the lawyer to implement reasonable additional security measures not required by this Rule, the cost for which would be borne as determined by agreement between the client and the attorney. The client may also give consent, after consultation, to the use of a means of communication that would otherwise be prohibited by the Rule.

**Former Client**

[20] The duty of confidentiality continues after the client-lawyer relationship has terminated. See Rule 1.9(c)(2) of these Rules. See Rule 1.9(c)(1) for the prohibition against using such information to the disadvantage of the former client.

**Organization as Client**

[21] Where the client is an organization, the disclosures in this Rule work in conjunction with Rule 1.13 of these Rules.

**Rule 1.7. CONFLICT OF INTEREST: GENERAL RULE.**

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b), a lawyer shall not represent a client if the representation involves a concurrent conflict of interest. A concurrent conflict of interest exists if:

(1) the representation of one client will be directly adverse to another client; or

(2) there is a significant risk that the representation of one or more clients will be materially limited by the lawyer's responsibilities to another client, a former client, or a third person, or by a personal interest of the lawyer.

(b) Notwithstanding the existence of a concurrent conflict of interest under paragraph (a), a lawyer may represent a client if:

(1) the lawyer reasonably believes that the lawyer will be able to provide competent and diligent representation to each affected client;

(2) the representation is not prohibited by law;

(3) the representation does not involve the assertion of a claim by one client against another client represented by the lawyer in the same litigation or other proceeding before a tribunal; and

(4) each affected client gives consent after consultation, confirmed in writing.

(c) When representation of multiple clients in a single matter is contemplated, the consultation shall include explanation of the implications of the common representations, including both the advantages and the risks involved.

**COMMENTS:**

**General Principles**

[1] Loyalty and independent judgment are essential elements in the lawyer's relationship to a client. Concurrent conflicts of interest can arise when the lawyer's responsibilities to another client, a former client or a third person diverge from the lawyer's own interests. For the specific Rule regarding certain concurrent conflicts of interest, see Rule 1.8 of these Rules. For

former client conflicts of interest, see Rule 1.9. For conflicts of interest involving prospective clients, see Rule 1.18. For definitions of “consult” or “consulting,” and “confirmed in writing,” see Rule 1.0(c) and (b).

[2] Resolution of a conflict of interest problem under this Rule requires the lawyer to: 1) clearly identify the client or clients; 2) determine whether a conflict of interest exists; 3) decide whether the representation may be undertaken despite the existence of a conflict, i.e., whether steps can be taken that will allow the lawyer to remain loyal and independent with all clients, despite the conflict; and 4) if so, consult with the clients affected under paragraph (a) and obtain their consent after consultation, confirmed in writing. The clients affected under paragraph (a) include both of the clients referred to in paragraph (a)(1) and the one or more clients whose representation might be materially limited under paragraph (a)(2).

[3] A conflict of interest may exist before representation is undertaken, in which event the representation must be declined, unless the lawyer obtains the consent of each client after consultation, under the conditions of paragraph (b). To determine whether a conflict of interest exists, a lawyer should adopt reasonable procedures, appropriate for the size and type of firm and practice, to determine in both litigation and non-litigation matters the persons and issues involved. See also Comments [3] and [4] on Rule 5.1 of these Rules. Ignorance caused by a failure to institute such procedures will not excuse a lawyer’s violation of this Rule. As to whether a client-lawyer relationship exists or, having once been established, is continuing, see Comment [4] to Rule 1.3 and Scope.

[4] If a conflict arises after representation has been undertaken, the lawyer ordinarily must withdraw from the representation, unless the lawyer has obtained the consent of the client after

consultation, under the conditions of paragraph (b). See Rule 1.16 of these Rules. Where more than one client is involved, whether the lawyer may continue to represent any of the clients is determined both by the lawyer’s ability to comply with duties owed to the former client and by the lawyer’s ability to represent adequately the remaining client or clients, given the lawyer’s duties to the former client. See Rule 1.9 of these Rules. See also Comments [5] and [29] of this Rule.

[5] Unforeseeable developments, such as changes in corporate and other organizational affiliations or the addition or realignment of parties in litigation, might create conflicts in the midst of representation, as when a company sued by the lawyer on behalf of one client is bought by another client represented by the lawyer in an unrelated matter. Depending on the circumstances, the lawyer may have the option to withdraw from one of the representations in order to avoid the conflict. The lawyer must seek court approval where necessary and take steps to minimize harm to the clients. See Rule 1.16 of these Rules. The lawyer must continue to protect the confidences of the client from whose representation the lawyer has withdrawn. See Rule 1.9(c).

#### **Identifying Conflicts of Interest: Directly Adverse**

[6] Loyalty to a current client prohibits undertaking representation directly adverse to that client without that client’s consent after consultation. Thus, absent consent, a lawyer may not act as an advocate in one matter against a person the lawyer represents in some other matter, even when the matters are wholly unrelated. The client as to whom the representation is directly adverse is likely to feel betrayed, and the resulting damage to the client-lawyer relationship is likely to impair the lawyer’s ability to represent the client effectively. In addition, the client on whose behalf the adverse representation is

*undertaken reasonably may fear that the lawyer will pursue that client's case less effectively out of deference to the other client, i.e., that the representation may be materially limited by the lawyer's interest in retaining the current client. Similarly, a directly adverse conflict may arise when a lawyer is required to cross-examine a client who appears as a witness in a lawsuit involving another client, as when the testimony will be damaging to the client who is represented in the lawsuit. On the other hand, simultaneous representation in unrelated matters of clients whose interests are only economically adverse, such as representation of competing economic enterprises in unrelated litigation, does not ordinarily constitute a conflict of interest and thus may not require consent of the respective clients.*

*[7] Directly adverse conflicts can also arise in transactional matters. For example, if a lawyer is asked to represent the seller of a business in negotiations with a buyer represented by the lawyer, not in the same transaction but in another, unrelated matter, the lawyer could not undertake the representation without the consent of each client after consultation.*

***Identifying Conflicts of Interest: Material Limitation***

*[8] Even where there is no direct adversity of interest, a conflict of interest exists if there is a significant risk that a lawyer's ability to consider, recommend, or carry out an appropriate course of action for the client will be materially limited as a result of the lawyer's other responsibilities or interests. For example, a lawyer asked to represent several individuals seeking to form a joint venture is likely to be materially limited in the lawyer's ability to recommend or advocate all possible positions that each might take because of the lawyer's duty of loyalty to the others. The conflict in effect forecloses alternatives that would otherwise be available to the client. The mere possibility of subsequent harm does not itself*

*require disclosure and consent. The critical questions are the likelihood that a difference in interests will arise and, if it does, whether it will materially interfere with the lawyer's independent professional judgment in considering alternatives or foreclose courses of action that reasonably should be pursued on behalf of the client.*

***Lawyer's Responsibilities to Former Clients and Other Third Persons***

*[9] In addition to conflicts with other current clients, a lawyer's duties of loyalty and independence may be materially limited by responsibilities to former clients under Rule 1.9 of these Rules or by the lawyer's responsibilities to other persons, such as fiduciary duties arising from a lawyer's service as a trustee, executor, or corporate director.*

***Personal Interest Conflicts***

*[10] The lawyer's own interests should not be permitted to have an adverse effect on representation of a client. For example, if the probity of a lawyer's own conduct in a transaction is in serious question, it may be difficult or impossible for the lawyer to give a client detached advice. Similarly, when a lawyer has discussions concerning possible employment with an opponent of the lawyer's client, or with a law firm representing the opponent, such discussions could materially limit the lawyer's representation of the client. In addition, a lawyer may not allow related business interests to affect representation, for example, by referring clients to an enterprise in which the lawyer has an undisclosed financial interest. See Rule 1.8 for specific Rules pertaining to a number of personal interest conflicts, including business transactions with clients. See also Rule 1.10 (personal interest conflicts under Rule 1.7 ordinarily are not imputed to other lawyers in a law firm).*

*[11] When lawyers representing different clients in the same matter or in substantially related matters are closely*

*related by blood or marriage, there is a significant risk that client confidences will be revealed and that the lawyer's family relationship will interfere with both loyalty and independent professional judgment. As a result, each client is entitled to know of the existence and implications of the relationship between the lawyers before the client agrees to representation by the lawyer. Thus, lawyer X, related to lawyer, Y, e.g., as parent, child, sibling or spouse, ordinarily may not represent a client in a matter where lawyer Y is representing another party in that matter, unless each client gives consent after consultation. The disqualification arising from a close family relationship is personal and ordinarily is not imputed to members of firms with whom the lawyers are associated. See Rule 1.8(k) of these Rules and Comment [20] to Rule 1.8.*

*[12] A lawyer is prohibited from engaging in a sexual relationship with a client unless the sexual relationship predates the formation of the client-lawyer relationship.*

#### ***Interest of Person Paying for a Lawyer's Service***

*[13] A lawyer may be paid from a source other than the client, including a co-client, if the client is informed of that fact and consents, and the arrangement does not compromise the lawyer's duty of loyalty or independent judgment to the client. See Rule 1.8(f) of these Rules. For example, when an insurer and its insured have conflicting interests in a matter arising from a liability insurance agreement, and the insurer is required to provide special counsel for the insured, the arrangement should assure the special counsel's professional independence. If acceptance of the payment from any other source presents a significant risk that the lawyer's representation of the client will be materially limited by the lawyer's own interest in accommodating the person paying the lawyer's fee or by the lawyer's responsibilities to a payer who is also a co-client, then the lawyer must comply with the*

*requirements of paragraph (b) before accepting the representation, including determining whether the conflict can reasonably be consented to and, if so, that the client has adequate information about the material risks of the representation.*

#### ***Prohibited Representations***

*[14] Ordinarily, clients may consent to representation notwithstanding a conflict. However, as indicated in paragraph (b), some conflicts make representation impossible, regardless of a client's willingness to consent. In such situations, the conflict cannot reasonably be consented to because the lawyer involved cannot reasonably ask the client for consent and cannot provide independent, objective representation even if the client were to consent. See Comment [15] to Rule 1.7. When the lawyer is representing more than one client, the question of whether reasonable consent is possible must be resolved as to each client.*

*[15] The question of whether a perceived conflict of interest can reasonably be consented to is typically determined by considering whether the interests of the clients will be adequately protected if the clients are permitted to give their consent, after consultation, to representation burdened by a conflict of interest. Under paragraph (b)(1), the representation is prohibited if in the circumstances the lawyer cannot reasonably conclude that the lawyer will be able to provide competent and diligent representation. See Rule 1.1 (competence) and Rule 1.3 (diligence) of these Rules. When a disinterested lawyer would conclude that the client should not agree to the representation under the circumstances, the lawyer involved cannot properly ask for such agreement or provide representation on the basis of the client's consent. Resolving questions of conflict of interest is primarily the responsibility of the lawyer undertaking the representation. In litigation, a court may raise the question when there is reason to infer that the*

lawyer has neglected the responsibility. In a criminal case, inquiry by the court is generally required when a lawyer represents multiple defendants. Where the conflict is such that it clearly calls into question the fair or efficient administration of justice, opposing counsel may properly raise the question. Such an objection should be viewed with caution, however, for it can be misused as a technique of harassment.

[16] Paragraph (b)(2) describes conflicts that cannot be cured by consent of the client, because the representation is prohibited by applicable law. For example, in some states substantive law provides that the same lawyer may not represent more than one defendant in a capital case, even with the consent of the clients, and under federal criminal statutes certain representations by a former government lawyer are prohibited, despite the consent of the former client after consultation. In addition, decisional law in some states limits the ability of a governmental client, such as a municipality, to consent to a conflict of interest.

[17] Paragraph (b)(3) describes conflicts that cannot be cured by securing the consent of the client or clients after consultation, because of the institutional interest in vigorous development of each client's position when the clients are aligned directly against each other in the same litigation or other proceeding before a tribunal. Whether clients are aligned directly against each other within the meaning of this paragraph requires examination of the context of the proceeding. Although this paragraph does not preclude a lawyer's multiple representation of adverse parties to a mediation (because mediation is not a proceeding before a "tribunal" under Rule 1.0(n)), such representation may be precluded by paragraph (b)(1).

#### **Valid Consent**

[18] Valid client consent requires that each affected client be aware of the relevant

circumstances and of the material and reasonably foreseeable ways that the conflict could have adverse effects on the interests of that client. See Rule 1.0(c) of these Rules (defining what valid consultation consists of). The information required depends on the nature of the conflict and the nature of the risks involved. The process of obtaining valid consent in some instances will require a recommendation to consult independent counsel. When representation of multiple clients in a single matter is undertaken, the information must include the implications of the common representation, including possible effects on loyalty, confidentiality, and the client-lawyer privilege and the advantages and risks involved. See Comments [30] and [31] (effect of common representation on confidentiality).

[19] Under some circumstances it may be impossible to make the disclosure necessary to obtain consent. For example, when the lawyer represents different clients in related matters and one of the clients refuses to consent to the disclosure necessary to permit the other client to make an informed decision, the lawyer cannot properly ask the latter to consent. In some cases the alternative to common representation can be that each party may have to obtain separate representation with the possibility of incurring additional costs. These costs, along with the benefits of securing separate representation, are factors that may be considered by the affected client in determining whether common representation is in the client's interests.

#### **Consent Confirmed in Writing**

[20] Paragraph (b) requires the lawyer to obtain consent of the client after proper consultation and to confirm the consent in writing. Such a writing may consist of a document executed by the client or one that the lawyer promptly records and transmits to the client following an oral consent. See Rule 1.0(b) of these Rules. See

*also Rule 1.0(o) (writing includes electronic transmissions). If it is not feasible to obtain or transmit the writing at the time the client gives consent, then the lawyer must obtain or transmit it within a reasonable time thereafter. See Rule 1.0(b). The requirement of a writing does not supplant the need in most cases for the lawyer to talk with the client, to explain the risks and advantages, if any, of representation burdened with a conflict of interest, as well as reasonably available alternatives, and to afford the client a reasonable opportunity to consider the risks and alternatives and to raise questions and concerns. Rather, the writing is required in order to impress upon clients the seriousness of the decision the client is being asked to make and to avoid disputes or ambiguities that might later occur in the absence of a writing.*

#### **Revoking Consent**

*[21] A client who has given consent to a conflict may revoke the consent and, like any other client, may terminate the lawyer's representation at any time. Whether revoking consent to the client's own representation precludes the lawyer from continuing to represent other clients depends on the circumstances, including the nature of the conflict, whether the client revoked consent because of a material change in the circumstances, the reasonable expectations of the other client, and whether material detriment to the other clients or the lawyer would result.*

#### **Consent to Future Conflict**

*[22] Whether a lawyer may properly request a client to waive conflicts that might arise in the future is subject to the test of paragraph (b). The effectiveness of such waivers is generally determined by the extent to which the client reasonably understands the material risks that the waiver entails. The more comprehensive the explanation of the types of future representations that might arise and the actual and reasonably foreseeable adverse consequences of those*

*representations, the greater the likelihood that the client will have the requisite understanding. Thus, if the client agrees to consent to a particular type of conflict with which the client is already familiar, then the consent ordinarily will be effective with regard to that type of conflict. If the consent is general and open-ended, then the consent ordinarily will be ineffective, because it is not reasonably likely that the client will have understood the material risks involved. In any case, advanced consent cannot be effective if the circumstances that materialize in the future are such as would make it unreasonable under paragraph (b) for the lawyer to seek consent.*

#### **Conflicts in Litigation**

*[23] Paragraph (b)(3) prohibits representation of opposing parties in the same litigation, regardless of the client's consent. On the other hand, simultaneous representation of parties whose interests in litigation may conflict, such as co-plaintiffs or co-defendants, is governed by paragraph (a)(2). A conflict may exist by reason of substantial discrepancy in the parties' testimony, incompatibility in positions in relation to an opposing party, or the fact that there are substantially different possibilities of settlement of the claims or liabilities in question. Such conflicts can arise in criminal cases as well as civil. The potential for conflicts of interest in representing multiple defendants in a criminal case are so grave that ordinarily a lawyer should decline to represent more than one co-defendant. On the other hand, common representation of persons having similar interests in civil litigation is proper if the requirements of paragraph (b) are met.*

*[24] Ordinarily a lawyer may take inconsistent legal positions in different tribunals at different times on behalf of different clients. The mere fact that advocating a legal position on behalf of one client might create precedent adverse to the interests of a client represented by the lawyer in an unrelated matter does not*

create a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest exists, however, if there is a significant risk that a lawyer's action on behalf of one client will materially limit the lawyer's effectiveness in representing another client in a different case, for example, when a decision favoring one client will create a precedent likely to seriously weaken the position taken on behalf of the other client. Factors relevant in determining whether the clients need to be advised of the risk include: where the cases are pending, whether the issue is substantive or procedural, the temporal relationship between the matters, the significance of the issue to the immediate and long-term interests of the clients involved and the clients' reasonable expectations in retaining the lawyer. If there is significant risk of material limitation, then absent consent by the affected clients after consultation, the lawyer must refuse one of the representations or withdraw from one or both matters.

[25] When a lawyer represents or seeks to represent a class of plaintiffs or defendants in a class-action lawsuit, unnamed members of the class are ordinarily not considered to be clients of the lawyer for purposes of applying paragraph (1) of this Rule. Thus, the lawyer does not typically need to get the consent of such a person before representing a client suing the person in an unrelated matter. Similarly, a lawyer seeking to represent an opponent in a class action does not typically need the consent of an unnamed member of the class whom the lawyer represents in an unrelated matter.

#### **Nonlitigation Conflicts**

[26] Conflicts of interest under paragraphs (a)(1) and (a)(2) arise in contexts other than litigation. For a discussion of directly adverse conflicts in transactional matters, see Comment [7]. Relevant factors in determining whether there is significant potential for material limitation include the duration and intimacy of the lawyer's relationship with the client or

clients involved, the functions being performed by the lawyer, the likelihood that disagreements will arise, and the likely prejudice to the client from the conflict. The question is often one of proximity and degree. See Comment [8].

[27] For example, conflict questions may arise in estate planning and estate administration. A lawyer may be called upon to prepare wills for several family members, such as husband and wife, and, depending upon the circumstances, a conflict of interest may be present. In order to comply with conflict of interest Rules, the lawyer should make clear the lawyer's relationship to the parties involved.

[28] A lawyer may not represent multiple parties to a negotiation whose interests are fundamentally antagonistic to each other, but common representation is permissible where the clients are generally aligned in interest. In an effective multiple representation, the lawyer seeks to resolve potentially adverse interests by developing the parties' mutual interests, in order to avoid obligating the clients to obtain separate representation and incurring the resulting additional costs.

#### **Special Considerations in Common Representation**

[29] In considering whether to represent multiple clients in the same matter, a lawyer should be mindful that if the common representation fails because the potentially adverse interests cannot be reconciled, the result can be additional cost, embarrassment, and recrimination. Ordinarily, the lawyer will be forced to withdraw from representing all of the clients if the common representation fails. In some situations, the risk of failure is so great that multiple representation is plainly impossible. For example, a lawyer cannot undertake common representation of clients where contentious litigation or negotiations between them are imminent or contemplated. Moreover, because the lawyer is required to be impartial between commonly represented

*clients, representation of multiple clients is improper when it is unlikely that impartiality can be maintained. Generally, if the relationship between the parties has already assumed antagonism, the possibility that the clients' interests can be adequately served by common representation is not very good. Other relevant factors are whether the lawyer subsequently will represent both parties on a continuing basis and whether the situation involves creating or terminating a relationship between the parties.*

*[30] A particularly important factor in determining the appropriateness of common representation is the effect of such representation on client-lawyer confidentiality and the client-lawyer privilege. The prevailing Rule is that, between commonly represented clients, the privilege of client-lawyer confidentiality does not attach. Hence, it must be assumed that if litigation does arise between the clients, the privilege will not protect any previous communications with the lawyer. Clients should be so advised before being asked to consent to common representation.*

*[31] As to the duty of confidentiality, continued common representation will almost certainly be inadequate if one client asks the lawyer not to disclose to the other client information relevant to the common representation. This is so because the lawyer has an equal duty of loyalty to each client, and each client has the right to be informed of anything bearing on the representation that might affect that client's interests and the right to expect that the lawyer will use that information to that client's benefit. See Rule 1.4 of these Rules. The lawyer should, at the outset of the common representation and as part of the process of obtaining each client's valid consent after consultation, advise each client that information will be shared and that the lawyer will have to withdraw if one client decides that some matter material to the representation should be kept from the other. In limited circumstances, it may be*

*appropriate for the lawyer to proceed with the representation when the clients have agreed, after being properly informed, that the lawyer will keep certain information confidential. For example, the lawyer may reasonably conclude that the failure to disclose one client's trade secrets to another client will not adversely affect representation involving a joint venture between the clients and agree to keep that information confidential with the valid consent, after consultation, of both clients.*

*[32] When seeking to establish or adjust a relationship between the clients, the lawyer should make clear that the lawyer's role is not that of partisanship normally expected in other circumstances and, thus, that the clients may be required to assume greater responsibility for decisions than when each client is separately represented. Any limitations on the scope of the representation made necessary as a result of the common representation should be fully explained to the clients at the outset of the representation. See Rule 1.2(c) of these Rules.*

*[33] Subject to the above limitations, each client in the common representation has the right to loyal and diligent representation and the protection of Rule 1.9 concerning the obligations to a former client. The client also has the right to discharge the lawyer as stated in Rule 1.16 of these Rules.*

#### **Organizational Clients**

*[34] A lawyer who represents a corporation or other organization does not, by virtue of that representation, necessarily represent any constituent or affiliated organization, such as a parent or a subsidiary. See Rule 1.13(a) of these Rules. Thus, the lawyer for an organization is not barred from accepting representation adverse to an affiliate in an unrelated matter, unless the circumstances are such that the affiliate should also be considered a client of the lawyer, there is an understanding between the lawyer and the*

*organizational client that the lawyer will avoid representation adverse to the client's affiliates, or the lawyer's obligations to either the organizational client or the new client are likely to limit materially the lawyer's representation of the other client.*

*[35] A lawyer for a corporation or other organization who is also a member of its board of directors should determine whether the responsibilities of the two roles may conflict. The lawyer may be called upon to advise the corporation in matters involving actions of the directors. Consideration should be given to the frequency with which such situations may arise, the potential intensity of the conflict, the effect of the lawyer's resignation from the board, and the possibility of the corporation's obtaining legal advice from another lawyer in such situations. If there is material risk that the dual role will compromise the lawyer's independence of professional judgment, the lawyer should not serve as a director or should cease to act as the corporation's lawyer when conflicts of interest arise. The lawyer should advise the other members of the board that in some circumstances matters discussed at board meetings while the lawyer is present in the capacity of director might not be protected by the client-lawyer privilege and that conflict of interest considerations might require the lawyer's recusal as a director or might require the lawyer and the lawyer's firm to decline representation of the corporation in a matter.*

**Rule 1.8. CONFLICT OF INTEREST: PROHIBITED TRANSACTIONS.**

(a) A lawyer shall not enter into a business transaction with a client or knowingly acquire an ownership, possessory, security or other pecuniary interest adverse to a client unless:

(1) the transaction and terms on which the lawyer acquires the interest are fair and reasonable to the client and are fully disclosed and transmitted in writing in a manner which can be reasonably understood by the client;

(2) the client is advised in writing of the desirability of seeking and is given a reasonable opportunity to seek the advice of independent legal counsel in the transaction; and

(3) the client consents in writing to the essential terms of the transaction and the lawyer's role in the transaction, including whether the lawyer is representing the client in the transaction.

(b) A lawyer shall not use information relating to representation of a client to the disadvantage of the client unless the client consents after consultation, except as permitted or required by these Rules.

(c) A lawyer shall not solicit any substantial gift from a client, including a testamentary gift, or prepare on behalf of a client an instrument giving the lawyer or a person related to the lawyer any substantial gift unless the lawyer or other recipient of the gift is related to the client. For purposes of this paragraph, related persons include a spouse, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent, or other relative or individual with whom the lawyer or the client maintains a close, familial relationship.

(d) Prior to the conclusion of representation of a client, a lawyer shall not make or negotiate an agreement giving the lawyer literary or media rights to a portrayal or account based in substantial part on information relating to the representation.

(e) A lawyer shall not provide financial assistance to a client in connection with pending or contemplated litigation, except that:

(1) a lawyer may advance court costs and expenses of litigation, the repayment of which may be contingent on the outcome of the matter; and

(2) a lawyer representing an indigent client may pay court costs and expenses of litigation on behalf of the client.

(f) A lawyer shall not accept compensation for representing a client from one other than the client unless:

(1) the client consents after consultation;

(2) there is no interference with the lawyer's independence of professional judgment or with the client-lawyer relationship; and

(3) information relating to representation of a client is protected as required by Rule 1.6.

(g) A lawyer who represents two or more clients shall not participate in making an aggregate settlement of the claims of or against the clients, or in a criminal case an aggregated agreement as to guilty or nolo contendere pleas, unless each client consents in a writing signed by the client after consultation. The lawyer's disclosure shall include the existence and nature of all the claims or pleas involved and of the participation of each person in the settlement.

(h) A lawyer shall not:

(1) make an agreement prospectively limiting the lawyer's liability to a client for malpractice; or

(2) settle a claim or potential claim for such liability with an unrepresented client or former client unless that person is advised in writing of the desirability of seeking and is given a reasonable opportunity to seek the advice of independent legal counsel in connection therewith.

(i) A lawyer shall not acquire a proprietary interest in the cause of action or subject matter of litigation the lawyer is conducting for a client, except that the lawyer may:

(1) acquire a lien authorized by law to secure the lawyer's fee or expenses; and

(2) contract with a client for a reasonable contingent fee in a civil case.

(j) A lawyer shall not have sexual relations with a client unless a consensual sexual relationship existed between them when the client-lawyer relationship commenced.

(k) A lawyer related to another lawyer as parent, child, sibling, domestic partner or spouse shall not represent a client in a representation directly adverse to a person who the lawyer knows is represented by the other lawyer except upon consent by the client after consultation regarding the relationship.

(l) While lawyers are associated in a firm, a prohibition in the foregoing paragraphs (a) through (i) that applies to any one of them shall apply to all of them.

**COMMENTS:**

***Business Transactions Between Client and Lawyer***

[1] *A lawyer's legal skill and training, together with the relationship of trust and confidence between the lawyer and client, create the possibility of overreaching*

*when the lawyer participates in a business, property, or financial transaction with a client, for example a loan or sales transaction or a lawyer investment on behalf of a client. The requirements of paragraph (a) must be met even when the transaction is not closely related to the subject matter of the representation, as when a lawyer drafting a will for a client learns that the client needs money for unrelated expenses and offers to make a loan to the client. It also applies to lawyers purchasing property from estates they represent. It does not apply to ordinary fee arrangements between client and lawyer, which are governed by Rule 1.5, although its requirements must be met when the lawyer accepts an interest in the client's business or other nonmonetary property as payment of all or part of a fee. In addition, the Rule does not apply to standard commercial transactions between the lawyer and the client for products or services that the client generally markets to others, for example, banking or brokerage services, medical services, products manufactured or distributed by the client, and utility services. In such transactions, the lawyer has no advantage in dealing with the client, and the restrictions in paragraph (a) are unnecessary and impracticable.*

[2] *Paragraph (a)(1) requires that the transaction itself be fair to the client and that its essential terms be communicated to the client, in writing, in a manner that can be reasonably understood. Paragraph (a)(2) requires that the client also be advised, in writing, of the desirability of seeking the advice of independent legal counsel. It also requires that the client be given a reasonable opportunity to obtain such advice. Paragraph (a)(3) requires that the lawyer obtain the client's valid consent following consultation, in a writing signed by the client, both to the essential terms of the transaction and to the lawyer's role. When necessary, the lawyer should discuss both the material risks of the proposed transaction, including any risk presented by the lawyer's involvement, and the existence*

*of reasonably available alternatives, and should explain why the advice of independent legal counsel is desirable. See Rule 1.0(c) of these Rules (definition of consultation).*

*[3] The risk to a client is greatest when the client expects the lawyer to represent the client in the transaction itself or when the lawyer's financial interests otherwise pose a significant risk that the lawyer's representation of the client will be materially limited by the lawyer's financial interest in the transaction. Here the lawyer's role requires that the lawyer must comply not only with the requirements of paragraph (a), but also with the requirements of Rule 1.7. Under that Rule, the lawyer must disclose the risks associated with the lawyer's dual role as both legal adviser and participant in the transaction, such as the risk that the lawyer will structure the transaction or give legal advice in a way that favors the lawyer's interests at the expense of the client. Moreover, the lawyer must obtain the client's valid consent after consultation. In some cases, the lawyer's interest may be such that Rule 1.7 will preclude the lawyer from seeking the client's consent to the transaction.*

*[4] If the client is independently represented in the transaction, paragraph (a)(2) of this Rule is inapplicable, and the paragraph (a)(1) requirement for full disclosure is satisfied either by a written disclosure by the lawyer involved in the transaction or by the client's independent counsel. The fact that the client was independently represented in the transaction is relevant in determining whether the agreement was fair and reasonable to the client as paragraph (a)(1) further requires.*

*[5] Use of information relating to the representation to the disadvantage of the client violates the lawyer's duty of loyalty. Paragraph (b) applies when the information is used to benefit either the lawyer or a third person, such as another client or business associate of the lawyer. For example, if a lawyer learns that a client intends to*

*purchase and develop several parcels of land, the lawyer may not use that information to purchase one of the parcels in competition with the client or to recommend that another client make such a purchase. The Rule does not prohibit uses that do not disadvantage the client. For example, the lawyer who learns a government agency's interpretation of trade legislation during the representation of one client may properly use that information to benefit other clients. Paragraph (b) prohibits disadvantageous use of client information unless the client gives valid consent after consultation, except as permitted or required by these Rules. See Rules 1.2(d), 1.6, 1.9(c), 3.3, 4.1(b), 8.1, and 8.3.*

#### **Gifts to Lawyers**

*[6] A lawyer may accept a gift from a client, if the transaction meets general standards of fairness. For example, a simple gift such as a present given at a holiday or as a token of appreciation is permitted. If a client offers the lawyer a more substantial gift, paragraph (c) does not prohibit the lawyer from accepting it, although such a gift may be voidable by the client under the doctrine of undue influence, which treats client gifts as presumptively fraudulent. In any event, due to concerns about overreaching and imposition on clients, a lawyer may not suggest that a substantial gift be made to the lawyer or for the lawyer's benefit, except where the lawyer is related to the client as set forth in paragraph (c).*

*[7] If effectuation of a substantial gift requires preparing a legal instrument such as a will or conveyance the client should have the detached advice that another lawyer can provide. The sole exception to this Rule is where the client is a relative of the donee.*

[8] This Rule does not prohibit a lawyer from seeking to have the lawyer or a partner or associate of the lawyer named as executor of the client's estate or to another potentially lucrative fiduciary position. Nevertheless, such appointments will be subject to the general conflict of interest provision in Rule 1.7 of these Rules when there is a significant risk that the lawyer's interest in obtaining the appointment will materially limit the lawyer's independent professional judgment in advising the client concerning the choice of an executor or other fiduciary. In obtaining the client's valid consent to the conflict, after consultation, the lawyer should advise the client concerning the nature and extent of the lawyer's financial interest in the appointment, as well as the availability of alternative candidates for the position. See Rule 3 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai'i, governing an attorney's fiduciary duties to the client.

#### **Literary Rights**

[9] An agreement by which a lawyer acquires literary or media rights concerning the conduct of the representation creates a conflict of interest between the interests of the client and the personal interests of the lawyer. Measures suitable in the representation of the client may detract from the publication value of an account of the representation. Paragraph (d) does not prohibit a lawyer representing a client in a transaction concerning literary property from agreeing that the lawyer's fee shall consist of a share in ownership in the property, if the arrangement conforms to Rule 1.5 of these Rules and paragraphs (a) and (i) of this Rule.

#### **Financial Assistance**

[10] Lawyers may not subsidize lawsuits or administrative proceedings brought on behalf of their clients, including making or guaranteeing loans to their clients for living expenses, because to do so would encourage clients to pursue lawsuits that

might not otherwise be brought and because such assistance gives lawyers too great a financial stake in the litigation. These dangers do not warrant a prohibition on a lawyer lending a client court costs and litigation expenses, including the expenses of medical examination and the costs of obtaining and presenting evidence, because these advances are virtually indistinguishable from contingent fees and help ensure access to the courts. Similarly, an exception allowing lawyers representing indigent clients to pay court costs and litigation expenses regardless of whether these funds will be repaid is warranted.

#### **Person Paying for a Lawyer's Services**

[11] Lawyers are frequently asked to represent a client under circumstances in which a third person will compensate the lawyer, in whole or in part. The third person might be a relative or friend, an indemnitor (such as a liability insurance company), or a co-client (such as a corporation sued along with one or more of its employees). Because third-party payers frequently have interests that differ from those of the client, including interests in minimizing the amount spent on the representation and in learning how the representation is progressing, lawyers are prohibited from accepting or continuing such representations unless the lawyer determines that there will be no interference with the lawyer's independent professional judgment and there is consent after consultation from the client. See also Rule 5.4(c) of these Rules (prohibiting interference with a lawyer's professional judgment by one who recommends, employs, or pays the lawyer to render legal services for another).

[12] Sometimes it will be sufficient for the lawyer to obtain the client's valid consent after consultation regarding the fact of the payment and the identity of the third-party payer. If, however, the fee arrangement creates a conflict of interest for the lawyer, then the lawyer must comply

with Rule 1.7 of these Rules. The lawyer must also conform to the requirements of Rule 1.6 concerning confidentiality. Under Rule 1.7(a), a conflict of interest exists if there is significant risk that the lawyer's representation of the client will be materially limited by the lawyer's own interest in the fee arrangement or by the lawyer's responsibilities to the third-party payer (for example, when the third-party payer is a co-client). Under Rule 1.7(b), the lawyer may accept or continue the representation with the consent after consultation of each affected client, unless the conflict cannot reasonably be consented to under that paragraph. Under Rule 1.7(b), the consent must be confirmed in writing. Where the client is a class, consent may be obtained on behalf of the class by court-supervised procedure.

#### **Aggregate Settlements**

[13] Differences in willingness to make or accept an offer of settlement are among the risks of common representation of multiple clients by a single lawyer. Under Rule 1.7 of these Rules, this is one of the risks that should be discussed before undertaking the representation, as part of the process of obtaining the clients' consent after consultation. In addition, Rule 1.2(a) protects each client's right to have the final say in deciding whether to accept or reject an offer of settlement and in deciding whether to enter a guilty or nolo contendere plea in a criminal case. The Rule stated in this paragraph is a corollary of Rules 1.2(a) and 1.7 and provides that, before any settlement offer or plea bargain is made or accepted on behalf of multiple clients, the lawyer must inform each of them about all the material terms of the settlement, including what the other clients will receive or pay if the settlement or plea offer is accepted. See also Rule 1.0(c) of these Rules (definition of consultation). Lawyers representing a class of plaintiffs or defendants, or those proceeding derivatively, may not have a full client-lawyer

relationship with each member of the class; nevertheless, such lawyers must comply with applicable rules regulating notification of class members and other procedural requirements designed to ensure adequate protection of the entire class.

#### **Limiting Liability and Settling Malpractice Claims**

[14] Agreements prospectively limiting a lawyer's liability for malpractice are prohibited because they are likely to undermine competent and diligent representation. Also, many clients are unable to evaluate the desirability of making such an agreement before a dispute has arisen, particularly if they are then represented by the lawyer seeking the agreement. This paragraph does not, however, prohibit a lawyer from entering into an agreement with the client to arbitrate legal malpractice claims, provided such agreements are enforceable and the client is fully informed of the scope and effect of the agreement. Nor does this paragraph limit the ability of lawyers to practice in the form of a limited-liability entity, where permitted by law, provided that each lawyer remains personally liable to the client for his or her own conduct and the firm complies with any condition required by law, such as provisions requiring client notification or maintenance of adequate liability insurance. Nor does it prohibit an agreement in accordance with Rule 1.2 of these Rules that defines the scope of the representation, although a definition of scope that makes the obligations of representation illusory will amount to an attempt to limit liability.

[15] Agreements settling a claim or a potential claim for malpractice are not prohibited by this Rule. Nevertheless, in view of the danger that a lawyer will take unfair advantage of an unrepresented client or former client, the lawyer must first advise such a person in writing of the appropriateness of independent representation in connection with such a settlement. In addition, the lawyer must give

*the client or former client a reasonable opportunity to find and consult independent counsel.*

***Acquiring Proprietary Interest in Litigation***

*[16] Paragraph (i) states the traditional general rule that lawyers are prohibited from acquiring a proprietary interest in litigation. Like paragraph (e), the general rule has its basis in common law champerty and maintenance and is designed to avoid giving the lawyer too great an interest in the representation. In addition, when the lawyer acquires an ownership interest in the subject of the representation, it will be more difficult for a client to discharge the lawyer if the client so desires. The rule is subject to specific exceptions developed in decisional law and continued in these Rules. The exception for certain advances of the costs of litigation is set forth in paragraph (e). In addition, paragraph (i) sets forth exceptions for liens authorized by law to secure the lawyer's fees or expenses and contracts for reasonable contingent fees. The law of each jurisdiction determines which liens are authorized by law. These may include liens granted by statute, liens originating in common law, and liens acquired by contract with the client. A lawyer may not retain possession of client files and records in order to secure payment. When a lawyer acquires by contract a security interest in property other than that recovered through the lawyer's efforts in the litigation, such an acquisition is a business or financial transaction with a client and is governed by the requirements of paragraph (a). Contracts for contingent fees in civil cases are governed by Rule 1.5 of these Rules.*

***Client-lawyer Sexual Relationships***

*[17] The relationship between lawyer and client is a fiduciary one in which the lawyer occupies the highest position of trust and confidence. The relationship is almost always unequal; thus, a sexual relationship between lawyer and client can involve unfair*

*exploitation of the lawyer's fiduciary role, in violation of the lawyer's basic ethical obligation not to use the trust of the client to the client's disadvantage. In addition, such a relationship presents a significant danger that, because of the lawyer's emotional involvement, the lawyer will be unable to represent the client without impairment of the exercise of independent professional judgment. Moreover, a blurred line between the professional and personal relationships may make it difficult to predict to what extent client confidences will be protected by the client-lawyer evidentiary privilege, since client confidences are protected by privilege only when they are imparted in the context of the client-lawyer relationship. Because of the significant danger of harm to client interests and because the client's own emotional involvement renders it unlikely that the client could give adequate consent, this Rule prohibits the lawyer from having sexual relations with a client regardless of whether the relationship is consensual and regardless of the absence of prejudice to the client.*

*[18] Sexual relationships that predate the client-lawyer relationship are not prohibited. Issues relating to the exploitation of the fiduciary relationship and client dependency are diminished when the sexual relationship existed prior to the commencement of the client-lawyer relationship. However, before proceeding with the representation in these circumstances, the lawyer should consider whether the lawyer's ability to represent the client will be materially limited by the relationship. See Rule 1.7(a)(2) of these Rules.*

*[19] When the client is an organization, paragraph (j) of this Rule prohibits a lawyer for the organization (whether inside counsel or outside counsel) from having a sexual relationship with a constituent of the organization who supervises, directs, or regularly consults with that lawyer concerning the organization's legal matters.*

***Familial Conflicts of Interest***

*[20] Rule 1.8(k) applies to related lawyers who are in different firms. Related lawyers in the same firm are governed by Rules 1.7, 1.9, and 1.10 of these Rules. The disqualification stated in Rule 1.8(k) is personal and is not imputed to members of firms with whom the lawyers are associated.*

***Imputation of Prohibitions***

*[21] Under paragraph (l), a prohibition on conduct by an individual lawyer in paragraphs (a) through (i) also applies to all lawyers associated in a firm with the personally prohibited lawyer. For example, one lawyer in a firm may not enter into a business transaction with a client of another member of the firm without complying with paragraph (a), even if the first lawyer is not personally involved in the representation of the client. The prohibition set forth in paragraph (j) is personal and is not applied to associated lawyers.*

**Rule 1.9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST: FORMER CLIENT.**

(a) A lawyer who has formerly represented a client in a matter shall not thereafter represent another person in the same or a substantially related matter in which that person's interests are materially adverse to the interests of the former client unless the former client consents after consultation, and confirms in writing.

(b) A lawyer shall not knowingly represent a person in the same or a substantially related matter in which a firm with which the lawyer formerly was associated had previously represented a client

(1) whose interests are materially adverse to that person; and

(2) about whom the lawyer had acquired information protected by Rules 1.6 and 1.9(c) that is material to the matter; unless the former client consents after consultation, and confirms in writing.

(c) A lawyer who has formerly represented a client in a matter or whose present or former firm has formerly represented a client in a matter shall not thereafter:

(1) use information relating to the representation to the disadvantage of the former

client except as these Rules would permit or require with respect to a client, or when the information has become generally known; or

(2) reveal information relating to the representation except as these Rules would permit or require with respect to a client.

**COMMENTS:**

*[1] After termination of a client-lawyer relationship, a lawyer has certain continuing duties with respect to confidentiality and conflicts of interest and thus may not represent another client except in conformity with this Rule. Under this Rule, for example, a lawyer could not properly seek on behalf of a new client to rescind a contract drafted on behalf of the former client. So also a lawyer who has prosecuted an accused person could not properly represent the accused in a subsequent civil action against the government concerning the same transaction. Nor could a lawyer who has represented multiple clients in a matter represent one of the clients against the others in the same or substantially related matters after a dispute arose among the clients in that matter, unless all affected clients give consent after consultation. See Comment [9]. Current and former government lawyers must comply with this Rule to the extent required by Rule 1.11 of these Rules.*

*[2] The scope of a "matter" for purposes of this Rule depends on the facts of a particular situation or transaction. The lawyer's involvement in a matter can also be a question of degree. When a lawyer has been directly involved in a specific transaction, subsequent representation of other clients with materially adverse interests in that transaction clearly is prohibited. On the other hand, a lawyer who recurrently handled a type of problem for a former client is not precluded from later representing another client in a factually distinct problem of that type even though the subsequent representation involves a position adverse to the prior client. Similar*

*considerations can apply to the reassignment of military lawyers between defense and prosecution functions within the same military jurisdiction. The underlying question is whether the lawyer was so involved in the matter that the subsequent representation can be justly regarded as a changing of sides in the matter in question.*

*[3] Matters are “substantially related” for purposes of this Rule if they involve the same transaction or legal dispute or if there otherwise is a substantial risk that confidential factual information as would normally have been obtained in the prior representation would materially advance the client’s position in the subsequent matter. For example, a lawyer who has represented a businessperson and learned extensive private financial information about that person may not then represent that person’s spouse in seeking a divorce. Similarly, a lawyer who has previously represented a client in securing environmental permits to build a shopping center would be precluded from representing neighbors seeking to oppose rezoning of the property on the basis of environmental considerations; however, the lawyer would not be precluded, on the grounds of substantial relationship, from defending a tenant of the completed shopping center in resisting eviction for nonpayment of rent. Information that has been disclosed to the public or to other parties adverse to the former client ordinarily will not be disqualifying. Information acquired in a prior representation may have been rendered obsolete by the passage of time, a circumstance that may be relevant in determining whether two representations are substantially related. In the case of an organizational client, general knowledge of the client’s policies and practices ordinarily will not preclude a subsequent representation; on the other hand, knowledge of specific facts gained in a prior representation that are relevant to the matter in question ordinarily will preclude such a representation. A former client is not*

*required to reveal the confidential information learned by the lawyer in order to establish a substantial risk that the lawyer has confidential information to use in the subsequent matter. A conclusion about the possession of information may be based on the nature of the services the lawyer provided the former client and information that would in ordinary practice be learned by a lawyer providing such services.*

#### **Lawyers Moving Between Firms**

*[4] When lawyers have been associated within a firm but then end their association, the question of whether a lawyer should undertake representation is more complicated. There are several competing considerations. First, the client previously represented by the former firm must be reasonably assured that the principle of loyalty to the client is not compromised. Second, the Rule should not be so broadly cast as to preclude other persons from having reasonable choice of legal counsel. Third, the Rule should not unreasonably hamper lawyers from forming new associations and taking on new clients after having left a previous association. In this connection, it should be recognized that today many lawyers practice in firms, that many lawyers to some degree limit their practice to one field or another, and that many move from one association to another several times in their careers. If the concept of imputation were applied with unqualified rigor, the result would be radical curtailment of the opportunity of lawyers to move from one practice setting to another and of the opportunity of clients to change counsel.*

*[5] Paragraph (b) operates to disqualify the lawyer only when the lawyer involved has actual knowledge of information protected by Rule 1.6 and 1.9(c) of these Rules. Thus, if a lawyer while with one firm acquired no knowledge or information relating to a particular client of the firm, and that lawyer later joined another firm, neither the lawyer individually*

*nor the second firm is disqualified from representing another client in the same or a related matter even though the interests of the two clients conflict. See Rule 1.10(b) of these Rules for the restrictions on a firm once a lawyer has terminated association with the firm.*

*[6] Application of paragraph (b) depends on a situation's particular facts, aided by inferences, deductions, or working presumptions that reasonably may be made about the way in which lawyers work together. A lawyer may have general access to files of all clients of a law firm and may regularly participate in discussions of their affairs; it should be inferred that such a lawyer in fact is privy to all information about all the firm's clients. In contrast, another lawyer may have access to the files of only a limited number of clients and participate in discussions of the affairs of no other clients; in the absence of information to the contrary, it should be inferred that such a lawyer in fact is privy to information about the clients actually served but not those of other clients. In such an inquiry, the burden of proof should rest upon the firm whose disqualification is sought.*

*[7] Independent of the question of disqualification of a firm, a lawyer changing professional association has a continuing duty to preserve confidentiality of information about a client formerly represented. See Rules 1.6 and 1.9(c) of these Rules.*

*[8] Paragraph (c) provides that information acquired by the lawyer in the course of representing a client may not subsequently be used or revealed by the lawyer to the disadvantage of the client. However, the fact that a lawyer has once served a client does not preclude the lawyer from using generally known information about that client when later representing another client.*

**Waiver of Conflict**

*[9] The provisions of this Rule are for the protection of former clients and can be*

*waived if the former client gives consent after consultation, the consent to be confirmed in writing under paragraphs (a) and (b). See Rule 1.0(c) of these Rules (defining consultation). A waiver is effective only if there is disclosure of the circumstances, including the lawyer's intended role on behalf of the new client. With regard to the effectiveness of an advance waiver, see Comment [22] to Rule 1.7. With regard to disqualification of a firm with which a lawyer is or was formerly associated, see Rule 1.10.*

**Rule 1.10. IMPUTATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: GENERAL RULE.**

**(a)** While lawyers are associated in a firm, none of them shall knowingly represent a client when any one of them practicing alone would be prohibited from doing so by Rules 1.7, 1.9, or 2.2 of these Rules, unless the prohibition is based on a personal interest of the prohibited lawyer and does not present a significant risk of materially limiting the representation of the client by the remaining lawyers in the firm.

**(b)** When a lawyer has terminated an association with a firm, the former firm is not prohibited from thereafter representing a new client with interests materially adverse to those of a client represented by the departed lawyer, unless:

(1) the matter is the same or substantially related to that in which the departed lawyer represented the original client; and

(2) any lawyer remaining in the firm has information protected by Rules 1.6 and 1.9(c) of these Rules that is material to the matter.

**(c)** When a lawyer becomes associated with a firm, and the lawyer is prohibited from representing a client because the lawyer's former firm has represented a person whose interests are materially adverse to that client in the same or a substantially related matter, other lawyers in the firm may not thereafter represent the client unless:

(1) the disqualified lawyer did not participate in the matter and has no confidential information regarding the matter;

(2) the disqualified lawyer is timely screened from any participation in the matter and is apportioned no part of the fee therefrom; and

(3) written notice is promptly given to any affected former client to enable it to ascertain compliance with the provisions of this Rule.

(d) A disqualification of an individual attorney prescribed by this Rule may be waived by the affected client under the conditions stated in Rule 1.7 of these Rules.

(e) The disqualifications of lawyers associated in a firm with former or current government lawyers is governed by Rule 1.11 of these Rules.

**COMMENTS:**

**Definition of "Firm"**

[1] For purposes of the Rules of Professional Conduct, the term "firm" denotes a lawyer or lawyers in a professional business organization (see Rule 6 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai'i) or lawyers employed in a legal services organization or the legal department of a corporation or other organization. See Rule 1.0(d) of these Rules. Whether two or more lawyers constitute a firm within this definition can depend on the specific facts. See Comments [3] through [5] to Rule 1.0 of these Rules.

**Principles of Imputed Disqualification**

[2] The Rule of imputed disqualification stated in paragraph (a) gives effect to the principle of loyalty to the client as it applies to lawyers who practice in a law firm. Such situations can be considered from the premise that a firm of lawyers is essentially one lawyer for purposes of the Rules governing loyalty to the client, or from the premise that each lawyer is vicariously bound by the obligation of loyalty owed by each lawyer with whom the lawyer is associated. Paragraph (a) operates only among the lawyers currently associated in a firm. When a lawyer moves from one firm to another, the situation is governed by Rules 1.9(b) and 1.10(b) and (c) of these Rules.

[3] The Rule in paragraph (a) does not prohibit representation where neither questions of client loyalty nor protection of confidential information are presented.

*Where one lawyer in a firm could not effectively represent a given client because of strong political beliefs, for example, but that lawyer will do no work on the case and the personal beliefs of the lawyer will not materially limit the representation by others in the firm, the firm should not be disqualified. On the other hand, if an opposing party in a case were owned by a lawyer in the law firm, and others in the firm would be materially limited in pursuing the matter because of loyalty to that lawyer, the personal disqualification of the lawyer would be imputed to all others in the firm.*

[4] The Rule in paragraph (a) also does not necessarily prohibit representation by others in the law firm where the person prohibited from involvement in a matter is a nonlawyer, such as a paralegal or legal secretary. Nor does paragraph (a) necessarily prohibit representation if the lawyer is prohibited from acting because of the events before the person became a lawyer, for example, work that the person did while a law student. Such persons, however, may be screened where effective from any personal participation in the matter to avoid communication to others in the firm of confidential information that both the nonlawyers and the firm have a legal duty to protect. See Rules 1.0(l) and 5.3 of these Rules.

[5] Rule 1.10(b) operates to permit a law firm, under certain circumstances, to represent a person with interests directly adverse to those of a client represented by a lawyer who formerly was associated with the firm. The Rule applies regardless of when the formerly associated lawyer represented the client. However, the law firm may not represent a person with interests adverse to those of a present client of the firm, which would violate Rule 1.7 of these Rules. Moreover, the firm may not represent the person where the matter is the same or substantially related to that in which the formerly associated lawyer represented the client and any other lawyer currently in the

*firm has material information protected by Rules 1.6 and 1.9(c).*

*[6] Where the conditions of paragraph (c) are met, imputation is removed, and consent to the new representation is not required. Lawyers should be aware, however, that courts may impose more stringent obligations in ruling upon motions to disqualify a lawyer from pending litigation. Requirements for screening procedures are stated in Rule 1.0(l) of these Rules. Paragraph (c)(2) does not prohibit the screened lawyer from receiving a salary or partnership share established by prior independent agreement, but that lawyer may not receive compensation directly related to the matter in which the lawyer is disqualified. Notice, including a description of the screened lawyer's prior representation and of the screening procedures employed, generally should be given as soon as practicable after the need for screening becomes apparent.*

*[7] Rule 1.10(d) reminds the practitioner that the disqualification of the individual attorney can be waived with the consent of the affected client or former client under conditions stated in Rule 1.7 of these Rules. The conditions stated in Rule 1.7 require the lawyer to determine that the representation is not prohibited by Rule 1.7(b) and that each affected client or former client has given consent to the representation after consultation and confirmed in writing. In some cases, the risk may be so severe that the conflict may not be cured by client consent. For a discussion of the effectiveness of client waivers of conflicts that might arise in the future, see Comment [22] to Rule 1.7 of these Rules. For a definition of consent after consultation, see Rule 1.0(c) of these Rules.*

*[8] Where a lawyer has joined a private firm after having represented the government, imputation is governed by Rule 1.11(b) and (c), not this Rule. Under Rule 1.11(d), where a lawyer represents the government after having served clients in private practice, nongovernmental*

*employment or in another government agency, former-client conflicts are not imputed to government lawyers associated with the individually disqualified lawyer. Furthermore, separate units of a government agency, such as the office of attorney general, may undertake concurrent representation that would otherwise offend Rule 1.10(a), so long as no prejudice is suffered by any of the clients.*

*[9] Paragraph (c) of Rule 1.10 is new. Like paragraph (b), it applies when a lawyer moves from a private firm to another firm, and is intended to create procedures similar in some cases to those under Rules 1.11(a) and (b) of these Rules for lawyers moving from a government agency to a private firm.*

*[10] A transitioning lawyer very well may have no confidential information if the lawyer did no work on the matter at the former firm and the matter was not the subject of discussion with the lawyer generally, for example at firm or working group meetings. The lawyer must search his or her files and recollections carefully to determine whether he or she has confidential information. The fact that the lawyer does not immediately remember any details of the former client's representation does not mean that he or she does not in fact possess confidential information regarding the matter. However, even if the lawyer has no confidential information about the representation of the former client, the new firm is disqualified unless all of the screening procedures are followed.*

*[11] In situations where the personally disqualified lawyer was involved in a matter, or had confidential information, the new firm will generally only be allowed to handle the matter if the former client at the former law firm of the personally disqualified lawyer consents and the new firm reasonably believes that the representation will not be adversely affected, all as required by Rule 1.7 of these Rules. This differs from the provisions of Rule 1.11, in that Rule 1.11(b) permits a firm to handle a*

*matter against a government agency, despite one of its attorneys possessing material knowledge gained in the matter while at the agency, regardless of the agency's consent, provided that the procedures of Rule 1.11(b)(1) and (2) are followed. Likewise, Rule 1.11(c) permits a firm to handle a matter against a person about whom the newly-arrived attorney possesses confidential information obtained while formerly working at the government agency, without the consent of the agency, but only if the newly-arrived lawyer is screened and not apportioned any part of the fee.*

*[12] The former client is entitled to review of the screening procedures if the former client believes that the procedures will not be or have not been effective. If the matter involves litigation, the court before which the litigation is pending would be able to decide motions to disqualify or to enter appropriate orders relating to the screening, taking cognizance of whether the former client is seeking the disqualification of the firm upon a reasonable basis or without a reasonable basis for tactical advantage or otherwise.*

*[13] Where a lawyer is prohibited from engaging in certain transactions under Rule 1.8, paragraph (l) of that Rule, and not this Rule, determines whether that prohibition also applies to other lawyers associated in a firm with the personally prohibited lawyer.*

*(Amended December 16, 2013, effective January 1, 2014.)*

**Rule 1.11. SPECIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST FOR FORMER AND CURRENT GOVERNMENT OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES.**

(a) Except as law may otherwise expressly permit, a lawyer who has formerly served as a public officer or employee of the government:

(1) is subject to Rule 1.9(c); and

(2) shall not otherwise represent a client in connection with a matter in which the lawyer participated personally and substantially as a public officer or employee, unless the appropriate

government agency gives its consent to the representation, confirmed in writing after consultation.

(b) When a lawyer is disqualified from representation under paragraph (a), no lawyer in a firm with which that lawyer is associated may knowingly undertake or continue representation in such a matter unless:

(1) the disqualified lawyer is timely screened from any participation in the matter and is apportioned no part of the fee therefrom; and

(2) written notice is promptly given to the appropriate government agency to enable it to ascertain compliance with the provisions of this Rule.

(c) Except as law may otherwise expressly permit, a lawyer having information that the lawyer knows is confidential government information about a person acquired when the lawyer was a public officer or employee may not represent a private client whose interests are adverse to that person in a matter in which the information could be used to the material disadvantage of that person. As used in this Rule, the term "confidential government information" means information that has been obtained under governmental authority and which, at the time this Rule is applied, the government is prohibited by law from disclosing to the public or has a legal privilege not to disclose and which is not otherwise available to the public. A firm with which that lawyer is associated may undertake or continue representation in the matter only if the disqualified lawyer is timely screened from any participation in the matter and is apportioned no part of the fee therefrom.

(d) Except as law may otherwise expressly permit, a lawyer currently serving as a public officer or employee:

(1) is subject to Rules 1.7 and 1.9; and

(2) shall not:

(A) participate in a matter in which the lawyer participated personally and substantially while in private practice or non-governmental employment, unless under applicable law no one is, or by lawful delegation may be, authorized to act in the lawyer's stead in the matter, though should another lawyer be authorized to so act, the conflict shall not be imputed to other public lawyers in the organization, provided the conflicted lawyer is screened and written notice

of the disqualification and screening is provided to the former client whom the disqualified lawyer represented in private practice in the matter; or

(B) negotiate for private employment with any person who is involved as a party or as lawyer for a party in a matter in which the lawyer is participating personally and substantially, except that a lawyer serving as a law clerk to a judge, other adjudicative officer, or arbitrator may negotiate for private employment as permitted by Rule 1.12(b) and subject to the conditions stated in Rule 1.12(b).

(e) As used in this Rule, the term "matter" includes:

(1) any judicial or other proceeding, application, request for a ruling or other determination, contract, claim, controversy, investigation, charge, accusation, arrest or other particular matter involving a specific party or parties; and

(2) any other matter covered by the conflict of interest rules of the appropriate government agency.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *A lawyer who has served or is currently serving as a public officer or employee is personally subject to the Rules of Professional Conduct, including the prohibition against concurrent conflicts of interest stated in Rule 1.7 of these Rules. In addition, such a lawyer may be subject to statutes and government regulations regarding conflicts of interest. Such statutes and regulations may circumscribe the extent to which the government agency may give consent under this Rule. See Rule 1.0(c) for guidance as to what constitutes effective consultation when seeking consent.*

[2] *Paragraphs (a)(1), (a)(2) and (d)(1) restate the obligations of an individual lawyer who has served or is currently serving as an officer or employee of the government toward a former government or private client. Rule 1.10 is not applicable to the conflicts of interest addressed by this Rule. Rather, paragraph (b) sets forth a special imputation rule for former government lawyers that provides for screening and notice. Because of the special problems raised by imputation within a*

*government agency, paragraph (d) does not impute the conflicts of a lawyer currently serving as an officer or employee of the government to other associated government officers or employees, although ordinarily it will be prudent to screen such lawyers.*

[3] *Paragraphs (a)(2) and (d)(2) apply regardless of whether a lawyer is adverse to a former client and are thus designed not only to protect the former client, but also to prevent a lawyer from exploiting public office for the advantage of another client. For example, a lawyer who has pursued a claim on behalf of the government may not pursue the same claim on behalf of a later private client after the lawyer has left government service, except when authorized to do so by the government agency under paragraph (a). Similarly, a lawyer who has pursued a claim on behalf of a private client may not pursue the claim on behalf of the government, except when authorized to do so by paragraph (d). As with paragraphs (a)(1) and (d)(1), Rule 1.10 is not applicable to the conflicts of interest addressed by these paragraphs.*

[4] *This Rule represents a balancing of interests. On the one hand, where the successive clients are a government agency and another client, public or private, the risk exists that power or discretion vested in that agency might be used for the special benefit of the other client. A lawyer should not be in a position where benefit to the other client might affect performance of the lawyer's professional functions on behalf of the government. Also, unfair advantage could accrue to the other client by reason of access to confidential government information about the client's adversary obtainable only through the lawyer's government service. On the other hand, the Rules governing lawyers presently or formerly employed by a government agency should not be so restrictive as to inhibit transfer of employment to and from the government. The government has a legitimate need to attract qualified lawyers as well as to maintain high ethical*

standards. Thus a former government lawyer is disqualified only from particular matters in which the lawyer participated personally and substantially. The provisions for screening and waiver in paragraph (b) are necessary to prevent the disqualification Rule from imposing too severe a deterrent against entering public service. The limitation of disqualification in paragraphs (a)(2) and (d)(2) to matters involving a specific party or parties, rather than extending disqualification to all substantive issues on which the lawyer worked, serves a similar function.

[5] When a lawyer has been employed by one government agency and then moves to a second government agency, it may be appropriate to treat that second agency as another client for purposes of this Rule, as when a lawyer is employed by a city and subsequently is employed by a federal agency. However, because the conflict of interest is governed by paragraph (d), the latter agency is not required to screen the lawyer as paragraph (b) requires a law firm to do. The question of whether two government agencies should be regarded as the same or different clients for conflict of interest purposes is beyond the scope of these Rules. See Comment [8] to Rule 1.13 of these Rules.

[6] Paragraphs (b) and (c) contemplate a screening arrangement. See Rule 1.0(l) (requirements for screening procedures). These paragraphs do not prohibit a lawyer from receiving a salary or partnership share established by prior independent agreement, but that lawyer may not receive compensation directly related to the fee in the matter in which the lawyer is disqualified.

[7] Notice, including a description of the screened lawyer's prior representation and of the screening procedures employed, generally should be given as soon as practicable after the need for screening becomes apparent, in order that the government agency will have a reasonable opportunity to ascertain that the lawyer is

complying with Rule 1.11 and to take appropriate action if the lawyer is not complying.

[8] Paragraph (c) operates only when the lawyer in question has knowledge of the information, which means actual knowledge; it does not operate with respect to information that merely could be imputed to the lawyer.

[9] Paragraph (d) does not necessarily disqualify other lawyers in the agency with which the conflicted lawyer in question is associated. Other agency lawyers may be assigned to replace the conflicted lawyer in the particular representation, provided the disqualified government lawyer has been screened from participation in the matter.

[10] Paragraphs (a) and (d) do not prohibit a lawyer from jointly representing a private party and a government agency when doing so is permitted by Rule 1.7 of these Rules and is not otherwise prohibited by law.

[11] For purposes of paragraph (e) of this Rule, a "matter" may continue in another form. In determining whether two particular matters are the same, the lawyer should consider the extent to which the matters involve the same basic facts, the same or related parties, and the time elapsed.

#### **Rule 1.12. FORMER JUDGE, ARBITRATOR, MEDIATOR, OR OTHER THIRD-PARTY NEUTRAL.**

(a) A lawyer shall not represent anyone in the same or substantially related matter in which the lawyer participated personally and substantially as a judge or other adjudicative officer or law clerk to such a person or as an arbitrator, mediator, or other third-party neutral, unless all parties to the proceeding consent after disclosure, confirmed in writing.

(b) A lawyer shall not negotiate for employment with any person who is involved as a party or as a lawyer for a party in a matter in which the lawyer is participating personally and substantially as a judge or other adjudicative officer,

or arbitrator, mediator, or other third-party neutral. A lawyer serving as a law clerk to a judge or other adjudicative officer may negotiate for employment with a party or lawyer involved in a matter in which the clerk is participating personally and substantially, but only after the lawyer has notified the judge or other adjudicative officer.

(c) If a lawyer is disqualified by paragraph (a), no lawyer in a firm with which that lawyer is associated may knowingly undertake or continue representation in the matter unless:

(1) the disqualified lawyer is screened from any participation in the matter and is apportioned no part of the fee therefrom; and

(2) written notice is promptly given to the parties and any appropriate tribunal to enable them to ascertain compliance with the provisions of this Rule.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] This Rule generally parallels Rule 1.11. The term "personally and substantially" signifies that a judge who was a member of a multi-member court, and thereafter left judicial office to practice law, is not prohibited from representing a client in a matter pending in the court, but in which the former judge did not participate. So also the fact that a former judge exercised administrative responsibility in a court does not prevent the former judge from acting as a lawyer in a matter where the judge had previously exercised remote or incidental administrative responsibility that did not affect the merits. Compare this Comment to Rule 1.11. The term "adjudicative officer" includes such officials as judges pro tempore, referees, special masters, hearing officers and other parajudicial officers, and also lawyers who serve as part-time judges. Hawai'i Revised Code of Judicial Conduct Application III(b) provides that a part-time judge or retired judge recalled to active service, "shall not act as a lawyer in a proceeding in which the judge has served as a judge or in any other proceeding related thereto." Although phrased differently from this Rule, those Rules correspond in meaning.

[2] Like former judges, lawyers who have served as arbitrators, mediators, or other third-party neutrals may be asked to represent a client in the same or a substantially related matter in which the lawyer participated personally and substantially. This Rule forbids such representation unless all of the parties to the proceedings give their consent after consultation, confirmed in writing. See Rule 1.0(c) and (b) of these Rules, respectively. Other law or codes of ethics governing third-party neutrals may impose more stringent standards of personal or imputed disqualification. See Rule 2.4 of the Rules.

[3] Although lawyers who serve as third-party neutrals do not have the information concerning the parties that is protected under Rule 1.6, they typically owe the parties an obligation of confidentiality under law or codes of ethics governing third-party neutrals. Thus, paragraph (c) provides that conflicts of the personally disqualified lawyer will be imputed to other lawyers in a law firm unless the conditions of this paragraph are met.

[4] Requirements for screening procedures are stated in Rule 1.0(l) of these Rules. Paragraph (c)(1) does not prohibit the screened lawyer from receiving a salary or partnership share established by prior independent agreement, but that lawyer may not receive compensation directly related to the matter in which the lawyer is disqualified.

[5] Notice, including a description of the screened lawyer's prior representation and of the screening procedures employed, generally should be given as soon as practicable after the need for screening becomes apparent.

[6] For a discussion of "substantially related," see Comment [3] to Rule 1.9 of these Rules.

**Rule 1.13. ORGANIZATION AS CLIENT.**

(a) A lawyer employed or retained by an organization represents the organization acting through its duly authorized constituents.

(b) If a lawyer for an organization knows that an officer, employee or other person associated with the organization is engaged in action, intends to act, or refuses to act in a matter related to the representation that is a violation of a legal obligation to the organization, or a violation of law that reasonably might be imputed to the organization, and that is likely to result in substantial injury to the organization, then the lawyer shall proceed as is reasonably necessary in the best interest of the organization. Unless the lawyer reasonably believes that it is not necessary in the best interest of the organization to do so, the lawyer shall refer the matter to higher authority in the organization, including, if warranted by the circumstances, to the highest authority that can act in behalf of the organization as determined by applicable law.

(c) Except as provided in paragraph (d), if

(1) despite the lawyer's efforts in accordance with paragraph (b), the highest authority that can act on behalf of the organization (i) insists upon an action that is clearly a violation of law, (ii) or insists upon a refusal to act that is clearly a violation of law, or (iii) fails to address such a violation in a timely and appropriate manner, and

(2) the lawyer reasonably believes that the violation is reasonably certain to result in substantial injury to the organization, then the lawyer may reveal information relating to the representation whether or not Rule 1.6 permits such disclosure, but only if and to the extent the lawyer reasonably believes necessary to prevent substantial injury to the organization.

(d) Paragraph (c) shall not apply with respect to information relating to a lawyer's representation of an organization to investigate an alleged violation of law, or to defend the organization or an officer, employee, or other constituent associated with the organization against a claim arising out of an alleged violation of law.

(e) A lawyer who reasonably believes that he or she has been discharged because of the lawyer's actions taken pursuant to paragraphs (b) or (c), or who withdraws under circumstances that require or permit the lawyer to take action under either of those

paragraphs, shall proceed as the lawyer reasonably believes necessary to assure that the organization's highest authority is informed of the lawyer's discharge or withdrawal.

(f) In dealing with an organization's directors, officers, employees, members, shareholders, or other constituents, a lawyer shall explain the identity of the client when the lawyer knows or reasonably should know that the organization's interests are adverse to those of the constituents with whom the lawyer is dealing.

(g) A lawyer representing an organization may also represent any of its directors, officers, employees, members, shareholders or other constituents, subject to the provisions of Rule 1.7 of these Rules. If the organization's consent to the dual representation is required by Rule 1.7, the consent shall be given by an appropriate official of the organization other than the individual who is to be represented, or by the shareholders.

(h) If a government lawyer knows that an officer, employee or other person associated with the government is engaged in action, intends to act or refuses to act in a matter related to the lawyer's representation that is a violation of a legal obligation to the government or the public, or a violation of law which reasonably might be imputed to the government, the lawyer shall proceed as is reasonably necessary in the best interest of the government or the public. In determining how to proceed, the lawyer shall give due consideration to the seriousness of the violation and its consequences, the scope and nature of the lawyer's representation, governmental policies concerning such matters, governmental chain of command, and any other relevant consideration. Any measures taken shall be designed to minimize disruption of the governmental functions. Such measures may include among others:

(1) asking for reconsideration of the matter;

(2) referring the matter to a higher authority in the government, including if warranted by the seriousness of the matter, referral to the highest government official that can act on behalf of the government on the particular matter as determined by applicable law even if the highest authority is not within the agency or department the lawyer represents;

(3) advising that a separate legal opinion on the matter be sought and considered; and

(4) divulging of information to persons outside the government pursuant to the limitations provided in Rule 1.6 of these Rules.

**COMMENTS:**

***The Entity as the Client***

[1] *An organizational client is a legal entity, but it cannot act except through its officers, directors, employees, shareholders, and other constituents. Officers, directors, employees, and shareholders are the constituents of the corporate organizational client. The duties defined in this Comment apply equally to unincorporated associations. "Other constituents" as used in this Comment means the positions equivalent to officers, directors, employees, and shareholders held by persons acting for organizational clients that are not corporations.*

[2] *When one of the constituents of an organizational client communicates with the organization's lawyer in that person's organizational capacity, the communication is protected by Rule 1.6 of these Rules. Thus, by way of example, if an organizational client requests its lawyer to investigate allegations of wrongdoing, interviews made in the course of that investigation between the lawyer and the client's employees or other constituents are covered by Rule 1.6. This does not mean, however, that constituents of an organizational client are the clients of the lawyer. The lawyer may not disclose to such constituents information relating to the representation except for disclosures explicitly or impliedly authorized by the organizational client in order to carry out the representation or as otherwise permitted by Rule 1.6.*

[3] *When constituents of the organization make decisions for it, the decisions ordinarily must be accepted by the lawyer even if their utility or prudence is doubtful. Decisions concerning policy and operations, including ones entailing serious risk, are not as such in the lawyer's province. Paragraph (b) makes clear,*

*however, that when the lawyer knows that the organization is likely to be substantially injured by an action of an officer or other constituent that violates a legal obligation to the organization or is in violation of law that might be imputed to the organization, the lawyer must proceed as is reasonably necessary in the best interest of the organization. As defined in Rule 1.0(f) of these Rules, knowledge can be inferred from the circumstances, and a lawyer cannot ignore the obvious.*

[4] *In determining how to proceed under paragraph (b), the lawyer should give due consideration to the seriousness of the violation and its consequences, the responsibility in the organization and the apparent motivation of the person involved, the policies of the organization concerning such matters, which the lawyer should encourage the organization to develop, and any other relevant considerations. Ordinarily, referral to a higher authority would be necessary. In some circumstances, however, it may be appropriate for the lawyer to ask the constituent to reconsider the matter; for example, if the circumstances involve a constituent's innocent misunderstanding of law and subsequent acceptance of the lawyer's advice, the lawyer may reasonably conclude that the best interest of the organization does not require that the matter be referred to higher authority. If a constituent persists in conduct contrary to the lawyer's advice, it will be necessary for the lawyer to take steps to have the matter reviewed by a higher authority in the organization. In some instances, it may be useful or essential to obtain an independent legal opinion.*

[5] *Paragraph (b) also makes it clear that when the lawyer concludes it is reasonably necessary to call upon the organization to address the matter in a timely and appropriate manner, the lawyer must refer the matter to higher authority, including, if warranted by the circumstances, the highest authority that can act on behalf of the organization under*

*applicable law. The organization's highest authority to whom a matter may be referred ordinarily will be the board of directors or similar governing body. However, applicable law may prescribe that under certain conditions the highest authority reposes elsewhere, for example, in the independent directors of a corporation.*

#### **Relation to Other Rules**

[6] *The authority and responsibility provided in this Rule are concurrent with the authority and responsibility provided in other Rules. In particular, this Rule does not limit or expand the lawyer's responsibility under Rules 1.8, 1.16, 3.3 or 4.1 of these Rules. Paragraph (c) of this Rule supplements Rule 1.6(b) by providing an additional basis upon which the lawyer may reveal information relating to the representation, but does not modify, restrict, or limit the provisions of Rule 1.6(b)(1)-(7). Under paragraph (c) the lawyer may reveal such information only when the organization's highest authority insists upon or fails to address threatened or ongoing action that is clearly a violation of law, and then only to the extent the lawyer reasonably believes necessary to prevent reasonably certain substantial injury to the organization. It is not necessary that the lawyer's services be used in furtherance of the violation, but it is required that the matter be related to the lawyer's representation of the organization. If the lawyer's services are being used by an organization to further a crime or fraud by the organization, Rules 1.6(b)(1) and 1.6(b)(2) may permit the lawyer to disclose confidential information. In such circumstances Rule 1.2(d) may also be applicable, in which event, withdrawal from the representation under Rule 1.16(a)(1) may be required.*

[7] *Paragraph (d) makes clear that the authority of a lawyer to disclose information relating to a representation in circumstances described in paragraph (c) does not apply with respect to information*

*relating to a lawyer's engagement by an organization to investigate an alleged violation of law or to defend the organization or an officer, employee, or other person associated with the organization against a claim arising out of an alleged violation of law. This is necessary in order to enable organizational clients to enjoy the full benefits of legal counsel in conducting an investigation or defending against a claim.*

#### **Government Agency**

[8] *The duty defined in this Rule applies to governmental organizations. Defining precisely the identity of the client and prescribing the resulting obligations of such lawyers may be more difficult in the government context and is a matter beyond the scope of these Rules. See Scope [5]. Although in some circumstances the client may be a specific agency, it may also be a branch of government, such as the executive branch, or the government as a whole. For example, if the action or failure to act involves the head of a bureau, either the department of which the bureau is a part or the relevant branch of government may be the client for purposes of this Rule. Moreover, in a matter involving the conduct of government officials, a government lawyer may have authority under applicable law to question such conduct more extensively than that of a lawyer for a private organization in similar circumstances. Thus, when the client is a governmental organization, a different balance may be appropriate between maintaining confidentiality and assuring that the wrongful official act is prevented or rectified, for public business is involved. In addition, duties of lawyers employed by the government or lawyers in military service may be defined by statutes and regulation.*

#### **Clarifying the Lawyer's Role**

[9] *There are times when the organization's interest may be or become adverse to those of one or more of its*

*constituents. In such circumstances the lawyer should advise any constituent whose interest the lawyer finds adverse to that of the organization (i) of the conflict or potential conflict of interest, (ii) that the lawyer cannot represent such constituent, and (iii) that such person may wish to obtain independent representation. Care must be taken to assure that the individual understands that, when there is such adversity of interest, the lawyer for the organization cannot provide legal representation for that constituent individual, and that discussions between the lawyer for the organization and the individual may not be privileged.*

*[10] Whether such a warning should be given by the lawyer for the organization to any constituent individual may turn on the facts of each case.*

#### **Dual Representation**

*[11] Paragraph (g) recognizes that a lawyer for an organization may also represent a principal officer or major shareholder.*

#### **Derivative Actions**

*[12] Under generally prevailing law, the shareholders or members of a corporation may bring suit to compel the directors to perform their legal obligations in the supervision of the organization. Members of unincorporated associations have essentially the same right. Such an action may be brought nominally by the organization, but usually is, in fact, a legal controversy over management of the organization.*

*[13] The question can arise whether counsel for the organization may defend such an action. The proposition that the organization is the lawyer's client does not alone resolve the issue. Most derivative actions are a normal incident of an organization's affairs, to be defended by the organization's lawyer like any other suit. However, if the claim involves serious charges of wrongdoing by those in control of*

*the organization, a conflict may arise between the lawyer's duty to the organization and the lawyer's relationship with the board. In those circumstances, Rule 1.7 of these Rules governs who should represent the directors and the organization.*

#### **Rule 1.14. CLIENT UNDER A DISABILITY.**

**(a)** When a client's ability to make adequately considered decisions in connection with a representation is diminished, whether because of minority, mental impairment, or for some other reason, the lawyer shall, as far as reasonably possible, maintain a normal client-lawyer relationship with the client.

**(b)** When the lawyer reasonably believes that the client has diminished capacity, is at risk of substantial physical, financial or other harm unless action is taken, and cannot adequately act in the client's own interest, the lawyer may take reasonably necessary protective action, including consulting with individuals or entities that have the ability to take action to protect the client and, in appropriate cases, seeking the appointment of a guardian ad litem, conservator, or guardian.

**(c)** Information relating to the representation of a client with diminished capacity is protected by Rule 1.6 of these Rules. When taking protective action pursuant to paragraph (b), the lawyer is impliedly authorized under Rule 1.6 to reveal information about the client, but only to the extent reasonably necessary to protect the client's interests.

#### **COMMENTS:**

*[1] The normal client-lawyer relationship is based on the assumption that the client, when properly advised and assisted, is capable of making decisions about important matters. When the client is a minor or suffers from a diminished mental capacity, however, maintaining the ordinary client-lawyer relationship may not be possible in all respects. In particular, a severely incapacitated person may have no power to make legally binding decisions. Nevertheless, a client with diminished capacity often has the ability to understand, deliberate upon, and reach conclusions about matters affecting the client's own*

well-being. For example, children as young as five or six years of age, and certainly those of 10 or 12, are regarded as having opinions that are entitled to weight in legal proceedings concerning their custody. So also, it is recognized that some persons of advanced age can be quite capable of handling routine financial matters while needing special legal protection concerning major transactions.

[2] The fact that a client suffers a disability does not diminish the lawyer's obligation to treat the client with attention and respect. Even if the person has a legal representative, the lawyer should as far as possible accord the represented person the status of client, particularly in maintaining communication.

[3] The client may wish to have family members or other persons participate in discussions with the lawyer. When necessary to assist in the representation, the presence of such persons generally does not affect the applicability of the client-lawyer evidentiary privilege. Nevertheless, the lawyer must keep the client's interests foremost and, except for protective action authorized under paragraph (b), must look to the client, and not family members, to make decisions on the client's behalf.

[4] If a legal representative has already been appointed for the client, the lawyer should ordinarily look to the representative for decisions on behalf of the client. In matters involving a minor, whether the lawyer should look to the parents as natural guardians may depend on the type of proceeding or matter in which the lawyer is representing the minor. If the lawyer represents the guardian as distinct from the ward, and is aware that the guardian is acting adversely to the ward's interest, the lawyer may have an obligation to prevent or rectify the guardian's misconduct. See Rule 1.2(d) of these Rules.

#### **Taking Protective Action**

[5] If a lawyer reasonably believes that a client is at risk of substantial physical,

financial, or other harm unless action is taken, and that a normal client-lawyer relationship cannot be maintained as provided in paragraph (a) because the client lacks sufficient capacity to communicate or to make adequately considered decisions in connection with the representation, then paragraph (b) permits the lawyer to take protective measures deemed necessary. Such measures could include: consulting with family members, using a reconsideration period to permit clarification or improvement of circumstances, using voluntary surrogate decision-making tools such as durable powers of attorney, or consulting with support groups, professional services, adult-protective agencies, or other individuals or entities that have the ability to protect the client. In taking any protective action, the lawyer should be guided by such factors as the wishes and values of the client to the extent known, the client's best interests, and the goals of intruding into the client's decision-making autonomy to the least extent feasible, maximizing client capacities, and respecting the client's family and social connections.

[6] In determining the extent of the client's diminished capacity, the lawyer should consider and balance such factors as: the client's ability to articulate reasoning leading to a decision, variability of state of mind, and ability to appreciate consequences of a decision; the substantive fairness of a decision; and the consistency of a decision with the known long-term commitments and values of the client. In appropriate circumstances, the lawyer may seek guidance from an appropriate diagnostician.

[7] If a legal representative has not been appointed, the lawyer should consider whether appointment of a guardian ad litem, conservator, or guardian is necessary to protect the client's interests. Thus, if a client with diminished capacity has substantial property that should be sold for the client's benefit, effective completion of the transaction may require appointment of a

*legal representative. In addition, Rules of procedure in litigation sometimes provide that minors or persons with diminished capacity must be represented by a guardian or next friend if they do not have a general guardian. In many circumstances, however, appointment of a legal representative may be more expensive or traumatic for the client than circumstances in fact require. Evaluation of such circumstances is a matter entrusted to the professional judgment of the lawyer. In considering alternatives, however, the lawyer should be aware of any law that requires the lawyer to advocate the least restrictive action on behalf of the client.*

***Disclosure of the Client's Condition***

*[8] Disclosure of the client's diminished capacity could adversely affect the client's interests. For example, raising the question of diminished capacity could, in some circumstances, lead to proceedings for involuntary commitment. Information relating to the representation is protected by Rule 1.6 of these Rules. Therefore, unless authorized to do so, the lawyer may not disclose such information. When taking protective action pursuant to paragraph (b), the lawyer is impliedly authorized to make the necessary disclosures, even when the client directs the lawyer to the contrary. Nevertheless, given the risks of disclosure, paragraph (c) limits what the lawyer may disclose in consulting with other individuals or entities or seeking the appointment of a legal representative. At the very least, the lawyer should determine whether it is likely that the person or entity consulted with will act adversely to the client's interests before discussing matters related to the client. The lawyer's position in such cases is an unavoidably difficult one.*

***Emergency Legal Assistance***

*[9] In an emergency where the health, safety, or a financial interest of a person with seriously diminished capacity is threatened with imminent and irreparable harm, a lawyer may take legal action on*

*behalf of such a person even though the person is unable to establish a client-lawyer relationship or to make or express considered judgments about the matter, when the person or another acting in good faith on that person's behalf has consulted with the lawyer. Even in such an emergency, however, the lawyer should not act unless the lawyer reasonably believes that the person has no other lawyer, agent, or other representative available. The lawyer should take legal action on behalf of the person only to the extent reasonably necessary to maintain the status quo or otherwise avoid imminent and irreparable harm. A lawyer who undertakes to represent a person in such an exigent situation has the same duties under these Rules as the lawyer would with respect to a client. In light of the clear risks and uncertainties inherent in such a situation, the attorney should weigh all factors carefully before intervening.*

*[10] A lawyer who acts on behalf of a person with seriously diminished capacity in an emergency should keep the confidences of the person as if dealing with a client, disclosing them only to the extent necessary to accomplish the intended protective action. The lawyer should disclose to any tribunal involved and to any other counsel involved the nature of his or her relationship with the person. The lawyer should take steps to regularize the relationship or implement other protective solutions as soon as possible. Normally, a lawyer would not seek compensation for such emergency actions taken.*

**Rule 1.15. PRESERVING IDENTITY OF FUNDS AND PROPERTY OF A CLIENT OR THIRD PERSON.**

(a) A lawyer shall hold property of clients or third persons that is in a lawyer's possession in connection with a representation separate from the lawyer's own property, as a fiduciary. The lawyer shall not commingle such funds or property with his or her own or misappropriate such funds or property to his or her own use or benefit. Funds shall be kept in a separate account in Hawai'i in accordance with Rule 11 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai'i, and Rule 4 of the Hawai'i Rules Governing Trust Accounting. Other tangible property owned by a client or third person shall be identified as such, appropriately safeguarded, and a record kept of the item's receipt and disbursement. Complete records of such account funds and other property shall be kept by the lawyer and shall be preserved for a period of 6 years after the termination of the representation.

(b) A lawyer may deposit into a trust account the lawyer's own funds reasonably sufficient to either pay bank charges or avoid paying bank charges on the account, or to cover unanticipated overages.

(c) A lawyer shall deposit into a client trust account legal fees and expenses that have been paid in advance, to be withdrawn by the lawyer only as fees are earned or expenses incurred.

(d) Upon receiving or disbursing funds or other property in which a client or third person has an interest, a lawyer shall promptly notify the client or third person. Except as stated in this Rule or otherwise permitted by law or by agreement with the client, a lawyer shall promptly deliver to the client or third person any funds or other property that the client or third person is entitled to receive and, upon request by the client or third person, shall promptly render a full accounting regarding such property.

(e) When in the course of representation a lawyer is in possession of property in which two or more persons (one of whom may be the lawyer) claims interests, the property shall be kept separate by the lawyer until the dispute is resolved. Disputed client funds shall be kept in a client trust account until the dispute is resolved. The lawyer shall promptly distribute all portions of the property as to which the interests are not in dispute.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *A lawyer should hold property of others, in whatever form, with the care required of a professional fiduciary. Securities should be kept in a safe deposit box, except when some other form of safekeeping is warranted by special circumstances. All property that is the property of clients or third persons, including prospective clients, must be kept separate from the lawyer's business and personal property and, if monies, in one or more trust accounts. Separate trust accounts may be warranted when administering estate monies or acting in similar fiduciary capacities. A lawyer should maintain on a current basis books and records in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice and must comply with any recordkeeping Rules established by law or court order. See, e.g., Hawai'i Rules Governing Trust Accounting.*

[2] *While normally it is impermissible to commingle the lawyer's own funds with client funds, paragraph (b) identifies several instances in which it is permissible to do so. See also Rule 11(c)(1)(A) of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai'i. Accurate records must be kept regarding which part of the funds are the lawyer's. See, e.g., Rule 4(c)(1) through (9) of the Hawai'i Rules Governing Trust Accounting.*

[3] *Lawyers often receive funds from which the lawyer's fee will be paid. The lawyer is not required to remit to the client funds that the lawyer reasonably believes represent fees earned and owed. However, a lawyer may not hold funds to coerce a client into accepting the lawyer's contention. The disputed portion of the funds must be kept in a trust account. See Rule 4(a) of the Hawai'i Rules Governing Trust Accounting. The lawyer should suggest means for prompt resolution of the dispute, such as arbitration. The undisputed portion of the funds shall be promptly distributed. See also Rule 1.5 of these Rules regarding a lawyer's duties related to Fees.*

[4] *A mere debtor-creditor relationship is generally itself insufficient to establish a financial interest in funds or property within the meaning of paragraphs (d) and (e). Paragraphs (d) and (e) recognize, however, that third parties may have lawful entitlement to funds or other property in a lawyer's custody, such as a client's creditor who has a lien on funds recovered in a personal injury action. A lawyer may have a duty under applicable law to protect such third-party entitlements against wrongful interference by the client. In such cases, the lawyer must refuse to surrender the funds or property to the client until the dispute is resolved. A lawyer should not unilaterally assume to arbitrate a dispute between a client and the third party, but, when there are substantial grounds for dispute as to the person entitled to the funds, the lawyer may file an action to have a court resolve the dispute.*

[5] *The obligations of a lawyer under this Rule are independent of those arising from activity other than rendering legal services. For example, a lawyer who serves only as an escrow agent is governed by the applicable law relating to fiduciaries even though the lawyer does not render legal services in the transaction and is not governed by this Rule.*

[6] *The Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection provides a means through the collective efforts of the Hawai'i bar to reimburse persons who have lost money or property as a result of a lawyer's dishonest conduct. Lawyer participation is mandatory. See Rules and Regulations Concerning the Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection of the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai'i (aka Lawyers' Fund Rules and Regulations).*

*(Amended October 21, 2013, effective January 1, 2014; further amended December 16, 2013, effective January 1, 2014; further amended August 18, 2021, effective January 1, 2022.)*

### **Rule 1.16. DECLINING OR TERMINATING REPRESENTATION.**

(a) Except as stated in paragraph (c), a lawyer shall not represent a client or, where representation has commenced, shall withdraw from the representation of a client if:

(1) the representation will result in violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law;

(2) the lawyer's physical or mental condition materially impairs the lawyer's ability to represent the client; or

(3) the lawyer is discharged.

(b) Except as stated in paragraph (c), a lawyer may withdraw from representing a client if:

(1) withdrawal can be accomplished without material adverse effect on the interests of the client;

(2) the client persists in a course of action involving the lawyer's services that the lawyer reasonably believes is criminal or fraudulent;

(3) the lawyer reasonably believes that the client has used the lawyer's services to perpetrate a crime or fraud;

(4) a client insists upon taking action that the lawyer considers repugnant or with which the lawyer has a fundamental disagreement;

(5) the client fails substantially to fulfill an obligation to the lawyer regarding the lawyer's services and has been given reasonable warning that the lawyer will withdraw unless the obligation is fulfilled;

(6) the representation will result in an unreasonable financial burden on the lawyer or has been rendered unreasonably difficult by the client; or

(7) other good cause for withdrawal exists.

(c) A lawyer must comply with applicable law requiring notice to or permission of a tribunal when terminating a representation. When ordered to do so by a tribunal, a lawyer shall continue representation notwithstanding good cause for terminating the representation.

(d) Upon termination of representation, a lawyer shall take steps to the extent reasonably practicable to protect a client's interests, such as giving reasonable notice to the client, allowing time for employment of other counsel, surrendering papers and property to which the client is entitled, refunding any advance payment of fee or expense that has not been earned or incurred, and, upon request, providing an accounting of such funds.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] A lawyer should not accept representation in a matter unless it can be performed competently, promptly, without improper conflict of interest and to completion. Ordinarily, a representation in a matter is completed when the agreed-upon assistance has been concluded. See Rules 1.1, 1.2(c), and 6.5 of these Rules. See also Comment [4] to Rule 1.3 of these Rules.

**Mandatory Withdrawal**

[2] A lawyer ordinarily must decline or withdraw from representation if the client demands that the lawyer engage in conduct that is illegal or violates the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law. The lawyer is not obliged to decline or withdraw simply because the client suggests such a course of conduct; a client may make such a suggestion in the hope that a lawyer will not be constrained by a professional obligation.

[3] When a lawyer has been appointed to represent a client, withdrawal ordinarily requires approval of the appointing authority. See also Rule 6.2 of these Rules. Similarly, court approval or notice to the court is often required by applicable law before a lawyer withdraws from pending litigation. Difficulty may be encountered if withdrawal is based on the client's demand that the lawyer engage in unprofessional conduct. The court may request an explanation for the withdrawal, while the lawyer may be bound to keep confidential the facts that would constitute such an explanation. The lawyer's statement that professional considerations require termination of the representation ordinarily should be accepted as sufficient. Lawyers should be mindful of their obligations to both clients and the court under Rules 1.6 and 3.3 of these Rules.

**Discharge**

[4] A client has a right to discharge a lawyer at any time, with or without cause, subject to liability for payment for the lawyer's services. Where future dispute

about the withdrawal may be anticipated, it may be advisable to prepare a written statement reciting the circumstances.

[5] Whether a client can discharge appointed counsel may depend on applicable law. A client seeking to do so should be given a full explanation of the consequences. These consequences may include a decision by the appointing authority that appointment of successor counsel is unjustified, thus requiring self-representation by the client.

[6] If the client has severely diminished capacity, the client may lack the legal capacity to discharge the lawyer, and in any event the discharge may be seriously adverse to the client's interests. The lawyer should make special effort to help the client consider the consequences and may take reasonably necessary protective action as provided in Rule 1.14 of these Rules.

**Optional Withdrawal**

[7] A lawyer may withdraw from representation in some circumstances. The lawyer has the option to withdraw if it can be accomplished without material adverse effect on the client's interests. Withdrawal is also justified if the client persists in a course of action that the lawyer reasonably believes is criminal or fraudulent, for a lawyer is not required to be associated with such conduct even if the lawyer does not further it. Withdrawal is also permitted if the lawyer's services were misused in the past, even if that would materially prejudice the client. The lawyer also may withdraw where the client insists on taking action that the lawyer considers repugnant or with which the lawyer has a fundamental disagreement.

[8] A lawyer may withdraw if the client refuses to abide by the terms of an agreement relating to the representation, such as an agreement concerning fees or court costs or an agreement limiting the objectives of the representation.

***Assisting the Client Upon Withdrawal***

[9] *Even if the lawyer has been unfairly discharged by the client, a lawyer must take all reasonable steps to mitigate the consequences to the client.*

[10] *The papers to which a client is entitled upon termination of representation may include all documents in the lawyer's file except (a) documents which were only for review and use by the lawyer and persons in the lawyer's office and which the lawyer reasonably believes will not be of material use or benefit to the client or successor lawyer; (b) documents which would violate a duty of confidentiality owed to a third party; (c) documents which cannot be copied or disclosed pursuant to a court order or other law; and (d) documents which may cause the client or a third party physical or psychological harm.*

[11] *The right to an accounting upon request ensures the client will receive information concerning the work performed by the lawyer that is sufficiently detailed to aid in the resolution of any fee dispute or request for a refund by the client that may arise.*

*(Amended September 25, 2018, effective January 1, 2019.)*

**Rule 1.17. SALE OF LAW PRACTICE.**

A lawyer or a law firm may sell or purchase a law practice, or an area of a law practice, including good will, if the following conditions are satisfied:

(a) The seller ceases to engage in the private practice of law, or in the area of practice that has been sold, in the State of Hawai'i;

(b) The entire practice, or the entire area of practice, is sold to one or more lawyers or law firms;

(c) The seller gives written notice to each of the seller's clients regarding:

(1) the proposed sale;

(2) the client's right to retain other counsel or to take possession of the file; and

(3) the fact that the client's consent to the transfer of the client's files will be presumed if the client does not take any action or does not otherwise object within 90 days of receipt of the notice.

If a client cannot be given notice, the representation of that client may be transferred to the purchaser only upon entry of an order so authorizing by a court having jurisdiction. The seller may disclose to the court in camera information relating to the representation only to the extent necessary to obtain an order authorizing the transfer of a file.

(d) The fees charged clients shall not be increased by reason of the sale. Existing agreements between the seller and the client as to fees and the scope of the work must be honored by the purchaser, unless the client consents in writing after consultation.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *The practice of law is a profession, not merely a business. Clients are not commodities that can be purchased and sold at will. Pursuant to this Rule, when a lawyer or an entire firm ceases to practice, or ceases to practice in an area of law, and other lawyers or firms take over the representation, the selling lawyer or firm may obtain compensation for the reasonable value of the practice as may withdrawing partners of law firms. See Rules 5.4 and 5.6 of these Rules.*

***Termination of Practice by the Seller***

[2] *The requirement that all of the private practice, or all of an area of practice, be sold is satisfied if the seller in good faith makes the entire practice, or the area or practice, available for sale to the purchasers. The fact that a number of the seller's clients decide not to be represented by the purchasers but take their matters elsewhere, therefore, does not result in a violation. Return to private practice as a result of an unanticipated change in circumstances does not necessarily result in a violation. For example, a lawyer who has sold the practice to accept an appointment to judicial office does not violate the requirement that the sale be attendant to cessation of practice if the lawyer later resumes private practice upon resignation or departure from the judiciary.*

[3] *The requirement that the seller cease to engage in the private practice of law does not prohibit employment as a lawyer on the staff of a public agency or a legal services entity that provides legal services to the poor, or as in-house counsel to a business.*

[4] *The Rule permits a sale of an entire practice attendant upon retirement from the private practice of law within the jurisdiction. Its provisions, therefore, accommodate the lawyer who sells the practice on the occasion of moving to another state.*

[5] *This Rule also permits a lawyer or law firm to sell an area of practice. If an area of practice is sold and the lawyer remains in the active practice of law, the lawyer must cease accepting any matters in the area of practice that has been sold, either as counsel or co-counsel or by assuming joint responsibility for a matter in connection with the division of a fee with another lawyer as would otherwise be permitted by Rule 1.5(e) of these Rules. Although a lawyer who leaves a jurisdiction or geographical area typically would sell the entire practice, this Rule permits the lawyer to limit the sale to one or more areas of the practice, thereby preserving the lawyer's right to continue practice in the areas of the practice that were not sold.*

#### **Sale of Entire Practice or Entire Area of Practice**

[6] *The Rule requires that the seller's entire practice, or an entire area of practice, be sold. The prohibition against sale of less than an entire practice area protects those clients whose matters are less lucrative and who might find it difficult to secure other counsel if a sale could be limited to substantial fee-generating matters. The purchasers are required to undertake all client matters in the practice or practice area, subject to client consent. This requirement is satisfied, however, even if a purchaser is unable to undertake a*

*particular client matter because of a conflict of interest.*

#### **Client Confidences, Consent and Notice**

[7] *Negotiations between seller and prospective purchaser prior to disclosure of information relating to a specific representation of an identifiable client no more violate the confidentiality provisions of Rule 1.6 of these Rules than do preliminary discussions concerning the possible association of another lawyer or mergers between firms, with respect to which client consent is not required. Providing the purchaser access to client-specific information relating to the representation and to the file, however, requires client consent. The Rule provides that before such information can be disclosed by the seller to the purchaser the client must be given actual written notice of the contemplated sale, including the identity of the purchaser and any proposed change in the terms of future representation, and must be told that the decision to consent or make other arrangements must be made within 90 days. If nothing is heard from the client within that time, consent to the sale is presumed.*

[8] *A lawyer or law firm ceasing to practice cannot be required to remain in practice because some clients cannot be given actual notice of the proposed purchase. Since these clients cannot themselves consent to the purchase or direct any other disposition of their files, the Rule requires an order from a court having jurisdiction authorizing their transfer or other disposition. The Court can be expected to determine whether reasonable efforts to locate the client have been exhausted, and whether the absent client's legitimate interests will be served by authorizing the transfer of the file so that the purchaser may continue the representation. Preservation of client confidences requires that the petition for a court order be considered in camera.*

[9] *All elements of client autonomy, including the client's absolute right to discharge a lawyer and transfer the*

representation to another, survive the sale of the practice or area of practice.

**Fee Arrangements Between Client and Purchaser**

[10] The sale of the practice or practice area may not be financed by increases in fees charged the clients of the practice. Existing agreements between the seller and the client as to fees and the scope of the work must be honored by the purchaser, unless the client consents after consultation. Furthermore, the purchaser may not intentionally fragment the practice which is the subject of the sale by charging significantly different fees in substantially similar matters. Doing so would make it possible for the purchaser to avoid the obligation to take over the entire practice by charging arbitrarily higher fees for less lucrative matters, thereby increasing the likelihood that those clients would not consent to the new representation.

**Other Applicable Ethical Standards**

[11] Lawyers participating in the sale of a law practice or a practice area are subject to the ethical standards applicable to involving another lawyer in the representation of a client. These include, for example, the seller's obligation to exercise competence in identifying a purchaser qualified to assume the practice and the purchaser's obligation to undertake the representation competently (see Rule 1.1 of these Rules); the obligation to avoid disqualifying conflicts, and to secure client consent after consultation for those conflicts which can be agreed to (see Rule 1.7 regarding conflicts and Rule 1.0(c) for the definition of consultation); and the obligation to protect information relating to the representation (see Rules 1.6 and 1.9).

[12] If approval of the substitution of the purchasing lawyer for the selling lawyer is required by the Rules of any tribunal in which a matter is pending, such approval must be obtained before the matter can be

included in the sale (see Rule 1.16 of these Rules).

**Applicability of the Rule**

[13] This Rule applies to the sale of a law practice of a deceased, disabled, or disappeared lawyer. Thus, the seller may be represented by a non-lawyer representative not subject to these Rules. Since, however, no lawyer may participate in a sale of a law practice that does not conform to the requirements of this Rule, to the extent possible, the purchasing lawyer should ensure that the requirements of this Rule are met.

[14] Admission to or retirement from a law partnership or professional association, retirement plans and similar arrangements, and a sale of tangible assets of a law practice, do not constitute a sale or purchase governed by this Rule.

[15] This Rule does not apply to the transfers of legal representation between lawyers when such transfers are unrelated to the sale of a practice or an area of practice.

**Rule 1.18. DUTIES TO PROSPECTIVE CLIENTS.**

(a) **Definition of a prospective client.** A person who discusses with a lawyer the possibility of forming a client-lawyer relationship with respect to a matter is a prospective client.

(b) **Duty of confidentiality to prospective clients.** Even when no client-lawyer relationship ensues, a lawyer who has had discussions with a prospective client shall not use or reveal information learned in the consultation, except as Rule 1.9 of these Rules would permit with respect to information of a former client.

(c) **General conflict of interest duties apply.** A lawyer subject to paragraph (b) shall not represent a client with interests materially adverse to those of a prospective client in the same or a substantially related matter if the lawyer received information from the prospective client that could be significantly harmful to that person in the matter, except as provided in paragraph (d). If a lawyer is disqualified from representation under this paragraph, no lawyer in a firm with which that lawyer is associated may

knowingly undertake or continue representation in such a matter, except as provided in paragraph (d).

**(d) Representation is allowed with consent or screening.** When the lawyer has received disqualifying information as defined in paragraph (c), representation is permissible if:

(1) both the affected client and the prospective client have given consent after consultation, confirmed in writing, or

(2) the lawyer who received the information did not obtain more disqualifying information than was reasonably necessary to determine whether to represent the prospective client; and

(i) the disqualified lawyer is timely screened from any participation in the matter and is apportioned no part of the fee therefrom; and

(ii) written notice is promptly given to the prospective client.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *Prospective clients, like clients, may disclose information to a lawyer, place documents or other property in the lawyer's custody, or rely on the lawyer's advice. A lawyer's discussions with a prospective client usually are limited in time and depth and leave both the prospective client and the lawyer free (and sometimes required) to proceed no further. Hence, prospective clients should receive some but not all of the protection afforded clients.*

[2] *Not all persons who communicate information to a lawyer are entitled to protection under this Rule. A person who communicates information unilaterally to a lawyer, without any reasonable expectation that the lawyer is willing to discuss the possibility of forming a client-lawyer relationship, is not a "prospective client" within the meaning of paragraph (a).*

[3] *It is often necessary for a prospective client to reveal information to the lawyer during an initial consultation prior to the decision about formation of a client-lawyer relationship. The lawyer often must learn such information to determine whether there is a conflict of interest with an existing client and whether the matter is one that the lawyer is willing to undertake.*

*Paragraph (b) prohibits the lawyer from using or revealing that information, except as permitted by Rule 1.9 of these Rules, even if the client or lawyer decides not to proceed with the representation. The duty exists regardless of how brief the initial conference may be.*

[4] *In order to avoid acquiring disqualifying information from a prospective client, a lawyer considering whether or not to undertake a new matter should limit the initial interview to only such information as reasonably appears necessary for that purpose. Where the information indicates that a conflict of interest or other reason for non-representation exists, the lawyer should so inform the prospective client or decline the representation. If the prospective client wishes to retain the lawyer, and if consent is possible under Rule 1.7 of these Rules, then consent from all affected present or former clients must be obtained before accepting the representation.*

[5] *Even without fulfilling the conditions set forth in paragraph (d), under paragraph (c), the lawyer is not prohibited from representing a client with interests adverse to those of the prospective client in the same or a substantially related matter unless the lawyer has received from the prospective client information that could be significantly harmful if used in the matter.*

[6] *Under paragraph (c), the prohibition in this Rule is imputed to other lawyers as provided in Rule 1.10 of these Rules, but, under paragraph (d), imputation may be avoided if the lawyer obtains consent after consultation, confirmed in writing, of both the prospective and affected clients. In the alternative, imputation may be avoided if all disqualified lawyers are timely screened and written notice is promptly given to the prospective client. See Rule 1.0(l) (requirements for screening procedures). Paragraph (d)(1) does not prohibit the screened lawyer from receiving a salary or partnership share established by prior independent agreement, but that lawyer may not receive compensation*

*directly related to the matter in which the lawyer is disqualified.*

*[7] Notice, including a general description of the subject matter about which the lawyer was consulted, and of the screening procedures employed, generally should be given as soon as practicable after the need for screening becomes apparent.*

*[8] For the duty of competence of a lawyer who gives assistance on the merits of a matter to a prospective client, see Rule 1.1 of these Rules. For a lawyer's duties when a prospective client entrusts valuables or papers to the lawyer's care, see Rule 1.15 of these Rules.*

### **Rule 2.1. ADVISOR.**

In representing a client, a lawyer shall exercise independent professional judgment and render candid advice. In rendering advice, a lawyer may refer not only to law but to other considerations such as moral, economic, social and political factors, that may be relevant to the client's situation.

#### **COMMENTS:**

##### **Scope of Advice**

*[1] A client is entitled to straightforward advice expressing the lawyer's honest assessment. Legal advice often involves unpleasant facts and alternatives that a client may be disinclined to confront. In presenting advice, a lawyer endeavors to sustain the client's morale and may put advice in as acceptable a form as honesty permits. However, a lawyer should not be deterred from giving candid advice by the prospect that the advice will be unpalatable to the client.*

*[2] Advice couched in narrow legal terms may be of little value to a client, especially where practical considerations, such as costs or effects on other people, are predominant. Purely technical legal advice, therefore, can sometimes be inadequate. It is proper for a lawyer to refer to relevant moral and ethical considerations in giving advice. Although a lawyer is not a moral advisor as such, moral and ethical considerations impinge upon most legal*

*questions and may decisively influence how the law will be applied.*

*[3] A client may expressly or impliedly ask the lawyer for purely technical advice. When such a request is made by a client experienced in legal matters, the lawyer may accept it at face value. When such a request is made by a client inexperienced in legal matters, however, the lawyer's responsibility as advisor may include indicating that more may be involved than strictly legal considerations.*

*[4] Matters that go beyond strictly legal questions may also be in the domain of another profession. Family matters can involve problems within the professional competence of psychiatry, clinical psychology, or social work; business matters can involve problems within the competence of the accounting profession or of financial specialists. Where consultation with a professional in another field is itself something a competent lawyer would recommend, the lawyer should make such recommendation. At the same time, a lawyer's advice at its best often consists of recommending a course of action in the face of conflicting recommendations of experts.*

##### **Offering Advice**

*[5] In general, a lawyer is not expected to give advice until asked by the client. However, when a lawyer knows that a client proposes a course of action that is likely to result in substantial adverse legal consequences to the client, the lawyer's duty to the client under Rule 1.4 of these Rules may require that the lawyer offer advice if the client's course of action is related to the representation. Similarly, when a matter is likely to involve litigation, it may be necessary under Rule 1.4 to inform the client of forms of dispute resolution that might constitute reasonable alternatives to litigation. A lawyer ordinarily has no duty to initiate investigation of a client's affairs or to give advice that the client has indicated is unwanted, but a lawyer may*

*initiate advice to a client when doing so appears to be in the client's interest.*

**Rule 2.2. INTERMEDIARY.**

(a) A lawyer may act as intermediary between clients if:

(1) the lawyer consults with each client concerning the implications of the common representation, including the advantages and risks involved, and the effect on the attorney-client privileges, and obtains each client's consent to the common representation;

(2) the lawyer reasonably believes that the matter can be resolved on terms compatible with the clients' best interests, that each client will be able to make adequately informed decisions in the matter and that there is little risk of material prejudice to the interest of any of the clients if the contemplated resolution is unsuccessful; and

(3) the lawyer reasonably believes that the common representation can be undertaken impartially and without improper effect on other responsibilities the lawyer has to any of the clients.

(b) While acting as intermediary, the lawyer shall consult with each client concerning the decisions to be made and the considerations relevant in making them, so that each client can make adequately informed decisions.

(c) A lawyer shall withdraw as intermediary if any of the clients so request, or if any of the conditions stated in paragraph (a) is no longer satisfied. Upon withdrawal, the lawyer shall not continue to represent any of the clients in the matter that was the subject of the intermediation.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *A lawyer acts as intermediary under this Rule when the lawyer represents two or more parties with potentially conflicting interests. A key factor in defining the relationship is whether the parties share responsibility for the lawyer's fee, but the common representation may be inferred from other circumstances. Because confusion can arise as to the lawyer's role where each party is not separately represented, it is important that the lawyer make clear the relationship.*

[2] *The Rule does not apply to a lawyer acting as arbitrator or mediator between or among parties who are not clients of the lawyer, even where the lawyer has been appointed with the concurrence of the parties. In performing such a role the lawyer may be subject to applicable codes of ethics, such as the Code of Ethics for Arbitration in Commercial Disputes prepared by a joint Committee of the American Bar Association and the American Arbitration Association.*

[3] *A lawyer acts as intermediary in seeking to establish or adjust a relationship between clients on an amicable and mutually advantageous basis; for example, in helping to organize a business in which two or more clients are entrepreneurs, working out the financial reorganization of an enterprise in which two or more clients have an interest, arranging a property distribution in settlement of an estate or mediating a dispute between clients. The lawyer seeks to resolve potentially conflicting interests by developing the parties' mutual interests. The alternative can be that each party may have to obtain separate representation, with the possibility in some situations of incurring additional cost, complication or even litigation. Given these and other relevant factors, all the clients may prefer that the lawyer act as intermediary.*

[4] *In considering whether to act as intermediary between clients, a lawyer should be mindful that if the intermediation fails the result can be additional cost, embarrassment and recrimination. In some situations the risk of failure is so great that intermediation is plainly impossible. For example, a lawyer cannot undertake common representation of clients between whom contentious litigation is imminent or who contemplate contentious negotiations. More generally, if the relationship between the parties has already assumed definite antagonism, the possibility that the clients' interests can be adjusted by intermediation ordinarily is not very good.*

[5] *The appropriateness of intermediation can depend on its form. Forms of intermediation range from informal arbitration, where each client's case is presented by the respective client and the lawyer decides the outcome, to mediation, to common representation where the clients' interests are substantially though not entirely compatible. One form may be appropriate in circumstances where another would not. Other relevant factors are whether the lawyer subsequently will represent both parties on a continuing basis and whether the situation involves creating a relationship between the parties or terminating one.*

#### **Confidentiality and Privilege**

[6] *A particularly important factor in determining the appropriateness of intermediation is the effect on client-lawyer confidentiality and the attorney-client privilege. In a common representation, the lawyer is still required both to keep each client adequately informed and to maintain confidentiality of information relating to the representation. See Rules 1.4 and 1.6 of these Rules. Complying with both requirements while acting as intermediary requires a delicate balance. If the balance cannot be maintained, the common representation is improper. With regard to the attorney-client privilege, the prevailing rule is that as between commonly represented clients the privilege does not attach. Hence, it must be assumed that if litigation eventuates between the clients, the privilege will not protect any such communications, and the clients should be so advised.*

[7] *Since the lawyer is required to be impartial between commonly represented clients, intermediation is improper when that impartiality cannot be maintained. For example, a lawyer who has represented one of the clients for a long period and in a variety of matters might have difficulty being impartial between that client and one to*

*whom the lawyer has only recently been introduced.*

#### **Consultation**

[8] *In acting as intermediary between clients, the lawyer is required to consult with the clients on the implications of doing so, and proceed only upon consent based on such a consultation. The consultation should make clear that the lawyer's role is not that of partisanship normally expected in other circumstances.*

[9] *Paragraph (b) is an application of the principle expressed in Rule 1.4 of these Rules. Where the lawyer is intermediary, the clients ordinarily must assume greater responsibility for decisions than when each client is independently represented.*

#### **Withdrawal**

[10] *Common representation does not diminish the rights of each client in the client-lawyer relationship. Each has the right to loyal and diligent representation, the right to discharge the lawyer as stated in Rule 1.16 of these Rules, and the protection of Rule 1.9 concerning obligations to a former client.*

### **Rule 2.3. EVALUATION FOR USE BY THIRD PERSONS.**

(a) A lawyer may provide an evaluation of a matter affecting a client for the use of someone other than the client if the lawyer reasonably believes that making the evaluation is compatible with other aspects of the lawyer's relationship with the client.

(b) When the lawyer knows or reasonably should know that the evaluation is likely to affect the client's interests materially and adversely, the lawyer shall not provide an evaluation unless the client consents after consultation.

(c) Except as disclosure is authorized in connection with a report of an evaluation, information relating to the evaluation is otherwise protected by Rule 1.6 of these Rules.

**COMMENTS: Definition**

[1] An evaluation may be performed at the client's direction or when impliedly authorized in order to carry out the representation. See Rule 1.2 of these Rules. Such an evaluation may be for the primary purpose of establishing information for the benefit of third parties; for example, an opinion concerning the title of property rendered at the behest of a vendor for the information of a prospective purchaser, or at the behest of a borrower for the information of a prospective lender. In some situations, the evaluation may be required by a government agency; for example, an opinion concerning the legality of the securities registered for sale under the securities laws. In other instances, the evaluation may be required by a third person, such as a purchaser of a business.

[2] A legal evaluation should be distinguished from an investigation of a person with whom the lawyer does not have a client-lawyer relationship. For example, a lawyer retained by a purchaser to analyze a vendor's title to property does not have a client-lawyer relationship with the vendor. So also, an investigation into a person's affairs by a government lawyer, or by special counsel employed by the government, is not an evaluation as that term is used in this Rule. The question is whether the lawyer is retained by the person whose affairs are being examined. When the lawyer is retained by that person, the general rules concerning loyalty to client and preservation of confidences apply, which is not the case if the lawyer is retained by someone else. For this reason, it is essential to identify the person by whom the lawyer is retained. This should be made clear not only to the person under examination, but also to others to whom the results are to be made available.

**Duties Owed to Third Person and Client**

[3] When the evaluation is intended for the information or use of a third person, a legal duty to that person may or may not arise. That legal question is beyond the

scope of this Rule. However, since such an evaluation involves a departure from the normal client-lawyer relationship, careful analysis of the situation is required. The lawyer must be satisfied as a matter of professional judgment that making the evaluation is compatible with other functions undertaken on behalf of the client. For example, if the lawyer is acting as advocate in defending the client against charges of fraud, it would normally be incompatible with that responsibility for the lawyer to perform an evaluation for others concerning the same or a related transaction. Assuming no such impediment is apparent, however, the lawyer should advise the client of the implications of the evaluation, particularly the lawyer's responsibilities to third persons and the duty to disseminate the findings.

**Access to and Disclosure of Information**

[4] The quality of an evaluation depends on the freedom and extent of the investigation upon which it is based. Ordinarily a lawyer should have whatever latitude of investigation seems necessary as a matter of professional judgment. Under some circumstances, however, the terms of the evaluation may be limited. For example, certain issues or sources may be categorically excluded, or the scope of search may be limited by time constraints or the non-cooperation of persons having relevant information. Any such limitations which are material to the evaluation should be described in the report. If after a lawyer has commenced an evaluation, the client refuses to comply with the terms upon which it was understood the evaluation was to have been made, the lawyer's obligations are determined by law, having reference to the terms of the client's agreement and the surrounding circumstances.

**Obtaining Client's Informed Consent**

[5] Information relating to an evaluation is protected by Rule 1.6 of these Rules. In many situations, providing an evaluation to a third party poses no significant risk to the client; thus, the lawyer may be impliedly authorized to disclose information to carry out the representation. See Rule 1.6(a). Where, however, it is reasonably likely that providing the evaluation will affect the client's interests materially and adversely, the lawyer must first obtain the client's consent after the client has been adequately informed concerning the important possible effects on the client's interests. See Rules 1.0(c) and 1.6(a) of these Rules.

**Financial Auditors' Requests for Information**

[6] When a question concerning the legal situation of a client arises at the instance of the client's financial auditor and the question is referred to the lawyer, the lawyer's response may be made in accordance with procedures recognized in the legal profession. See, e.g., American Bar Association Statement of Policy Regarding Lawyers' Responses to Auditors' Requests for Information, adopted in 1975.

**Rule 2.4. LAWYER SERVING AS THIRD-PARTY NEUTRAL.**

(a) A lawyer serves as a third-party neutral when the lawyer assists two or more persons who are not clients of the lawyer to reach a resolution of a dispute or other matter that has arisen between them. Service as a third-party neutral may include service as an arbitrator, a mediator, or in such other capacity as will enable the lawyer to assist the parties to resolve the matter.

(b) A lawyer serving as a third-party neutral shall inform unrepresented parties that the lawyer is not representing them. When the lawyer knows or reasonably should know that an unrepresented party does not understand the lawyer's role in the matter, the lawyer shall explain the difference between the

lawyer's role as a third-party neutral and a lawyer's role as one who represents a client.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] Alternative dispute resolution has become a substantial part of the civil justice system. Aside from representing clients in dispute-resolution processes, lawyers often serve as third-party neutrals. A third-party neutral is a person, such as a mediator, arbitrator, conciliator, or evaluator, who assists the parties, represented or unrepresented, in the resolution of a dispute or in the arrangement of a transaction. Whether a third-party neutral serves primarily as a facilitator, evaluator, or decisionmaker depends on the particular process that is either selected by the parties or mandated by a court.

[2] The role of a third-party neutral is not unique to lawyers, although, in some court-connected contexts, only lawyers are allowed to serve in this role or to handle certain types of cases. In performing this role, the lawyer may be subject to court rules or other law that apply either to third-party neutrals generally or to lawyers serving as third-party neutrals. Lawyer-neutrals may also be subject to various codes of ethics, such as the Code of Ethics for Arbitration in Commercial Disputes prepared by a joint committee of the American Bar Association and the American Arbitration Association, or the Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators jointly prepared by the American Bar Association, the American Arbitration Association and the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution.

[3] Unlike nonlawyers who serve as third-party neutrals, lawyers serving in this role may experience unique problems as a result of differences between the role of a third-party neutral and a lawyer's service as a client representative. The potential for confusion is significant when the parties are unrepresented in the process. Thus, paragraph (b) requires a lawyer-neutral to inform unrepresented parties that the lawyer

*is not representing them. For some parties, particularly parties who frequently use dispute-resolution processes, this information will be sufficient. For others, particularly those who are using the process for the first time, more information will be required. Where appropriate, the lawyer should inform unrepresented parties of the important differences between the lawyer's role as third-party neutral and a lawyer's role as a client representative, including the inapplicability of the client-lawyer evidentiary privilege. The extent of disclosure required under this paragraph will depend on the particular parties involved and the subject matter of the proceeding, as well as the particular features of the dispute-resolution process selected.*

*[4] A lawyer who serves as a third-party neutral subsequently may be asked to serve as a lawyer representing a client in the same matter. The conflicts of interest that arise for both the individual lawyer and the lawyer's law firm are addressed in Rule 1.12 of these Rules.*

*[5] Lawyers who represent clients in alternative dispute-resolution processes are governed by the Rules of Professional Conduct. When the dispute-resolution process takes place before a tribunal, (see Rule 1.0(n)) as in binding arbitration, the lawyer's duty of candor is governed by Rule 3.3. Otherwise, the lawyer's duty of candor toward both the third-party neutral and other parties is governed by Rule 4.1.*

### **Rule 3.1. MERITORIOUS CLAIMS AND CONTENTIONS.**

A lawyer shall not bring or defend a proceeding, or assert or controvert an issue therein, unless there is a basis for doing so that is not frivolous, which includes a good faith argument for an extension, modification, or reversal of existing law. A lawyer for the defendant in a criminal proceeding, or the respondent in a proceeding that could result in incarceration, may nevertheless so defend the proceeding as to require that every element of the case be established.

### **COMMENTS:**

*[1] The advocate has a duty to use legal procedure for the fullest benefit of the client's cause, but also a duty not to abuse legal procedure. The law, both procedural and substantive, establishes the limits within which an advocate may proceed. However, the law is not always clear and never is static. Accordingly, in determining the proper scope of advocacy, account must be taken of the law's ambiguities and potential for change.*

*[2] The filing of an action or defense or similar action taken for a client is not frivolous merely because the facts have not first been fully substantiated or because the lawyer expects to develop vital evidence only by discovery. Such action is not frivolous even though the lawyer believes that the client's position ultimately will not prevail. The action is frivolous, however, if the client desires to have the action taken primarily for the purpose of harassing or maliciously injuring a person or if the lawyer is unable either to make a good faith argument on the merits of the action taken or to support the action taken by a good faith argument for an extension, modification or reversal of existing law.*

### **Rule 3.2. EXPEDITING LITIGATION.**

A lawyer shall make reasonable efforts to expedite litigation consistent with the legitimate interests of the client.

### **COMMENT:**

*[1] Dilatory practices bring the administration of justice into disrepute. Significant delay should not be indulged merely for the convenience of the advocates, or for the purposes of frustrating an opposing party's attempt to obtain rightful redress or repose. It is not a justification that similar conduct is often tolerated by the bench and bar. The question is whether a competent lawyer acting in good faith would regard the course of action as having some substantial purpose other than delay. Realizing financial or other benefit from*

*otherwise improper delay in litigation is not a legitimate interest of the client.*

**Rule 3.3. CANDOR TOWARD THE TRIBUNAL.**

(a) A lawyer shall not knowingly:

(1) make a false statement of material fact or law to a tribunal;

(2) fail to disclose a material fact to a tribunal when disclosure is necessary to avoid assisting a criminal or fraudulent act by the client;

(3) fail to disclose to the tribunal legal authority in the controlling jurisdiction known to the lawyer to be directly adverse to the position of the client and not disclosed by opposing counsel; or

(4) offer evidence that the lawyer knows to be false. If a lawyer has offered material evidence and comes to know of its falsity, the lawyer shall take remedial measures to the extent reasonably necessary to rectify the consequences.

(b) The duties stated in paragraphs (a) and (d) continue to the conclusion of the proceeding, and apply even if compliance requires disclosure of information otherwise protected by Rule 1.6(a) of these Rules.

(c) A lawyer may refuse to offer evidence that the lawyer reasonably believes is false.

(d) In an ex parte proceeding, except grand jury proceedings and applications for search warrants, a lawyer shall inform the tribunal of all material facts known to the lawyer which will enable the tribunal to make an informed decision, whether or not the facts are adverse, disclosure of which is not otherwise prohibited by law.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *The advocate's task is to present the client's case with persuasive force. Performance of that duty while maintaining confidences of the client is qualified by the advocate's duty of candor to the tribunal. However, an advocate does not vouch for the evidence submitted in a cause; the tribunal is responsible for assessing its probative value.*

**Representations by a Lawyer**

[2] *An advocate is responsible for pleadings and other documents prepared for*

*litigation, but is usually not required to have personal knowledge of matters asserted therein, for litigation documents ordinarily present assertions by the client, or by someone on the client's behalf, and not assertions by the lawyer. Compare Rule 3.1 of these Rules. However, an assertion purporting to be on the lawyer's own knowledge, as in an affidavit by the lawyer or in a statement in open court, may properly be made only when the lawyer knows the assertion is true or believes it to be true on the basis of a reasonably diligent inquiry. There are circumstances where failure to make a disclosure is the equivalent of an affirmative misrepresentation. The obligation, prescribed in Rule 1.2(d) of these Rules, not to counsel a client to commit or assist the client in committing a fraud applies in litigation. Regarding compliance with Rule 1.2(d), see the comment to that Rule. See also Comment [2] to Rule 8.4(b) of these Rules.*

**Misleading Legal Argument**

[3] *Legal argument based on a knowingly false representation of law constitutes dishonesty toward the tribunal. A lawyer is not required to make a disinterested exposition of the law, but must recognize the existence of pertinent legal authorities. Furthermore, as stated in paragraph (a)(3), an advocate has a duty to disclose directly adverse authority in the controlling jurisdiction which has not been disclosed by the opposing party. The underlying concept is that legal argument is a discussion seeking to determine the legal premises properly applicable to the case.*

**False Evidence**

[4] *When evidence that a lawyer knows to be false is provided by a person who is not the client, the lawyer must refuse to offer it regardless of the client's wishes. Suspicions and hunches are insufficient to substantiate the degree of falsity necessary to refuse to offer evidence.*

[5] *When false evidence is offered by the client, however, a conflict may arise between the lawyer's duty to keep the client's revelations confidential and the duty of candor to the court. Upon ascertaining that material evidence is false, the lawyer should seek to persuade the client that the evidence should not be offered or, if it has been offered, that its false character should immediately be disclosed. If the persuasion is ineffective, the lawyer must take remedial measures to the extent reasonably necessary to rectify the consequences.*

[6] *Except in the defense of a criminal accused, the rule generally recognized is that, if necessary to rectify the situation, an advocate must disclose the existence of the client's deception to the court or to the other party. Such a disclosure can result in grave consequences to the client, including not only a sense of betrayal but also loss of the case and perhaps a prosecution for perjury. But the alternative is that the lawyer cooperate in deceiving the court, thereby subverting the truth-finding process which the adversary system is designed to implement. See Rule 1.2(d) of these Rules. Furthermore, unless it is clearly understood that the lawyer will act upon the duty to disclose the existence of false evidence, the client can simply reject the lawyer's advice to reveal the false evidence and insist that the lawyer keep silent. Thus the client could in effect coerce the lawyer into being a party to fraud on the court.*

#### **Perjury by a Criminal Defendant**

[7] *Whether an advocate for a criminally accused has the same duty of disclosure has been intensely debated. While it is agreed that the lawyer should seek to persuade the client to refrain from perjurious testimony, there has been dispute concerning the lawyer's duty when that persuasion fails. If the confrontation with the client occurs before trial, the lawyer ordinarily can withdraw. Withdrawal before trial may not be possible, however, either because trial is imminent, or because the*

*confrontation with the client does not take place until the trial itself, or because no other counsel is available.*

[8] *The most difficult situation, therefore, arises in a criminal case where the accused insists on testifying when the lawyer knows that the testimony is perjurious. The lawyer's effort to rectify the situation can increase the likelihood of the client's being convicted as well as opening the possibility of a prosecution for perjury. On the other hand, if the lawyer does not exercise control over the proof, the lawyer participates, although in a merely passive way, in deception of the court.*

[9] *Three resolutions of this dilemma have been proposed. One is to permit the accused to testify by a narrative without guidance through the lawyer's questioning. This compromises both contending principles; it exempts the lawyer from the duty to disclose false evidence but subjects the client to an implicit disclosure of information imparted to counsel. Another suggested resolution, of relatively recent origin, is that the advocate be entirely excused from the duty to reveal perjury if the perjury is that of the client. This is a coherent solution but makes the advocate a knowing instrument of perjury.*

[10] *The other resolution of the dilemma is that the lawyer must reveal the client's perjury if necessary to rectify the situation. A criminal accused has a right to the assistance of an advocate, a right to testify and a right of confidential communication with counsel. However, an accused should not have a right to assistance of counsel in committing perjury. Furthermore, an advocate has an obligation, not only in professional ethics but under the law as well, to avoid implication in the commission of perjury or other falsification of evidence. See Rule 1.2(d) of these Rules.*

**Remedial Measures**

[11] *If perjured testimony or false evidence has been offered, the advocate's proper course ordinarily is to remonstrate with the client confidentially. If that fails, the advocate should seek to withdraw if that will remedy the situation. If withdrawal will not remedy the situation or is impossible, the advocate should make disclosure to the court. It is for the court then to determine what should be done - making a statement about the matter to the trier of fact, ordering a mistrial or perhaps nothing. If the false testimony was that of the client, the client may controvert the lawyer's version of their communication when the lawyer discloses the situation to the court. If there is an issue whether the client has committed perjury, the lawyer cannot represent the client in resolution of the issue and a mistrial may be unavoidable. An unscrupulous client might in this way attempt to produce a series of mistrials and thus escape prosecution. However, a second such encounter could be construed as a deliberate abuse of the right to counsel and as such a waiver of the right to further representation.*

**Constitutional Requirements**

[12] *The general rule - that an advocate must disclose the existence of perjury with respect to a material fact, even that of a client - applies to defense counsel in criminal cases, as well as in other instances. However, the definition of the lawyer's ethical duty in such a situation may be qualified by constitutional provisions for due process and the right to counsel in criminal cases. In some jurisdictions these provisions have been construed to require that counsel present an accused as a witness if the accused wishes to testify, even if counsel knows the testimony will be false. The obligation of the advocate under these Rules is subordinate to such a constitutional requirement.*

**Duration of Obligation**

[13] *A practical time limit on the obligation to rectify the presentation of false evidence has to be established. The conclusion of the proceeding is a reasonably definite point for the termination of the obligation.*

**Refusing to Offer Proof Believed to be False**

[14] *Generally speaking, a lawyer has authority to refuse to offer testimony or other proof that the lawyer believes is untrustworthy. Offering such proof may reflect adversely on the lawyer's ability to discriminate in the quality of evidence and thus impair the lawyer's effectiveness as an advocate. In criminal cases, however, a lawyer may, in some jurisdictions, be denied this authority by constitutional requirements governing the right to counsel.*

**Ex Parte Proceedings**

[15] *Ordinarily, an advocate has the limited responsibility of presenting one side of the matters that a tribunal should consider in reaching a decision; the conflicting position is expected to be presented by the opposing party. However, in an ex parte proceeding, such as an application for a temporary restraining order, there is no balance of presentation by opposing advocates. The object of an ex parte proceeding is nevertheless to yield a substantially just result. The judge has an affirmative responsibility to accord the absent party just consideration. The lawyer for the represented party has the correlative duty to make disclosures of material facts known to the lawyer and that the lawyer reasonably believes are necessary to an informed decision.*

**Rule 3.4. FAIRNESS TO OPPOSING PARTY AND COUNSEL.**

A lawyer shall not:

(a) unlawfully obstruct another party's access to evidence or unlawfully alter, destroy or conceal a document or other material having potential evidentiary value. A lawyer shall not counsel or assist another person to do any such act;

(b) falsify evidence or counsel or assist a witness to testify falsely;

(c) offer an inducement that is prohibited by law or pay, offer to pay, or acquiesce in the payment of compensation to a witness contingent upon the content of the witness' testimony or the outcome of the case. But a lawyer may advance, guarantee, or acquiesce in the payment of:

(1) expenses reasonably incurred by a witness in attending or testifying;

(2) reasonable compensation to a witness for the witness' loss of time in attending or testifying; or

(3) a reasonable fee for the professional services of an expert witness;

(d) advise or cause a person to secrete himself or herself or to leave the jurisdiction of a tribunal for the purpose of making the person unavailable as a witness therein;

(e) knowingly disobey an obligation under the rules of a tribunal except for an open refusal based on an assertion that no valid obligation exists;

(f) in pretrial procedure, make a frivolous discovery request or fail to make reasonably diligent effort to comply with a legally proper discovery request by an opposing party;

(g) in trial, allude to any matter that the lawyer does not reasonably believe is relevant or that will not be supported by admissible evidence, assert personal knowledge of facts in issue except when testifying as a witness, or state a personal opinion as to the justness of a cause, the credibility of a witness, the culpability of a civil litigant or the guilt or innocence of an accused;

(h) request a person other than a client to refrain from voluntarily giving relevant information to another party unless:

(1) the person is a relative or an employee or other agent of a client; and

(2) the lawyer reasonably believes that the person's interests will not be adversely affected by refraining from giving such information; or

(i) present, participate in presenting, or threaten to present criminal charges solely to obtain an advantage in a civil matter.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *The procedure of the adversary system contemplates that the evidence in a case is to be marshalled competitively by the contending parties. Fair competition in the adversary system is secured by prohibitions against destruction or concealment of evidence, improperly influencing witnesses, obstructive tactics in discovery procedure, and the like.*

[2] *Documents and other items of evidence are often essential to establish a claim or defense. Subject to evidentiary privileges, the right of an opposing party, including the government, to obtain evidence through discovery or subpoena is an important procedural right. The exercise of that right can be frustrated if relevant material is altered, concealed or destroyed. Applicable law in many jurisdictions makes it an offense to destroy material for purpose of impairing its availability in a pending proceeding or one whose commencement can be foreseen. Falsifying evidence is also generally a criminal offense. Paragraph (a) applies to evidentiary material generally, including computerized information.*

[3] *Paragraph (h) permits a lawyer to advise employees of a client to refrain from giving information to another party, for the employees may identify their interests with those of the client. See also Rule 4.2 of these Rules.*

**Rule 3.5. IMPARTIALITY AND DECORUM OF THE TRIBUNAL.**

(a) **Influencing Decision Maker.** A lawyer shall not seek to influence a judge, juror, prospective juror, discharged juror, or other decision maker by means prohibited by law.

(b) **Harassing or Embarrassing Decision Maker.** A lawyer shall not harass a judge, juror, prospective juror, discharged juror, or other decision maker or embarrass such person in such capacity.

(c) **Disruption of Tribunal.** A lawyer shall not engage in conduct intended or reasonably likely to disrupt a tribunal.

(d) **Communication with a Judge or Official.** In an adversary proceeding, a lawyer shall not communicate as to the merits of the cause with a judge or an official before whom the proceeding is pending except:

(1) in the course of the official proceeding in the cause;

(2) in writing if the lawyer promptly delivers a copy of the writing to the opposing counsel or to the adverse party if not represented by a lawyer; or

(3) orally upon notice to opposing counsel or to the adverse party if not represented by a lawyer.

(e) **Communication with Jurors.** A lawyer shall not:

(1) before the trial of a case with which the lawyer is connected, communicate with anyone the lawyer knows to be a member of the venire from which the jury will be selected, with respect to the case or with the intent or reasonable likelihood of influencing the member with respect to the case;

(2) during the trial of a case with which the lawyer is connected, communicate with a juror except in the course of the proceedings, with the judge and opposing counsel present;

(3) during the trial of a case with which the lawyer is not connected, communicate with a juror concerning the case;

(4) after dismissal of the jury in a case with which the lawyer is connected, communicate with a juror regarding the trial except that:

(i) upon leave of the court, which leave shall be freely granted, a lawyer may ask questions of, or respond to questions from, jurors about the trial, provided that the lawyer does so in a manner that is not calculated to harass or embarrass any juror and

does not seek to influence the juror's actions in future jury service in any particular case; and

(ii) upon leave of the court for good cause shown, a lawyer who believes there are grounds for legal challenge to a verdict may conduct an in-court examination of jurors or former jurors to determine whether the verdict is subject to challenge. A motion for in-court examination of discharged jurors under this subsection (e)(4)(ii) shall be served no later than 10 days after the judgment has been entered unless good cause is shown for the failure to serve the motion within that time. If the examination is permitted, the court shall prescribe the time, manner, place, and scope of the examination.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *Many forms of improper influence upon a tribunal are proscribed by criminal law. A lawyer is required to avoid contributing to a violation of such provisions.*

[2] *The advocate's function is to present evidence and argument so that the cause may be decided according to law. Refraining from abusive or obstreperous conduct is a corollary of the advocate's right to speak on behalf of litigants. A lawyer may stand firm against abuse by a judge but should avoid reciprocation; the judge's default is no justification for similar dereliction by an advocate. An advocate can present the cause, protect the record for subsequent review, and preserve professional integrity by patient firmness no less effectively than by belligerence or theatrics.*

[3] *It has long been recognized and acknowledged that post-discharge respectful conduct between a trial lawyer (or those acting on the lawyer's behalf) and jurors before whom the lawyer has appeared benefits both the lawyer and the jurors. The lawyer may gain insights that enable the lawyer to better represent future clients and the juror may have some mysteries (usually related to the admission or rejection of evidence) solved so as to better appreciate the workings of the justice system. In addition, it is not at all uncommon for*

lawyers and judges to talk casually about a former case that has become final. Hawai'i's original HRPC 3.5(a) and (b), adopted in December 1993, provided:

*A lawyer shall not:*

(a) seek to influence a judge, juror, prospective juror or other official by means prohibited by law;

(b) communicate *ex parte* with such a person except as permitted by law; or

(c) engage in conduct intended to disrupt a tribunal.

Original HRPC 3.5(a) and (b) appeared to preclude "all post-trial communications between attorneys and jurors, relating to the subject matter of the trial, in the presence of all parties to the proceeding or their legal representatives." *State v. Furutani*, 76 Hawai'i 172, 177, n.8, 873 P.2d 51, 56 n.8 (1994). The same prohibition would logically have applied to lawyer-judge post-decision contacts. The supreme court asserted that HRPC 3.5 prohibited post-trial contact that was permissible under DR 7-108 of the prior Code of Professional Responsibility. *Id.*

As interpreted, original HRPC 3.5 prohibited post-trial contact in an oblique manner: original paragraph (a) precluded seeking "to influence a judge, juror, prospective juror or other official" while original paragraph (b) precluded "communicat[ion] *ex parte* with such a person." A discharged juror was not specifically referenced in original HRPC 3.5(a)-(c). Original HRPC 3.5 referred to jurors and prospective jurors. There are sound public policy reasons for precluding *ex parte* contact with jurors and prospective jurors, and limiting contact with discharged jurors.

Enforcement of original HRPC 3.5(b) was enjoined by the United States District Court for the District of Hawai'i in *Rapp v. Disciplinary Board*, United States District Court Civ. No. 95-00779 DAE. While the *Rapp* case was pending in federal court the supreme court proposed, the Hawai'i State Bar Association approved, and, on May 8,

1996, the supreme court adopted amendments so that HRPC 3.5 provided:

Rule 3.5 *I M P A R T I A L I T Y A N D DECORUM OF THE TRIBUNAL*

(a) *A lawyer shall not:*

(1) seek to influence a judge, juror, prospective juror, or other official by means prohibited by law;

(2) communicate *ex parte* with such a person except as provided in subsection (b) of this Rule; or

(3) engage in conduct intended to disrupt a tribunal.

(b) *After the jury is discharged, a lawyer may ask questions of, or respond to questions from, jurors provided the lawyer does so in a manner that neither harasses nor embarrasses the juror and does not seek to influence the juror's actions in future jury service. Likewise, after final disposition of a matter a lawyer may ask questions of a judge or other official regarding the matter and may respond to questions from the judge or other official, provided the lawyer does so in a manner that neither harasses nor embarrasses the judge or official and does not seek to influence the judge's or official's actions in future judicial or official service. A juror or judge is free to refuse to comment or respond.*

COMMENTS:

*In anticipation of further amendment after a decision in Rapp v. Disciplinary Board, subsection (b) was intended to be an interim rule.*

*In Rapp, the United States District Court for the District of Hawai'i concluded:*

*. . . that [original HRPC] 3.5(b) as interpreted and applied suffer[ed] from two chief infirmities. First, the language of the rule prohibiting *ex parte* communication with jurors "except as permitted by law," is unconstitutionally vague and overbroad. . . . The plain language of [original] Rule 3.5(b) [did] not specifically indicate whether a judge ha[d] the authority to grant leave, or whether "good cause" or "exigent*

circumstances" for seeing the interviews must be shown. Moreover, this court has not found any Hawai'i case law which either sets forth an exception to [original] Rule 3.5(b) in circumstances where counsel suspect that jury misconduct has occurred or a procedure that an attorney needs to follow if that attorney does have suspicions. Additionally, no Hawai'i case has discussed what might amount to good cause warranting jury interviews, if good cause is the applicable standard. . . . [I]t is unclear how the rule would be applied in circumstances which may warrant the grant of post verdict interviews by a trial court. That is, a description of the mechanism for review by a trial judge is conspicuously absent from the rule. Moreover, the standard "as permitted by law" provides little guidance to lawyers as to when jurors can appropriately be contacted. . . .

Second, the probable efficacy of [original] Rule 3.5, as it has been interpreted by the Hawai'i Supreme Court, in protecting jury members and their verdicts is minimal at best. . . . If the aim of Rule 3.5 is to protect the sanctity of jury verdicts and prevent jury harassment, it misses the mark. Instead, as interpreted, the rule would theoretically allow two unscrupulous lawyers who agree to interview jurors together, to engage in a jury harassment "free for all" with no court supervision. Clearly, the limitations [original] Rule 3.5 places on ex parte jury communications is not well-tailored to achieve the State's compelling interests.

The United States District Court concluded:

. . . the State Defendants have demonstrated a compelling interest in preserving the integrity of the trial process by protecting jurors from post trial harassment and unnecessary intrusion by lawyers. There is no question that a properly tailored rule . . . can pass constitutional muster.

The United States District recognized two compelling state interests that could

justify a rule restricting attorney contact with jurors: "[1] the public policy holding jury deliberations and verdicts inviolable and [2] the aim of protecting the privacy of jurors." However, the United States District Court concluded original HRPC 3.5(b) was not sufficiently tailored to meet the State's compelling interests and enjoined its enforcement.

Upon review of the United States District Court's order, the Supreme Court of Hawai'i proposed additional amendments to Rule 3.5. After discussions with the Hawai'i State Bar Association and the Disciplinary Board and consideration of the concerns expressed by those entities, the supreme court adopted the current Rule. The current Rule eliminates the phrase "as permitted by law." In furtherance of the valid public policy interests in keeping jury deliberations inviolable and protecting the privacy of jurors, subdivision (e) retains the trial judge as the gatekeeper between the attorneys and the jury.

Further, subdivision (e) sets standards by which to determine requests for post-discharge juror interviews. Subdivision (e)(4)(i) recognizes that respectful post-discharge debriefing of a jury is beneficial to both lawyers and jurors. The possibility of jury harassment requires the oversight of the judge, but where the purpose of the requested interview is to educate the lawyer and the jury, the value of respectful debriefing is such that leave for respectful post-trial debriefing should be freely granted. Subdivision (e)(4)(i) presumes that discharged jurors are free to decline participation in such post-trial debriefings. Subdivision (e)(4)(ii) is designed to enforce the policies of holding jury thought processes inviolable and protecting the privacy of jurors. Thus, to avoid juror harassment by unscrupulous lawyers and lawyers on fishing expeditions, as well as the jury harassment free for all referred to by the United States District Court, an attorney seeking to challenge a verdict due to jury irregularity must (i) show

*good cause for a belief that grounds for a challenge exist, (ii) obtain leave of the court to question a juror or jurors and, if the motion to examine the jury is granted, (iii) conduct the examination in court and under conditions set by the judge. In sum, Rule 3.5(e) provides oversight by the trial judge, circumstances in which communications with jurors are permitted, and standards by which to decide requests to interview discharged jurors.*

*[4] The dignity of the court is to be respected and maintained at all times. Court proceedings shall be conducted in a manner that protects the dignity and seriousness of the proceedings. Lawyers appearing before a court, including remote hearings, shall dress in appropriate courtroom attire, unless exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise, and shall engage in conduct that is respectful to the court, the litigants, and other counsel. For remote hearings, a lawyer shall appear with the video camera on and shall be clearly visible, unless otherwise excused by the court.*

*(Amended August 22, 2023, effective January 1, 2024.)*

### **Rule 3.6. TRIAL PUBLICITY.**

(a) A lawyer who is participating or has participated in the investigation or litigation of a matter shall not make an extrajudicial statement that the lawyer knows or reasonably should know will be disseminated by means of public communication and will have a substantial likelihood of materially prejudicing an adjudicative proceeding in the matter.

(b) Notwithstanding paragraph (a), a lawyer may state:

(1) the claim, offense or defense involved and, except when prohibited by law, the identity of the persons involved;

(2) information contained in a public record;

(3) that an investigation of a matter is in progress;

(4) the scheduling or result of any step in litigation;

(5) a request for assistance in obtaining evidence and information necessary thereto;

(6) a warning of danger concerning the behavior

of a person involved, when there is reason to believe that there exists the likelihood of substantial harm to an individual or to the public interest; and

(7) in a criminal case, in addition to subparagraphs (1) through (6):

(i) the identity, residence, occupation and family status of the accused;

(ii) if the accused has not been apprehended, information necessary to aid in the apprehension of that person;

(iii) the fact, time and place of arrest; and

(iv) the identity of investigating and arresting officers or agencies and the length of the investigation.

(c) Notwithstanding paragraph (a), a lawyer may make a statement that a reasonable lawyer would believe is required to protect a client from the substantial undue prejudicial effect of recent publicity not initiated by the lawyer or the lawyer's client. A statement made pursuant to this paragraph shall be limited to such information as is necessary to mitigate the recent adverse publicity.

(d) No lawyer associated in a firm or government agency with a lawyer subject to paragraph (a) shall make a statement prohibited by paragraph (a).

### **COMMENTS:**

*[1] It is difficult to strike a balance between protecting the right to a fair trial and safeguarding the right of free expression. Preserving the right to a fair trial necessarily entails some curtailment of the information that may be disseminated about a party prior to trial, particularly where trial by jury is involved. If there were no such limits, the result would be the practical nullification of the protective effect of the rules of forensic decorum and the exclusionary rules of evidence. On the other hand, there are vital social interests served by the free dissemination of information about events having legal consequences and about legal proceedings themselves. The public has a right to know about threats to its safety and measures aimed at assuring its security. It also has a legitimate interest in the conduct of judicial proceedings, particularly in matters of general public*

concern. Furthermore, the subject matter of legal proceedings is often of direct significance in debate and deliberation over questions of public policy.

[2] Special rules of confidentiality may validly govern proceedings in juvenile, domestic relations and mental disability proceedings, and perhaps other types of litigation. Rule 3.4(e) of these Rules requires compliance with such rules.

[3] The Rule sets forth a basic general prohibition against a lawyer making statements that the lawyer knows or should know will have a substantial likelihood of materially prejudicing an adjudicative proceeding. Recognizing that the public value of informed commentary is great and the likelihood of prejudice to a proceeding by the commentary of a lawyer who is not involved in the proceeding is small, the Rule applies only to lawyers who are, or who have been, involved in the investigation or litigation of a case, and their associates.

[4] Paragraph (b) identifies specific matters about which a lawyer's statements would not ordinarily be considered to present a substantial likelihood of material prejudice, and should not in any event be considered prohibited by the general prohibition of paragraph (a). Paragraph (b) is not intended to be an exhaustive listing of the subjects upon which a lawyer may make a statement, but statements on other matters may be subject to paragraph (a).

[5] There are, on the other hand, certain subjects that are more likely than not to have a material prejudicial effect on a proceeding, particularly when they refer to a civil matter triable to a jury, a criminal matter, or any other proceeding that could result in incarceration. These subjects relate to:

(1) the character, credibility, reputation or criminal record of a party, suspect in a criminal investigation, or witness, or the identity of a witness, or the expected testimony of a party or witness;

(2) in a criminal case or proceeding that could result in incarceration, the possibility of a plea of guilty to the offense

or the existence or contents of any confession, admission, or statement given by a defendant or suspect or that person's refusal or failure to make a statement;

(3) the performance or results of any examination or test or the refusal or failure of a person to submit to an examination or test, or the identity or nature of physical evidence expected to be presented;

(4) any opinion as to the guilt or innocence of a defendant or suspect in a criminal case or proceeding that could result in incarceration;

(5) information that the lawyer knows or reasonably should know is likely to be inadmissible as evidence in a trial and that would, if disclosed, create a substantial risk of prejudicing an impartial trial; or

(6) the fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime, unless there is included therein a statement explaining that the charge is merely an accusation and that the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

[6] Another relevant factor in determining prejudice is the nature of the proceeding involved. Criminal jury trials will be most sensitive to extrajudicial speech. Civil trials may be less sensitive. Non-jury hearings and arbitration proceedings may be even less affected. The Rule will still place limitations on prejudicial comments in these cases, but the likelihood of prejudice may be different depending on the type of proceeding.

[7] Finally, extrajudicial statements that might otherwise raise a question under this Rule may be permissible when they are made in response to statements made publicly by another party, another party's lawyer, or third persons, where a reasonable lawyer would believe a public response is required in order to avoid prejudice to the lawyer's client. When prejudicial statements have been publicly made by others, responsive statements may have the salutary effect of lessening any resulting adverse impact on the adjudicative proceeding. Such responsive statements should be limited to contain only such information as is

*necessary to mitigate undue prejudice created by the statements made by others.*

### **Rule 3.7. LAWYER AS WITNESS.**

(a) A lawyer shall not act as advocate at a trial in which the lawyer is likely to be a necessary witness unless:

- (1) the testimony relates to an uncontested issue;
- (2) the testimony relates to the nature and value of legal services rendered in the case; or
- (3) disqualification of the lawyer would work substantial hardship on the client.

(b) A lawyer may act as advocate in a trial in which another lawyer in the lawyer's firm is likely to be called as a witness unless precluded from doing so by Rule 1.7 or Rule 1.9 of these Rules.

#### **COMMENTS:**

[1] *Combining the roles of advocate and witness can prejudice the tribunal and the opposing party and can also involve a conflict of interest between the lawyer and client.*

#### **Advocate-Witness Rule**

[2] *The tribunal may object when the trier of fact may be confused or misled by a lawyer serving as both advocate and witness. The opposing party may object where the combination of roles may prejudice that party's rights in the litigation. A witness is required to testify on the basis of personal knowledge, while an advocate is expected to explain and comment on evidence given by others. It may not be clear whether a statement by an advocate-witness should be taken as proof or as an analysis of the proof.*

[3] *To protect the tribunal, paragraph (a) prohibits a lawyer from simultaneously serving as advocate and necessary witness except in those circumstances specified in paragraphs (a)(1) through (a)(3). Paragraph (a)(1) recognizes that if the testimony will be uncontested, the ambiguities in the dual role are purely theoretical. Paragraph (a)(2) recognizes that where the testimony concerns the extent and value of legal services rendered in the action*

*in which the testimony is offered, permitting the lawyers to testify avoids the need for a second trial with new counsel to resolve that issue. Moreover, in such a situation the judge has first hand knowledge of the matter in issue; hence, there is less dependence on the adversary process to test the credibility of the testimony.*

[4] *Apart from these two exceptions, paragraph (a)(3) recognizes that a balancing is required between the interests of the client and those of the tribunal and of the opposing party. Whether the tribunal is likely to be misled or the opposing party is likely to suffer prejudice depends on the nature of the case, the importance and probable tenor of the lawyer's testimony, and the probability that the lawyer's testimony will conflict with that of other witnesses. Even if there is risk of such prejudice, in determining whether the lawyer should be disqualified due regard must be given to the effect of disqualification on the lawyer's client. It is relevant that one or both parties could reasonably foresee that the lawyer would probably be a witness. The conflict of interest principles stated in Rules 1.7, 1.9 and 1.10 of these Rules have no application to this aspect of the problem.*

[5] *A recurring situation involves the lawyer as impeaching witness, that is, as the means by which another witness' prior inconsistent statement is to be proved. In such a situation the need for such impeachment should be foreseen not only in preparation for trial but even in advance of the initial witness interview that produced the impeaching material. Cf. ABA Standards Relating to the Administration of Criminal Justice, The Defense Function, Standard 4-4.3(e): "[The lawyer] should avoid interviewing a prospective witness except in the presence of a third person."*

[6] *Because the tribunal is not likely to be misled when a lawyer acts as advocate in a trial in which another lawyer in the lawyer's firm will testify as a necessary witness, paragraph (b) permits the lawyer to*

do so, except in situations involving a conflict of interest.

**Conflict of Interest**

[7] In determining if it is permissible to act as advocate in a trial in which the lawyer will be a necessary witness, the lawyer must also consider that the dual role may give rise to a conflict of interest that will require compliance with Rule 1.7 or Rule 1.9 of these Rules. For example, if there is likely to be substantial conflict between the testimony of the client and that of the lawyer, the representation involves a conflict of interest that requires compliance with Rule 1.7. This would be true even though the lawyer might not be prohibited by paragraph (a) from simultaneously serving as advocate and witness because the lawyer's disqualification would work as a substantial hardship on the client. Similarly, a lawyer who might be permitted to simultaneously serve as an advocate and a witness by paragraph (a)(3) might be precluded from doing so by Rule 1.9. The problem can arise whether the lawyer is called as a witness on behalf of the client or is called by the opposing party. Determining whether or not such a conflict exists is primarily the responsibility of the lawyer involved. If there is a conflict of interest, the lawyer must secure the client's consent after consultation, confirmed in writing. In some cases, the lawyer will be precluded from seeking the client's consent. See Rule 1.7. See Rule 1.0(b) for the definition of "confirmed in writing" and Rule 1.0(c) for the definition of "consultation."

[8] Paragraph (b) provides that a lawyer is not disqualified from serving as an advocate because a lawyer with whom the lawyer is associated in a firm is precluded from doing so by paragraph (a). If, however, the testifying lawyer would also be disqualified by Rule 1.7 or Rule 1.9 of these Rules from representing the client in the matter, other lawyers in the firm will be precluded from representing the client by

Rule 1.10, unless the client consents after consultation under the conditions stated in Rule 1.7.

(Amended October 21, 2013, effective January 1, 2014.

**Rule 3.8. PERFORMING THE DUTY OF PUBLIC PROSECUTOR OR OTHER GOVERNMENT LAWYER.**

A public prosecutor or other government lawyer shall:

(a) not institute or cause to be instituted criminal charges when the prosecutor or government lawyer knows or it is obvious that the charges are not supported by probable cause; and

(b) make timely disclosure to the defense of all evidence or information known to the prosecutor that tends to negate the guilt of the accused or mitigates the offense, and, in connection with sentencing, disclose to the defense all unprivileged mitigating information known to the prosecutor, except when the prosecutor is relieved of this responsibility by a protective order of the tribunal.

(c) When a prosecutor knows of new, credible, and material evidence creating a reasonable likelihood that a convicted defendant did not commit an offense of which the defendant was convicted, the prosecutor shall

(1) promptly disclose that evidence to an appropriate court or authority; and

(2) if the conviction was obtained in the State of Hawai'i, promptly disclose that evidence to the defendant and the office of the public defender, unless a court orders otherwise.

(d) A prosecutor's independent judgment, made in good faith, that the new evidence is not of such nature as to trigger the obligations of section (c), though subsequently determined to have been erroneous, does not constitute a violation of this Rule.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] A prosecutor has the responsibility of a minister of justice and not simply that of an advocate. This responsibility carries with it specific obligations to see that the defendant is accorded procedural justice, that guilt is decided upon the basis of sufficient evidence, and that special precautions are

taken to prevent and to rectify the convictions of innocent persons. The extent of mandated remedial action is a matter of debate. See, e.g., *ABA Standards of Criminal Justice Relating to Prosecution Function*. Competent representation may require a prosecutor to undertake some procedural and remedial measures as a matter of obligation. See also Rule 3.3(d) of these Rules, governing *ex parte* proceedings. Applicable law may require other measures by the prosecutor. Knowing disregard of those obligations or a systematic abuse of prosecutorial discretion could constitute a violation of Rule 8.4 of these Rules.

[2] The exception in paragraph (b) recognizes that a prosecutor may seek an appropriate protective order from the tribunal if disclosure of information to the defense could result in substantial harm to an individual or to the public interest.

[3] “Defense” as used in paragraph (b) refers to a defense lawyer or a defendant if unrepresented.

[4] See Rule 3.6(d) of these Rules for restrictions on extrajudicial statements by investigators and other persons employed by lawyers in criminal cases.

[5] With respect to paragraph (c), consistent with the objectives of Rules 4.2 and 4.3 of these Rules, disclosure to a represented defendant must be made through the defendant’s counsel, and, in the case of an unrepresented defendant, would ordinarily be accompanied by a request to a court for the appointment of counsel to assist the defendant in taking such legal measures as may be appropriate.

(Amended October 21, 2013, effective January 1, 2014.)

**Rule 3.9. A D V O C A T E I N  
N O N - A D J U D I C A T I V E  
P R O C E E D I N G S.**

A lawyer representing a client before a legislative or administrative body in a nonadjudicative proceeding shall disclose that the appearance is in a representative capacity and shall conform to the

provisions of Rules 3.3(a) through (c), 3.4(a) through (e), and 3.5 of these Rules.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] In representation before bodies such as legislatures, municipal councils, and executive and administrative agencies acting in a rule-making or policy-making capacity, lawyers present facts, formulate issues and advance argument in the matters under consideration. The decision-making body, like a court, should be able to rely on the integrity of the submissions made to it. A lawyer appearing before such a body should deal with the tribunal honestly and in conformity with applicable rules of procedure. See Rules 3.3(a) through (c), 3.4(a) through (e), and 3.5 of these Rules.

[2] Lawyers have no exclusive right to appear before non-adjudicative bodies, as they do before a court. The requirements of this Rule therefore may subject lawyers to regulations inapplicable to advocates who are not lawyers. However, legislatures and administrative agencies have a right to expect lawyers to deal with them as they deal with courts.

[3] This Rule only applies when a lawyer represents a client in connection with an official hearing or meeting of a governmental agency or a legislative body to which the lawyer or the lawyer’s client is presenting evidence or argument. It does not apply to representation of a client in a negotiation or other bilateral transaction with a governmental agency or in connection with an application for a license or other privilege or the client’s compliance with generally applicable reporting requirements, such as filing income tax returns. Nor does it apply to the presentation of a client in connection with an investigation or examination of the client’s affairs conducted by government investigators or examiners. Representation in such a transaction is governed by Rules 4.1 through 4.4 of these Rules.

**Rule 4.1. TRUTHFULNESS IN STATEMENTS TO OTHERS.**

In the course of representing a client a lawyer shall not knowingly:

- (a) make a false statement of material fact or law to a third person; or
- (b) fail to disclose a material fact to a third person when disclosure is necessary to avoid assisting a criminal or fraudulent act by a client.

**COMMENTS:****Misrepresentation**

[1] *A lawyer is required to be truthful when dealing with others on a client's behalf, but generally has no affirmative duty to inform an opposing party of relevant facts. A misrepresentation can occur if the lawyer incorporates or affirms a statement of another person that the lawyer knows is false. Misrepresentations can also occur by partially true but misleading statements or omissions that are the equivalent of affirmative false statements. For dishonest conduct that does not amount to a false statement or for misrepresentations by a lawyer other than in the course of representing a client, see Rule 8.4 of these Rules.*

**Statements of Fact**

[2] *This Rule refers to statements of fact. Whether a particular statement should be regarded as one of fact can depend on the circumstances. Under generally accepted conventions in negotiation, certain types of statements ordinarily are not taken as statements of material fact. Estimates of price or value placed on the subject of a transaction and a party's intentions as to an acceptable settlement of claim are in this category, and so is the existence of an undisclosed principal except where nondisclosure of the principal would constitute fraud. Lawyers should be mindful of their obligations under applicable law to avoid criminal and tortious misrepresentation.*

**Crime or Fraud by Client**

[3] *Under Rule 1.2(d) of these Rules, a lawyer is prohibited from counseling or assisting a client in conduct that the lawyer knows is criminal or fraudulent. Paragraph (b) states a specific application of the principle set forth in Rule 1.2(d) and addresses the situation where a client's crime or fraud takes the form of a lie or misrepresentation. Ordinarily, a lawyer can avoid assisting a client's crime or fraud by withdrawing from the representation. Sometimes it may be necessary for the lawyer to give notice of the fact of the withdrawal and to disaffirm an opinion, document, affirmation or the like. In extreme cases, substantive law may require a lawyer to disclose information relating to the representation to avoid being deemed to have assisted the client's crime or fraud. See Rules 1.2 and 1.6.*

**Rule 4.2. COMMUNICATION WITH PERSON REPRESENTED BY COUNSEL.**

In representing a client, a lawyer shall not communicate about the subject of the representation with a person the lawyer knows to be represented by another lawyer in the matter, unless the lawyer has the consent of the other lawyer or is authorized to do so by law or a court order.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *This Rule does not prohibit communication with a represented person, or an employee or agent of such a person, concerning matters outside the representation. For example, the existence of a controversy between a government agency and a private party, or between two organizations, does not prohibit a lawyer for either from communicating with nonlawyer representatives of the other regarding a separate matter. Also, parties to a matter may communicate directly with each other and a lawyer having independent justification or legal authority for communicating with a represented person is permitted to do so. Communications*

authorized by law include, for example, the right of a party to a controversy with a government agency to speak with government officials about the matter.

[2] Communications authorized by law also include constitutionally permissible investigative activities of lawyers representing governmental entities, directly or through investigative agents, prior to the commencement of criminal or civil enforcement proceedings, where there is applicable judicial precedent that either has found the activity permissible under this Rule or has found this Rule inapplicable. However, the Rule imposes ethical restrictions that go beyond those imposed by constitutional provisions.

[3] This Rule also applies to communications with any person whether or not a party to a formal adjudicative proceeding, contract or negotiation, who is represented by counsel concerning the matter to which the communication relates.

[4] In the case of an organization, this Rule prohibits communications by a lawyer for another person or entity concerning the matter in representation with persons having a managerial responsibility on behalf of the organization, and with any other person whose act or omission in connection with that matter may be imputed to the organization for purposes of civil or criminal liability or whose statement may constitute an admission on the part of the organization. If an agent or employee of the organization is represented in the matter by his or her own counsel, the consent by that counsel to a communication will be sufficient for purposes of this Rule. Compare Rule 3.4(h) of these Rules.

[5] The prohibition on communications with a represented person only applies, however, in circumstances where the lawyer knows that the person is in fact represented in the matter to be discussed. This means that the lawyer has actual knowledge of the fact of the representation; but such actual knowledge may be inferred from the circumstances. See

Rule 1.0(f) of these Rules. Such an inference may arise in circumstances where there is substantial reason to believe that the person with whom communication is sought is represented in the matter to be discussed. Thus, a lawyer cannot evade the requirement of obtaining the consent of counsel by closing eyes to the obvious.

[6] In the event the person with whom the lawyer communicates is not known to be represented by counsel in the matter, the lawyer's communications are subject to Rule 4.3 of these Rules.

### **Rule 4.3. DEALING WITH UNREPRESENTED PERSON.**

(a) In dealing on behalf of a client with a person who is not represented by counsel, a lawyer shall not state or imply that the lawyer is disinterested. When the lawyer knows or reasonably should know that the unrepresented person misunderstands the lawyer's role in the matter, the lawyer shall make reasonable efforts to correct the misunderstanding.

(b) The lawyer shall not give legal advice to an unrepresented person, other than the advice to secure counsel, if the lawyer knows or reasonably should know that the interests of such a person are or have a reasonable possibility of being in conflict with the interests of the lawyer's client.

#### **COMMENTS:**

[1] An unrepresented person, particularly one not experienced in dealing with legal matters, might assume that a lawyer is disinterested in loyalties or is a disinterested authority on the law even when the lawyer represents a client. In order to avoid a misunderstanding, a lawyer will typically need to identify the lawyer's client and, where necessary, explain that the client has interests opposed to those of the unrepresented person. For misunderstandings that sometimes arise when a lawyer for an organization deals with an unrepresented constituent, see Rule 1.13(f) of these Rules.

[2] *The Rule distinguishes between situations involving unrepresented persons whose interests may be adverse to those of the lawyer's client and those in which the person's interests are not in conflict with the client's. In the former situation, the possibility that the lawyer will compromise the unrepresented person's interests is so great that the Rule prohibits the giving of any advice, apart from the advice to obtain counsel. Whether a lawyer is giving impermissible advice may depend on the experience and sophistication of the unrepresented person, as well as the setting in which the behavior and comments occur. This Rule does not prohibit a lawyer from negotiating the terms of a transaction or settling a dispute with an unrepresented person. So long as the lawyer has explained that the lawyer represents an adverse party and is not representing the person, the lawyer may inform the person of the terms on which the lawyer's client will enter into an agreement or settle a matter, prepare documents that require the person's signature and explain the lawyer's own view of the meaning of the document or the lawyer's view of the underlying legal obligations.*

**Rule 4.4. RESPECT FOR RIGHTS OF THIRD PERSONS.**

(a) In representing a client, a lawyer shall not use means that have no substantial purpose other than to embarrass, delay, or burden a third person, or use methods of obtaining evidence that violate the legal rights of such a person.

(b) A lawyer who receives a document and knows or reasonably should know that the document was inadvertently sent shall:

(1) not read the document further than reasonably necessary to determine its privileged or confidential nature within the meaning of Rule 1.6 of these Rules, and shall not disseminate the document or information about its contents to anyone other than a supervisory lawyer and/or disinterested lawyer consulted to secure legal advice about the receiving lawyer's compliance with this Rule;

(2) promptly notify the sending lawyer; and  
 (3) either reach agreement with the sending lawyer with respect to the disposition of the material or refrain from using the materials until a definitive resolution of the proper disposition of the materials is obtained from a court.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *Responsibility to a client requires a lawyer to subordinate the interests of others to those of the client, but that responsibility does not imply that a lawyer may disregard the rights of third persons. It is impractical to catalogue all such rights, but they include legal restrictions on methods of obtaining evidence from third persons and unwarranted intrusions into privileged relationships, such as the client-lawyer relationship.*

[2] *Paragraph (b) recognizes that lawyers sometimes receive documents that were mistakenly sent or produced by opposing parties or their lawyers. If a lawyer knows or reasonably should know that such a document was sent inadvertently, then this Rule requires the lawyer to promptly notify the sender and then either reach agreement with the sending attorney as to the disposition of the document or seek a ruling from the court as to whether the attorney-client privilege or work product protection was waived by the disclosure. This Rule incorporates Formal Opinion No. 39, issued by Hawaii's Office of Disciplinary Counsel on April 26, 2001, as well as provisions suggested in "The Future of Inadvertent Disclosure: The Lingering Need to Revise Professional Conduct Rules," P. Schaefer, Vol. 69 Maryland Law Review 195, 258-259 (2010). For purposes of this Rule, "document" includes e-mail or other electronic modes of transmission subject to being read out or put into readable form.*

**Rule 5.1. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS, MANAGERS, AND SUPERVISORY LAWYERS.**

(a) A partner in a law firm, and a lawyer who individually or together with other lawyers possesses comparable managerial authority in a law firm, shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that the firm has in effect measures giving reasonable assurance that all lawyers in the firm conform to the Rules of Professional Conduct.

(b) A lawyer having direct supervisory authority over another lawyer, including law-student interns licensed under Rule 7 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai'i, shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that the other lawyer conforms to the Rules of Professional Conduct.

(c) A lawyer shall be responsible for another lawyer's violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct if:

(1) the lawyer orders or, with knowledge of the specific conduct, ratifies the conduct involved; or

(2) the lawyer is a partner or has comparable managerial authority in the law firm in which the other lawyer practices, or has direct supervisory authority over the other lawyer, including law-student interns licensed under Rule 7 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai'i, and knows of the conduct at a time when its consequences can be avoided or mitigated but fails to take reasonable remedial action.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] Paragraph (a) applies to lawyers who have managerial authority over the professional work of a firm. See Rule 1.0(d) of these Rules. This includes members of a partnership and the shareholders in a law firm organized as a professional corporation; lawyers having managerial authority in the law department of an enterprise or government agency; and lawyers who have intermediate managerial responsibilities in a firm. Paragraph (b) applies to lawyers who have supervisory authority over the work of other lawyers in a firm, including law-student interns authorized pursuant to Rule 7 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai'i.

[2] Paragraph (a) requires lawyers with managerial authority within a firm to make reasonable efforts to establish internal policies and procedures designed to provide reasonable assurance that all lawyers in the firm will conform to the Rules of Professional Conduct. Such policies and procedures include those designed to detect and resolve conflicts of interest, identify dates by which actions must be taken in pending matters, account for client funds and property, and ensure that inexperienced lawyers, including law-student interns, are properly supervised.

[3] Other measures that may be required to fulfill the responsibility prescribed in paragraph (a) can depend on the firm's structure and the nature of its practice. In a small firm of experienced lawyers, informal supervision and periodic review of compliance with the required systems ordinarily will suffice. In a large firm, or in practice situations in which difficult ethical problems frequently arise, more elaborate procedures may be necessary. Some firms, for example, have a procedure whereby junior lawyers can make confidential referral of ethical problems directly to a designated senior partner or special committee. See Rule 5.2 of these Rules. Firms, whether large or small, may also rely on continuing legal education in professional ethics. In any event, the ethical atmosphere of a firm can influence the conduct of all its members, and the partners and managers may not assume that all lawyers associated with the firm will inevitably conform to the Rules.

[4] Paragraph (c) expresses a general principle of personal responsibility for acts of another. See also Rule 8.4(a) of these Rules.

[5] Paragraph (c)(2) defines the duty of a partner or other lawyer having comparable managing authority in a law firm, as well as a lawyer who has direct supervisory authority over performance of specific legal work by another lawyer, including law-student interns. Whether a

*lawyer has such supervisory authority in particular circumstances is a question of fact. Partners and lawyers with comparable authority have at least indirect responsibility for all work being done by the firm, while a partner or manager in charge of a particular matter ordinarily also has supervisory responsibility for the work of other firm lawyers engaged in the matter. Appropriate remedial action by a partner or managing lawyer would depend on the immediacy of that lawyer's involvement and the seriousness of the misconduct. A supervisor is required to intervene to prevent avoidable consequences of misconduct if the supervisor knows that the misconduct occurred. Thus, if a supervising lawyer knows that a subordinate misrepresented a matter to an opposing party in negotiation, the supervisor as well as the subordinate has a duty to correct the resulting misapprehension. A lawyer's knowledge of conduct referred to in (c)(2) means knowledge of the circumstances which render the conduct a violation.*

*[6] Professional misconduct by a lawyer under supervision could reveal a violation of paragraph (b) on the part of the supervisory lawyer even though it does not entail a violation of paragraph (c) because there was no direction, ratification or knowledge of the violation.*

*[7] Apart from this Rule and Rule 8.4(a), a lawyer does not have disciplinary liability for the conduct of a partner, associate or subordinate. Whether a lawyer may be liable civilly or criminally for another lawyer's conduct is a question of law beyond the scope of these Rules.*

*[8] The duties imposed by this Rule on managing and supervising lawyers do not alter the personal duty of each lawyer in a firm to abide by the Rules of Professional Conduct. See Rule 5.2(a) of these Rules. (Amended July 27, 2023, effective July 27, 2023.)*

### **Rule 5.2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF A SUBORDINATE LAWYER.**

**(a)** A lawyer is bound by the Rules of Professional Conduct notwithstanding that the lawyer acted at the direction of another person.

**(b)** A subordinate lawyer does not violate the Rules of Professional Conduct if that lawyer acts in accordance with a supervisory lawyer's reasonable resolution of an arguable question of professional duty.

#### **COMMENTS:**

*[1] Although a lawyer is not relieved of responsibility for a violation by the fact that the lawyer acted at the direction of a supervisor, that fact may be relevant in determining whether a lawyer had the knowledge required to render conduct a violation of the Rules. For example, if a subordinate filed a frivolous pleading at the direction of a supervisor, the subordinate would not be guilty of a professional violation unless the subordinate knew of the document's frivolous character.*

*[2] When lawyers in a supervisor-subordinate relationship encounter a matter involving professional judgment as to ethical duty, the supervisor may assume responsibility for making the judgment. Otherwise a consistent course of action or position could not be taken. If the question can reasonably be answered only one way, the duty of both lawyers is clear and they are equally responsible for fulfilling it. However, if the question is reasonably arguable, someone has to decide upon the course of action. That authority ordinarily reposes in the supervisor, and a subordinate may be guided accordingly. For example, if a question arises whether the interests of two clients conflict under Rule 1.7 of these Rules, the supervisor's reasonable resolution of the question should protect the subordinate professionally if the resolution is subsequently challenged.*

**Rule 5.3. RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING NONLAWYER ASSISTANTS.**

With respect to a nonlawyer employed or retained by or associated with a lawyer:

(a) a partner in a firm who individually or together with other lawyers possesses comparable managerial authority in a firm, shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that the firm has in effect measures giving reasonable assurance that the person's conduct is compatible with the professional obligations of the lawyer;

(b) a lawyer having direct supervisory authority over the nonlawyer shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that the person's conduct is compatible with the professional obligations of the lawyer; and

(c) a lawyer shall be responsible for conduct of such a person that would be a violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct if engaged in by a lawyer if:

(1) the lawyer orders or, with the knowledge of the specific conduct, ratifies the conduct involved; or

(2) the lawyer is a partner or has comparable managerial authority in the law firm in which the person is employed, or has direct supervisory authority over the person, and knows of the conduct at a time when its consequences can be avoided or mitigated but fails to take reasonable remedial action.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *Lawyers generally employ assistants in their practice, including secretaries, investigators, law student interns, and paralegals. Such assistants, whether employees or independent contractors, act for the lawyer in rendering the lawyer's professional services. A lawyer must give such assistants appropriate instruction and supervision concerning the ethical aspects of their employment, particularly regarding the obligation not to disclose information relating to representation of the client, and should be responsible for their work product. The measures employed in supervising nonlawyers should take account of the fact that they do not have legal training and are not subject to professional discipline.*

[2] *Paragraph (a) requires lawyers with managerial authority within a firm to make reasonable efforts to establish internal*

*policies and procedures designed to provide reasonable assurance that nonlawyers in the firm will act in a way compatible with the Rules of Professional Conduct. Reasonable efforts should include careful consideration of the use of technology and office resources connected to the internet, external data sources, and external vendors providing services relating to client data, and the use of client data. See Comment [2] to Rule 5.1. Paragraph (b) this Rule applies to lawyers who have supervisory authority over the work of a nonlawyer. Paragraph (c) specifies the circumstances in which a lawyer is responsible for conduct of a nonlawyer that would be a violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct if engaged in by a lawyer.*

*(Amended August 18, 2021, effective January 1, 2022.)*

**Rule 5.4. PROFESSIONAL INDEPENDENCE OF A LAWYER.**

(a) A lawyer or law firm shall not share legal fees with a nonlawyer, except that:

(1) an agreement by a lawyer with the lawyer's firm, partner, or associate may provide for the payment of money, over a reasonable period of time after the lawyer's death, to the lawyer's estate or to one or more specified persons;

(2) a lawyer who purchases the practice of a deceased, disabled, or disappeared lawyer may, pursuant to the provisions of Rule 1.17 of these Rules, pay to the estate or other representative of that lawyer the agreed-upon purchase price;

(3) a lawyer or law firm may include nonlawyer employees in a compensation or retirement plan, even though the plan is based in whole or in part on a profit-sharing arrangement;

(4) a lawyer may share court-awarded legal fees with a non-profit organization that employed, retained, or recommended employment of the lawyer in the matter; and

(5) a lawyer who undertakes to complete unfinished legal business of a deceased lawyer may pay to the estate of the deceased lawyer that proportion of the total compensation that fairly represents the services rendered by the deceased lawyer.

(b) A lawyer shall not form a partnership with a nonlawyer if any of the activities of the partnership consist of the practice of law.

(c) A lawyer shall not permit a person who recommends, employs, or pays the lawyer to render legal services for another to direct or regulate the lawyer's professional judgment in rendering the legal services.

(d) A lawyer shall not practice with, or in the form of, a professional corporation or association authorized to practice law for a profit, if:

(1) a nonlawyer owns any interest therein, except that a fiduciary representative of the estate of a lawyer may hold the stock or interest of the lawyer for a reasonable time during administration;

(2) a nonlawyer is a corporate director or officer thereof or occupies the position of similar responsibility in any form of association other than a corporation; or

(3) a nonlawyer has the right to direct or control the professional judgment of a lawyer.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *The provisions of this Rule express traditional limitations on sharing fees. These limitations are to protect the lawyer's professional independence of judgment. Where someone other than the client pays the lawyer's fee or salary, or recommends employment of the lawyer, that arrangement does not modify the lawyer's obligation to the client. As stated in paragraph (c), such arrangements should not interfere with the lawyer's professional judgment.*

[2] *This Rule also expresses traditional limitations on permitting a third party to direct or regulate the lawyer's professional judgment in rendering legal services to another. See also Rule 1.8(f) of these Rules (lawyers may accept compensation from a third party as long as there is no interference with the lawyer's independent professional judgment and the client gives consent after consultation).*

[3] *Subsection (b) only applies if legal services are provided by the partnership to third persons or entities (i.e., other than to the partnership itself).*

**Rule 5.5. UNAUTHORIZED PRACTICE OF LAW.**

A lawyer shall not:

(a) practice law in a jurisdiction where doing so violates the regulation of the legal profession in that jurisdiction; or

(b) assist a person who is not a member of the bar in the performance of activity that constitutes the unauthorized practice of law; or

(c) allow any person who has been suspended or disbarred and who maintains a presence in an office where the practice of law is conducted by the lawyer to have any contact with the clients of the lawyer either in person, by telephone, or in writing or to have any contact with persons who have legal dealings with the office either in person, by telephone, or in writing.

**COMMENT:**

[1] *The definition of the practice of law is established by law and varies from one jurisdiction to another. Whatever the definition, limiting the practice of law to members of the bar protects the public against rendition of legal services by unqualified persons.*

[2] *Paragraph (b) does not prohibit a lawyer from employing the services of paraprofessionals and delegating functions to them, so long as the lawyer supervises the delegated work and retains responsibility for their work. See Rule 5.3 of these Rules. Likewise, it does not prohibit lawyers from providing professional advice and instruction to nonlawyers whose employment requires knowledge of law; for example, claims adjusters, employees of financial or commercial institutions, social workers, accountants and persons employed in government agencies. In addition, a lawyer may counsel nonlawyers who wish to proceed pro se.*

[3] *Lawyers not authorized to practice law in Hawai'i might lawfully remotely practice the law of the jurisdictions in which they are permitted to practice, to the extent permitted by that jurisdiction, while they are physically present in Hawai'i, provided they do not (a) hold themselves out*

*as being licensed to practice in Hawai'i, (b) advertise or otherwise hold themselves out as having an office in Hawai'i, (c) provide or offer to provide Hawai'i legal services, or (d) engage in any other activity connected to the practice of law in Hawai'i other than their mere physical presence in Hawai'i. Having Hawai'i contact information listed on websites, letterheads, business cards, advertising, or the like would tend to improperly suggest a Hawai'i office or presence that could be deemed to constitute the unauthorized practice of law in Hawai'i. On the other hand, lawyers authorized to practice law in Hawai'i may remotely practice law in Hawai'i while they are physically present outside of Hawai'i, provided they are not prohibited from doing so in the jurisdiction where they are physically present. C.f., ABA Formal Opinions 495 (2020) and 498 (2021).*

*[4] Paragraph (c) prohibits an attorney who employs or otherwise utilizes a lawyer who is suspended or disbarred, or who resigned in lieu of discipline, from allowing that lawyer to have any contact with the attorney's clients or others who have legal dealing with the attorney's office. In order to protect the public, strict prohibitions are essential to prevent permissible paralegal activities from crossing the line to giving legal advice, taking fees, or misleading clients and others who deal with the attorney's office.*

*(Amended March 16, 2022, effective July 1, 2022.)*

#### **Rule 5.6. RESTRICTIONS ON RIGHT TO PRACTICE.**

A lawyer shall not participate in offering or making:

(a) a partnership, shareholders, operating, employment, or other similar type of agreement that restricts the right of a lawyer to practice after termination of the relationship, except an agreement concerning benefits upon retirement or as permitted by Rule 1.17 of these Rules; or

(b) an agreement in which a restriction on the lawyer's right to practice is part of the settlement of a client controversy.

#### **COMMENTS:**

[1] *An agreement restricting the right of lawyers to practice after leaving a firm not only limits their professional autonomy but also limits the freedom of clients to choose a lawyer. Paragraph (a) prohibits such agreements except for restrictions incident to provisions concerning retirement benefits for service with the firm or as allowed by Rule 1.17 of these Rules concerning sale of a law firm.*

[2] *Paragraph (b) prohibits a lawyer from agreeing not to represent other persons in connection with settling a claim on behalf of a client.*

#### **Rule 6.1. PRO BONO SERVICE.**

A lawyer should aspire to provide at least 50 hours of pro bono services per year. In fulfilling this responsibility, the lawyer should:

(a) provide at least 25 hours of legal services without fee or expectation of fee to:

(1) persons of limited means; or

(2) charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental and educational organizations in matters that are designed primarily to address the needs of persons of limited means; and

(b) provide any additional services through:

(1) delivery of legal services at no fee or substantially reduced fee to individuals, groups or organizations seeking to secure or protect civil rights, civil liberties or public rights, or charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental and educational organizations in matters in furtherance of their organizational purposes, where the payment of standard legal fees would significantly deplete the organization's economic resources or would be otherwise inappropriate;

(2) delivery of legal services at a substantially reduced fee to persons of limited means; or

(3) participation in activities for improving the law, the legal system or the legal profession.

(c) In lieu of providing 50 hours of pro bono service, a lawyer may exercise his or her desire to provide pro bono services by contributing at least \$500 each year to the Hawai'i Justice Foundation, or an entity that provides legal services at no fee, or at a significantly reduced fee, to persons of limited means.

(d) In addition to performing pro bono services or contributing under subsection (c) each year, a lawyer should voluntarily contribute financial support to organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] Every lawyer, regardless of professional prominence or professional work load, has a responsibility to provide legal services to those unable to pay, and personal involvement in the problems of the disadvantaged can be one of the most rewarding experiences in the life of a lawyer. This Rule urges all lawyers to provide a minimum of 50 hours of pro bono services annually. It is recognized that in some years a lawyer may render greater or fewer hours than the annual standard specified, but during the course of his or her legal career, each lawyer should render on average per year, the number of hours set forth in this Rule. Services can be performed in civil matters or in criminal or quasi-criminal matters for which there is no government obligation to provide funds for legal representation, such as post-conviction death penalty appeal cases.

[2] Paragraphs (a)(1) and (2) recognize the critical need for legal services that exists among persons of limited means by providing that at least 25 hours of the legal services rendered annually to the disadvantaged be furnished without fee or expectation of fee. Legal services under these paragraphs consist of a full range of activities, including individual and class representation, the provision of legal advice or information through nonprofit or court-annexed programs such as court self help centers and access to justice rooms that are designated primarily to serve persons of

limited means, legislative lobbying, administrative rule making, and the provision of free training or mentoring to those who represent persons of limited means. The variety of these activities should facilitate participation by government attorneys, even when restrictions exist on their engaging in the outside practice of law.

[3] Persons eligible for legal services under paragraphs (a)(1) and (2) are those who qualify for participation in programs funded by the Legal Services Corporation and those whose incomes and financial resources are slightly above the guidelines utilized by such programs but nevertheless, cannot afford counsel. Legal services can be rendered to individuals or to organizations such as homeless shelters, battered women's centers and food pantries that serve those of limited means. The term "governmental organizations" includes, but is not limited to, public protection programs and sections of the government or public sector agencies.

[4] Because service must be provided without fee or expectation of fee, the intent of the lawyer to render free legal services is essential for the work performed to fall within the meaning of paragraphs (a)(1) and (2). Accordingly, services rendered cannot be considered pro bono if an anticipated fee is uncollected, but the award of statutory attorneys' fees in a case originally accepted as pro bono would not disqualify such services from inclusion under this section. Lawyers who do receive fees in such cases are encouraged to contribute an appropriate portion of such fees to organizations, programs, or projects that benefit persons of limited means.

[5] While it is possible for a lawyer to fulfill the annual responsibility to perform pro bono services exclusively through activities described in paragraphs (a) and (b), to the extent that any hours of service remained unfulfilled, a monetary contribution in accordance with paragraph (c) replaces services described by (a) and (b).

[6] Paragraph (b)(1) includes the provision of certain types of legal services to those whose incomes and financial resources place them above limited means. It also permits the pro bono attorney to accept a substantially reduced fee for services. Examples of the types of issues that may be addressed under this paragraph include First Amendment claims, Title VII claims and environmental protection claims. Additionally, a wide range of organizations may be represented, including social service, medical research, cultural and religious groups.

[7] Paragraph (b)(2) covers instances in which attorneys agree to and receive a modest fee for furnishing legal services to persons of limited means. Participation in judicare programs and acceptance of court appointments in which the fee is substantially below a lawyer's usual rate are encouraged under this section.

[8] Paragraph (b)(3) recognizes the value of lawyers engaging in activities that improve the law, the legal system or the legal profession. Serving on bar association committees, serving on boards of pro bono or legal services programs, taking part in Law Day activities, acting as a continuing legal education instructor, a mediator, or an arbitrator, and engaging in legislative lobbying to improve the law, the legal system or the profession are a few examples of the many activities that fall within this paragraph.

[9] Because the provision of pro bono services is a professional responsibility, it is the individual ethical commitment of each lawyer. Unlike the Model ABA Rule, paragraph (c) expressly allows a lawyer to

exercise his or her desire to provide pro bono service through annual financial contributions to the Hawai'i Justice Foundation or other qualified entities for the support of organizations that provide free or significantly reduced fee legal services to persons of limited means. While the personal involvement of each lawyer in the provision of pro bono services is generally preferable, such personal involvement may not always be possible. The annual contribution alternative allows a lawyer to provide financial assistance to increase and improve the delivery of pro bono services when a lawyer cannot or decides not to provide pro bono services through the contribution of time. Also, there is no prohibition against a lawyer's contributing a combination of hours and financial support.

[10] Because the efforts of individual lawyers are not enough to meet the need for free legal services that exists among persons of limited means, there are organizations, programs, and projects that have been instituted to provide those services. Paragraph (d) encourages every lawyer to financially support organizations, programs, and projects that benefit persons of limited means, in addition to, and not as a substitute for, providing pro bono services, or making financial contributions annually to the Hawai'i Justice Foundation or other qualified entities when pro bono service is not feasible.

[11] Law firms should act reasonably to enable and encourage all lawyers in the firm to provide the pro bono legal services called for by this Rule.

[12] The responsibility set forth in this Rule is not intended to be enforced through the disciplinary process.

(Amended November 14, 2013, effective January 1, 2014.)

**Rule 6.2. ACCEPTING APPOINTMENTS.**

A lawyer shall not seek to avoid appointment by a tribunal to represent a person except for good cause, such as:

- (a) representing the client is likely to result in violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law;
- (b) representing the client is likely to result in an unreasonable financial burden on the lawyer; or
- (c) the client or the cause is so repugnant to the lawyer as to be likely to impair the client-lawyer relationship or the lawyer's ability to represent the client.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *A lawyer ordinarily is not obliged to accept a client whose character or cause the lawyer regards as repugnant. The lawyer's freedom to select clients is, however, qualified. All lawyers have a responsibility to assist in providing pro bono publico service. See Rule 6.1 of these Rules. An individual lawyer fulfills this responsibility by accepting a fair share of unpopular matters or indigent or unpopular clients. A lawyer may also be subject to appointment by a court to serve unpopular clients or persons unable to afford legal services.*

**Appointed Counsel**

[2] *For good cause a lawyer may seek to decline an appointment to represent a person who cannot afford to retain counsel or whose cause is unpopular. Good cause exists if the lawyer could not handle the matter competently, see Rule 1.1 of these Rules, or if undertaking the representation would result in an improper conflict of interest, for example, when the client or the cause is so repugnant to the lawyer as to be likely to impair the client-lawyer relationship or the lawyer's ability to represent the client. Employment as a government lawyer may be good cause to avoid appointment by a tribunal. A lawyer may also seek to decline an appointment if acceptance would be unreasonably burdensome, for example, when it would*

*impose a financial sacrifice so great as to be unjust.*

[3] *An appointed lawyer has the same obligations to the client as retained counsel, including the obligations of loyalty and confidentiality, and is subject to the same limitations on the client-lawyer relationship, such as the obligation to refrain from assisting the client in violation of the Rules.*

**Rule 6.3. MEMBERSHIP IN LEGAL SERVICES ORGANIZATION.**

A lawyer may serve as a director, officer or member of a legal services organization, apart from the law firm in which the lawyer practices, notwithstanding that the organization serves persons having interests adverse to a client of the lawyer. The lawyer shall not knowingly participate in a decision or action of the organization:

- (a) if participating in the decision or action would be incompatible with the lawyer's obligations to a client under Rule 1.7 of these Rules; or
- (b) where the decision or action could have a material adverse effect on the representation of a client of the organization whose interests are adverse to a client of the lawyer.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *Lawyers should be encouraged to support and participate in legal service organizations. A lawyer who is an officer or a member of such an organization does not thereby have a client-lawyer relationship with persons served by the organization. However, there is potential conflict between the interests of such persons and the interests of the lawyer's clients. If the possibility of such conflict disqualified a lawyer from serving on the board of a legal services organization, the profession's involvement in such organizations would be severely curtailed.*

[2] *It may be necessary in appropriate cases to reassure a client of the organization that the representation will not be affected by conflicting loyalties of a member of the board. Established, written policies in this respect can enhance the credibility of such assurances.*

**Rule 6.4. LAW REFORM ACTIVITIES AFFECTING CLIENT INTERESTS.**

A lawyer may serve as a director, officer, or member of an organization involved in reform of the law or its administration notwithstanding that the reform may affect the interests of a client of the lawyer. When the lawyer knows that the interests of a client may be materially benefitted by a decision in which the lawyer participates, the lawyer shall disclose that fact to the organization but need not identify the client.

**COMMENT:**

[1] *Lawyers involved in organizations seeking law reform generally do not have a client-lawyer relationship with the organization. Otherwise, it might follow that a lawyer could not be involved in a bar association law reform program that might indirectly affect a client. For example, a lawyer specializing in antitrust litigation might be regarded as disqualified from participating in drafting revisions of Rules governing that subject. In determining the nature and scope of participation in such activities, a lawyer should be mindful of obligations to clients under other Rules, particularly Rule 1.7. A lawyer is professionally obligated to protect the integrity of the program by making an appropriate disclosure within the organization when the lawyer knows a private client might be materially benefitted. This Rule applies to lawyers who are also lobbyists and legislators.*

**Rule 6.5. NONPROFIT AND COURT-ANNEXED LIMITED LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAMS.**

(a) A lawyer who, under the auspices of a program sponsored by a nonprofit organization or court, provides short-term limited legal services to a client without expectation by either the lawyer or the client that the lawyer will provide continuing representation in the matter:

(1) is subject to Rule 1.7 and 1.9(a) of these Rules only if the lawyer knows that the representation of the client involves a conflict of interest; and

(2) is subject to Rule 1.10 only if the lawyer knows that another lawyer associated with the lawyer in the law firm is disqualified by Rule 1.7 or 1.9(a) with respect to the matter.

(b) Except as provided in paragraph (a)(2), Rule 1.10 is inapplicable to a representation governed by this Rule.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *Legal services organizations, courts, and various nonprofit organizations have established programs through which lawyers provide short-term limited legal services—such as advice or the completion of legal forms—that will assist persons to address their legal problems without further representation by a lawyer. In these programs, such as legal-advice hotlines, advice-only clinics or pro se counseling programs, a client-lawyer relationship is established, but there is no expectation that the lawyer's representation of the client will continue beyond the limited consultation. Such programs are normally operated under circumstances in which it is not feasible for a lawyer to systematically screen for conflicts of interest as is generally required before undertaking a representation. See, e.g., Rules 1.7, 1.9 and 1.10 of these Rules.*

[2] *A lawyer who provides short-term limited legal services pursuant to this Rule must secure the client's consent, after consultation, to the limited scope of the representation. See Rule 1.2(c) of these Rules. If a short-term limited representation would not be reasonable under the*

*circumstances, the lawyer may offer advice to the client but must also advise the client of the need for further assistance of counsel. Except as provided in this Rule, the Rules of Professional Conduct, including Rules 1.6 and 1.9(c), are applicable to the limited representation.*

*[3] Because a lawyer who is representing a client in the circumstances addressed by this Rule ordinarily is not able to check systematically for conflicts of interest, paragraph (a) requires compliance with Rules 1.7 or 1.9(a) only if the lawyer knows that the representation presents a conflict of interest for the lawyer, and with Rule 1.10 only if the lawyer knows that another lawyer in the lawyer's firm is disqualified by Rules 1.7 or 1.9(a) in the matter.*

*[4] Because the limited nature of the services significantly reduces the risk of conflicts of interest with other matters being handled by the lawyer's firm, paragraph (b) provides that Rule 1.10 is inapplicable to a representation governed by this Rule except as provided by paragraph (a)(2). Paragraph (a)(2) requires the participating lawyer to comply with Rule 1.10 when the lawyer knows that the lawyer's firm is disqualified by Rules 1.7 or 1.9(a). By virtue of paragraph (b), however, a lawyer's participation in a short-term limited legal services program will not preclude the lawyer's firm from undertaking or continuing the representation of a client with interests adverse to a client being represented under the program's auspices. Nor will the personal disqualification of a lawyer participating in the program be imputed to other lawyers participating in the program.*

*[5] If, after commencing short-term limited representation in accordance with this Rule, a lawyer undertakes to represent the client in the matter on an ongoing basis, Rules 1.7, 1.9(a) and 1.10 become applicable.*

**Rule 7.1. C O M M U N I C A T I O N S  
CONCERNING A LAWYER'S  
SERVICES.**

A lawyer shall not make a false or misleading communication about the lawyer or the lawyer's services. A communication is false or misleading if it:

(a) contains a material misrepresentation of fact or law, or omits a fact necessary to make the statement considered as a whole not materially misleading;

(b) is likely to create an unjustified expectation about results the lawyer can achieve, or states or implies that the lawyer can achieve results by means that violate the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law; or

(c) compares the lawyer's services with other lawyer's services, unless the comparison can be factually substantiated.

**COMMENTS:**

*[1] This Rule governs all communications about a lawyer's services, including advertising permitted by Rule 7.2 of these Rules. Whatever means are used to make known a lawyer's services, statements about them should be truthful.*

*[2] Truthful statements that are misleading are also prohibited by this Rule. A truthful statement is misleading if it omits a fact necessary to make the lawyer's communication considered as a whole not materially misleading. A truthful statement is also misleading if there is a substantial likelihood that it will lead a reasonable person to formulate a specific conclusion about the lawyer or the lawyer's services for which there is not reasonable factual foundation.*

*[3] An advertisement that truthfully reports a lawyer's achievements on behalf of clients or former clients may be misleading if presented so as to lead a reasonable person to form an unjustified expectation that the same results could be obtained for other clients in similar matters without reference to the specific factual and legal circumstances of each client's case. Similarly, an unsubstantiated comparison of*

*the lawyer's services or fees with the services or fees of other lawyers may be misleading if presented with such specificity as would lead a reasonable person to conclude that the comparison can be substantiated. The inclusion of any appropriate disclaimer or qualifying language may preclude a finding that a statement is likely to create unjustified expectations or otherwise mislead a prospective client.*

*[4] See also Rule 8.4(e) of these Rules for the prohibition against stating or implying an ability to influence a government agency or official or to achieve results by means that violate the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law.*

*[5] If a lawyer refers to oneself as a former or retired government official (e.g., judge, justice, governor, senator, attorney general, prosecutor, public defender, etc.), to avoid creating any unjustified expectation about the results the lawyer can achieve, any communication, whether by words or image, should clearly indicate that the lawyer no longer serves in that role and is a former or retired official. Use of historical documents, articles or video footage of actual events, or re-creations thereof, should clearly state the historical context. Additionally, if the lawyer was removed from that prior office due to misconduct, any direct or indirect reference to the prior office in the communication should clearly disclose the removal due to the misconduct.*

*(Amended January 4, 2022, effective July 1, 2022.)*

### **Rule 7.2. ADVERTISING.**

**(a)** Subject to the requirements of Rules 7.1 and 7.3 of these Rules, a lawyer may advertise services through written, recorded, or electronic communication, including public media.

**(b)** A lawyer shall not give anything of value to a person for recommending the lawyer's services except that a lawyer may:

(1) pay the reasonable costs of advertisements or communications permitted by this Rule;

(2) pay the usual charges of a not-for-profit lawyer referral service or qualified legal assistance organization, which charges, in addition to any referral fee, may include a fee calculated as a percentage of legal fees earned by the lawyer to whom the service or organization has referred a matter, provided that any such percentage fee shall be used only to pay the reasonable operating expenses of the service or organization and to fund public service activities of the service or organization, including the delivery of pro bono legal services; and

(3) pay for the purchase of a law practice in accordance with Rule 1.17 of these Rules.

**(c)** Any communication made pursuant to this Rule shall include the name of at least one lawyer responsible for its content.

### **COMMENTS:**

*[1] To assist the public in obtaining legal services, lawyers should be allowed to make known their services not only through reputation but also through organized information campaigns in the form of advertising. Advertising involves an active quest for clients, contrary to the tradition that a lawyer should not seek clientele. However, the public's need to know about legal services can be fulfilled in part through advertising. This need is particularly acute in the case of persons of moderate means who have not made extensive use of legal services. The interest in expanding public information about legal services ought to prevail over considerations of tradition. Nevertheless, advertising by lawyers entails the risk of practices that are misleading or overreaching.*

[2] This Rule permits public dissemination of information concerning a lawyer's name or firm name, address and telephone number; the kinds of services the lawyer will undertake; the basis on which the lawyer's fees are determined, including prices for specific services and payment and credit arrangements; a lawyer's foreign language ability; names of references and, with their consent, names of clients regularly represented; and other information that might invite the attention of those seeking legal assistance.

[3] Questions of effectiveness and taste in advertising are matters of speculation and subjective judgment. Some jurisdictions have had extensive prohibitions against television advertising, against advertising going beyond specified facts about a lawyer, or against "undignified" advertising. Television is now one of the most powerful media for getting information to the public, particularly persons of low and moderate income; prohibiting television advertising, therefore, would impede the flow of information about legal services to many sectors of the public. Limiting the information that may be advertised has a similar effect and assumes that the bar can accurately forecast the kind of information that the public would regard as relevant. Similarly, electronic media, such as the Internet, can be an important source of information about legal services, and lawful communication by electronic mail is permitted by this Rule. But see Rule 7.3(a) of these Rules for the prohibition against the solicitation of a prospective client through a real-time electronic exchange that is not initiated by the prospective client.

[4] Neither this Rule nor Rule 7.3 of these Rules prohibits communications authorized by law, such as notice to members of a class in class action litigation.

#### **Paying Others to Recommend a Lawyer**

[5] Lawyers are not permitted to pay others for channeling professional work. Paragraph (b)(1), however, allows a lawyer

to pay for advertising and communications permitted by this Rule, including the costs of print directory listings, on-line directory listings, newspaper ads, television and radio airtime, domain-name registrations, sponsorship fees, banner ads, and group advertising. A lawyer may compensate employees, agents, and vendors who are engaged to provide marketing or client-development services, such as publicists, public-relations personnel, business-development staff, and website designers. See Rule 5.3 of these Rules for the duties of lawyers and law firms with respect to the conduct of nonlawyers who prepare marketing materials for them.

[6] A lawyer may pay the usual charges of a prepaid legal services plan, not-for-profit lawyer referral service, or qualified legal assistance organization. A prepaid legal service plan is a group legal service plan in which the cost of the services are prepaid by the group member or by some other person or organization on the member's behalf. It is a plan by which legal services are rendered to individual members of a group identifiable in terms of some common interest and must otherwise satisfy the requirements of Hawai'i Revised Statutes Chapter 488. A lawyer may also share legal fees with a not-for-profit lawyer referral service that recommended employment of the lawyer in the matter, as permitted by Rule 5.4(a)(4) of these Rules. See Rule 1.0(h) (Terminology) section for the definition of "Qualified legal assistance organization."

[7] A lawyer who accepts assignments or referrals from a legal service plan or referrals from a lawyer referral service must act reasonably to assure that the activities of the plan or service are compatible with the lawyer's professional obligations. See Rule 5.3 of these Rules. Legal service plans and lawyer referral services may communicate with prospective clients, but such communication must be in conformity with these Rules. Thus, advertising must not be false or misleading, as would be the case if the communications of a group advertising program or a group legal services plan would mislead prospective clients to think that it was a lawyer referral service sponsored by a state agency or bar association. Nor could the lawyer allow in-person telephonic, or real-time contacts that would violate Rule 7.3 of these Rules.

[8] A lawyer also may agree to refer clients to another lawyer or a nonlawyer professional, in return for the undertaking of that person to refer clients or customers to the lawyer. Such reciprocal referral arrangements must not interfere with the lawyer's professional judgment as to making referrals or as to providing substantive legal services. See Rules 2.1 and 5.4(c) of these Rules. Except as provided in Rule 1.5(e) of these Rules, a lawyer who receives referrals from a lawyer or nonlawyer professional must not pay anything solely for the referral, but the lawyer does not violate paragraph (b) of this Rule by agreeing to refer clients to the other lawyer or nonlawyer professional, so long as the reciprocal referral agreement is not exclusive and the client is informed of the referral agreement. Conflicts of interest created by such arrangements are governed by Rule 1.7 of these Rules. Reciprocal referral agreements should not be of indefinite duration and should be reviewed periodically to determine whether they comply with these Rules. This Rule does not restrict referrals or divisions of revenues or net income among lawyers within firms comprised of multiple entities.

### **Rule 7.3. DIRECT CONTACT WITH PROSPECTIVE CLIENTS.**

(a) A lawyer shall not by in-person, live telephone or real-time electronic contact solicit professional employment when a significant motive for the lawyer's doing so is the lawyer's pecuniary gain, unless the person contacted has a family, close personal, or prior professional relationship with the lawyer.

(b) A lawyer shall not solicit professional employment by written, recorded or electronic communication or by in-person, telephone or real-time electronic contact even when not otherwise prohibited by paragraph (a), if:

(1) the target of the solicitation has made known to the lawyer a desire not to be solicited by the lawyer; or

(2) the solicitation involves coercion, duress or harassment.

(c) Every written, recorded or electronic communication from a lawyer soliciting professional employment from anyone known to be in need of legal services in a particular matter shall include the words "Advertising Material" on the outside envelope, if any, and at the beginning and ending of any recorded or electronic communication, unless the recipient of the communication is a person specified in paragraph (a).

(d) Notwithstanding the prohibitions in paragraph (a), a lawyer may participate with a prepaid or group legal service plan operated by an organization not owned or directed by the lawyer that uses in-person or telephone contact to solicit memberships or subscriptions for the plan from persons who are not known to need legal services in a particular matter covered by the plan.

(e) A lawyer shall not solicit professional employment from a prospective client on the lawyer's behalf or on behalf of anyone associated with the lawyer if:

(1) the communication concerns an action for personal injury or wrongful death involving the person to whom the communication is addressed or a relative of that person, unless the personal injury or wrongful death occurred more than 30 days prior to the sending of the communication; or

(2) the lawyer knows or should know that the physical, emotional, or mental state of the person makes it unlikely that the person would exercise reasonable judgment in employing a lawyer.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *There is an inherent potential for abuse in direct contact by a lawyer with a prospective client known to need legal services, whether such contact be made in person or through the use of e-mail, social media, instant messaging, text messaging, or live telephone contact. These forms of contact between a lawyer and a prospective client subject the layperson to the private importuning of the trained advocate in a direct interpersonal encounter. The prospective client, who may already feel overwhelmed by the circumstances giving rise to the need for legal services, may find it difficult fully to evaluate all available alternatives with reasoned judgment and appropriate self-interest in the face of the lawyer's presence and insistence upon being retained immediately. The situation is fraught with the possibility of undue influence, intimidation, and over-reaching.*

[2] *This potential for abuse inherent in direct solicitation of prospective clients justifies its prohibition, particularly since lawyer advertising and written and recorded communication permitted under Rule 7.2 of these Rules offer alternative means of conveying necessary information to those who may be in need of legal services. Advertising and written and recorded communications which may be mailed or autodialed make it possible for a prospective client to be informed about the need for legal services, and about the qualifications of available lawyers and law firms, without subjecting the prospective client to direct, personal persuasion that may overwhelm the client's judgment.*

[3] *The use of general advertising and written, recorded, or electronic communications to transmit information from lawyer to prospective client, rather than any form of direct contact, will help to assure that the information flows cleanly as well as freely. The contents of advertisements and communications permitted under Rule 7.2 of these Rules are permanently recorded so that they cannot be disputed and may be shared with others who know the lawyer. This potential for informal review is itself likely to help guard against statements and claims that might constitute false and misleading communications, in violation of Rule 7.1 of these Rules. The contents of direct conversations between a lawyer and a prospective client can be disputed and may not be subject to similar third-party scrutiny. Consequently, they are much more likely to approach (and occasionally cross) the dividing line between accurate representations and those that are false and misleading.*

[4] *There is far less likelihood that a lawyer would engage in abusive practices against an individual with whom the lawyer has a prior personal or professional relationship or where the lawyer is motivated by considerations other than the lawyer's pecuniary gain. Consequently, the general prohibition in Rule 7.3(a) and the requirements of Rule 7.3(c) are not applicable in those situations.*

[5] *But even permitted forms of solicitation can be abused. Thus, any solicitation which contains information which is false or misleading within the meaning of Rule 7.1 of these Rules, which involves coercion, duress or harassment within the meaning of Rule 7.3(b)(2), or which involves contact with a prospective client who has made known to the lawyer a desire not to be solicited by the lawyer within the meaning of Rule 7.3(b)(1) is prohibited. Moreover, if after sending a letter or other communication to a client as permitted by Rule 7.2 of these Rules the lawyer receives no response, any further*

effort to communicate with the prospective client may violate the provisions of Rule 7.3(b).

[6] This Rule is not intended to prohibit a lawyer from contacting representatives of organizations or groups that may be interested in establishing a group or prepaid legal plan for their members, insureds, beneficiaries or other third parties for the purpose of informing such entities of the availability of and details concerning the plan or arrangement which the lawyer or lawyer's firm is willing to offer. This form of communication is not directed to a prospective client. Rather, it is usually addressed to an individual acting in a fiduciary capacity seeking a supplier of legal services for others who may, if they choose, become prospective clients of the lawyer. Under these circumstances, the activity which the lawyer undertakes in communicating with such representatives and the type of information transmitted to the individual are functionally similar and serve the same purpose as advertising permitted under Rule 7.2 of these Rules.

[7] The requirement in Rule 7.3(c) of these Rules that certain communications be marked "Advertising Material" does not apply to communications sent in response to requests of potential clients or their spokespersons or sponsors. General announcements by lawyers, including changes in personnel or office location, do not constitute communications soliciting professional employment from a client known to be in need of legal services within the meaning of this Rule.

[8] Paragraph (d) of this Rule would permit an attorney to participate with an organization which uses personal contact to solicit members for its group or prepaid legal service plan, provided that the personal contact is not undertaken by any lawyer who would be a provider of legal services through the plan. The organization referred to in paragraph (d) must not be owned by or directed (whether as manager or otherwise) by any lawyer or law firm that

participates in the plan. For example, paragraph (d) would not permit a lawyer to create an organization controlled directly or indirectly by the lawyer and use the organization for the in-person, telephone, or other form of direct, electronic solicitation of legal employment of the lawyer through memberships in the plan or otherwise. The communication permitted by these organizations also must not be directed to a person known to need legal services in a particular matter, but is to be designed to inform potential plan members generally of another means of affordable legal services. Lawyers who participate in a legal service plan must reasonably assure that the plan sponsors are in compliance with Rules 7.1, 7.2, 7.3(b), and 7.3(e) of these Rules. See Rule 8.4(a) of these Rules.

#### **Rule 7.4. COMMUNICATION OF FIELDS OF PRACTICE AND CERTIFICATION.**

(a) A lawyer may communicate the fact that the lawyer does or does not practice in particular fields of law.

(b) A lawyer admitted to engage in patent practice before the United States Patent and Trademark Office may use the designation "Patent Attorney" or a substantially similar designation.

(c) A lawyer engaged in Admiralty practice may use the designation "Admiralty," "Proctor in Admiralty," or a substantially similar designation.

(d) A lawyer may communicate the fact that the lawyer is certified as a specialist in a field of law by a named organization, provided that the communication

(1) is not false or misleading within the meaning of Rule 7.1 of these Rules,

(2) clearly states the name of the certifying organization, and;

(3) is accompanied by a statement that "The Supreme Court of Hawai'i grants Hawai'i certification only to lawyers in good standing who have successfully completed a specialty program accredited by the American Bar Association."

#### **COMMENTS:**

[1] This Rule permits a lawyer to indicate areas of practice in

*communications about the lawyer's services. If a lawyer practices only in certain fields, or will not accept matters in a specified field or fields, the lawyer is permitted to so indicate. Language indicating that a lawyer "concentrates in," "practices primarily in," "emphasizes," or "limits practice to" certain law areas is permitted. In addition, a lawyer is generally permitted to state that the lawyer is a "specialist," practices a "specialty," or "specializes in" particular fields, but such communications are subject to the "false and misleading" standard applied in Rule 7.1 of these Rules to communications concerning a lawyer's services. However, a lawyer may not communicate that the lawyer is recognized or certified as a specialist in a particular field of law, except as provided by this Rule and by Rule 1.13 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai'i.*

*[2] Recognition of specialization in patent matters is a matter of long-established policy of the Patent and Trademark Office, as reflected in paragraph (b). Paragraph (c) recognizes that designation of admiralty practice has a long historical tradition associated with maritime commerce and the federal courts.*

*[3] The Rule requires, inter alia, that a lawyer clearly state the name of the certifying organization and that the Supreme Court of Hawai'i certifies only those who have completed ABA accredited certification procedures. Otherwise, the consumer may be misled as to the significance of the lawyer's status as a certified specialist. Since lawyer advertising through public media and written or recorded communications invites the greatest danger of misleading consumers, the limitations of the certification process must be clearly stated in advertising that communicates the certification.*

### **Rule 7.5. FIRM NAMES AND LETTERHEADS.**

**(a)** A lawyer shall not use a firm name, letterhead or other professional designation that violates Rule 7.1. A trade name may be used by a lawyer in private practice if it does not imply a connection with a government agency or with a public or charitable legal services organization and is not otherwise in violation of Rule 7.1 of these Rules.

**(b)** A law firm may use as, or continue to include in, its name the name or names of one or more deceased or retired partners of the firm in a continuing line of succession; provided that where none of the names comprising a firm name is the name of a current partner who is on the list of active attorneys maintained by the Hawai'i State Bar, there shall be at least one supervisor, manager, partner, or shareholder of the firm who is on the list of active attorneys maintained by the bar.

**(c)** A law firm with offices in more than one jurisdiction may use the same name or other professional designation in each jurisdiction, but identification of the lawyers in an office of the firm shall indicate the jurisdictional limitations on those not licensed to practice in the jurisdiction where the office is located.

**(d)** The name of the lawyer holding a public office shall not be used in the name of a law firm, or in communications on its behalf, during any substantial period in which the lawyer is not actively and regularly practicing with the firm.

**(e)** Lawyers may state or imply that they practice in a partnership or other organization only when that is the fact.

#### **COMMENTS:**

*[1] A firm may be designated by the names of all or some of its members, by the names of deceased members where there has been a continuing succession in the firm's identity or by a trade name such as the "ABC Legal Clinic." A lawyer or law firm may also be designated by a distinctive website address or comparable professional designation. Although the United States Supreme Court has held that legislation may prohibit the use of trade names in professional practice, use of such names in law practice is acceptable so long as it is not*

*misleading. If a private firm uses a trade name that includes a geographical name such as "Springfield Legal Clinic," an express disclaimer that it is not a public legal aid agency may be required to avoid a misleading implication. It may be observed that any firm name including the name of a deceased partner is, strictly speaking, a trade name. The use of such names to designate law firms has proven a useful means of identification. However, it is misleading to use the name of a lawyer not associated with the firm or a predecessor of the firm or the name of a nonlawyer. See Rule 6(b) of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai'i, governing the naming of Lawyers' Professional Business Organizations.*

*[2] With regard to paragraph (e), lawyers sharing office facilities, but who are not in fact associated with each other in a law firm, may not denominate themselves as, for example, "Smith and Jones," for that title suggests that they are practicing law together in a firm.*

### **Rule 8.1. BAR ADMISSION AND DISCIPLINARY MATTERS.**

An applicant for admission to the bar, or a lawyer in connection with a bar admission application or in connection with a disciplinary matter, shall not:

(a) knowingly make a false statement of material fact; or

(b) fail to disclose a fact necessary to correct a misapprehension known by the person to have arisen in the matter, or knowingly fail to respond to a lawful demand for information from an admissions or disciplinary authority, except that this Rule does not require disclosure of information otherwise protected by Rule 1.6 of these Rules.

#### **COMMENTS:**

*[1] The duty imposed by this Rule extends to persons seeking admission to the bar as well as to lawyers. Hence, if a person makes a material false statement in connection with an application for admission, it may be the basis for subsequent disciplinary action if the person is admitted,*

*and in any event may be relevant in a subsequent admission application. The duty imposed by this Rule applies to a lawyer's own admission or discipline as well as that of others. Thus, it is a separate professional offense for a lawyer to knowingly make a misrepresentation or omission in connection with a disciplinary investigation of the lawyer's own conduct. This Rule also requires affirmative clarification of any misunderstanding on the part of the admissions or disciplinary authority of which the person involved becomes aware.*

*[2] This Rule is subject to the provisions of the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution and corresponding provisions of the Hawai'i State Constitution. A person relying on such a provision in response to a question, however, should do so openly and not use the right of nondisclosure as a justification for failure to comply with this Rule.*

*[3] A lawyer representing an applicant for admission to the bar, or representing a lawyer who is the subject of a disciplinary inquiry or proceeding, is governed by the Rules applicable to the client-lawyer relationship, including Rule 1.6 and, in some cases, Rule 3.3 of these Rules.*

**Rule 8.2. JUDICIAL AND LEGAL OFFICIALS.**

(a) A lawyer shall not make a statement that the lawyer knows to be false or with reckless disregard as to its truth or falsity concerning the qualifications or integrity of a judge, adjudicatory officer, or public legal officer, or of a candidate for election or appointment to judicial or legal office.

(b) A lawyer who is a candidate for judicial office shall comply with the applicable provisions of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

**COMMENTS**

[1] *Assessments by lawyers are relied on in evaluating the professional or personal fitness of persons being considered for election or appointment to judicial office and to public legal offices, such as attorney general, prosecuting attorney, and public defender. Expressing honest and candid opinions on such matters contributes to improving the administration of justice. Conversely, false statements by a lawyer can unfairly undermine public confidence in the administration of justice.*

[2] *When a lawyer seeks judicial office, the lawyer should be bound by applicable limitations on political activity.*

[3] *To maintain the fair and independent administration of justice, lawyers are encouraged to continue traditional efforts to defend judges and courts unjustly criticized.*

**Rule 8.3. REPORTING PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT.**

(a) A lawyer who knows that another lawyer has committed a violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct that raises a substantial question as to that lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness as a lawyer in other respects, shall inform the appropriate professional authority.

(b) A lawyer having knowledge that a judge has committed a violation of applicable Rules of judicial conduct that raises a substantial question as to the judge's fitness for office shall inform the appropriate authority.

(c) This Rule does not require disclosure of information otherwise protected by Rule 1.6 of these

Rules or information gained by a lawyer or judge while participating in the Attorneys and Judges Assistance Program.

(d) A lawyer shall not:

(1) negotiate, attempt to settle, or settle any legal matter by threatening to file or refrain from filing a disciplinary complaint against a lawyer; or

(2) offer, agree to, attempt, negotiate, enter into, or acquiesce in the formation of any agreement limiting the ability of the lawyer or any other person to:

(i) file a disciplinary complaint against any lawyer; or

(ii) cooperate with a disciplinary proceeding or investigation.

**COMMENTS:**

[1] *Self-regulation of the legal profession requires that members of the profession initiate disciplinary investigation when they know of a violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct. Lawyers have a similar obligation with respect to judicial misconduct. An apparently isolated violation may indicate a pattern of misconduct that only a disciplinary investigation can uncover. Reporting a violation is especially important where the victim is unlikely to discover the offense.*

[2] *A report about misconduct is not required where it would involve violation of Rule 1.6 of these Rules. However, a lawyer should encourage a client to consent to disclosure where prosecution would not substantially prejudice the client's interests.*

[3] *If a lawyer were obliged to report every violation of the Rules, the failure to report any violation would itself be a professional offense. Such a requirement existed in many jurisdictions but proved to be unenforceable. This Rule limits the reporting obligation to those offenses that a self-regulating profession must vigorously endeavor to prevent. A measure of judgment is, therefore, required in complying with the provisions of this Rule. The term "substantial" refers to the seriousness of the possible offense and not the quantum of evidence of which the lawyer is aware. A report should be made to the bar disciplinary agency unless some other agency, such as a peer review agency, is more appropriate in the circumstances. Similar considerations apply to the reporting of judicial misconduct.*

[4] *The duty to report professional misconduct does not apply to a lawyer retained to represent a lawyer whose professional conduct is in question. Such a situation is governed by the rules applicable to the client-lawyer relationship.*

[5] *Information about a lawyer's or judge's misconduct or fitness may be received by a lawyer in the course of that lawyer's participation in the Attorneys and Judges Assistance Program. In that circumstance, providing for an exception to the reporting requirement of paragraphs (a) and (b) of this Rule encourages lawyers and judges to seek treatment through such a program. Conversely, without such an exception, lawyers and judges may hesitate to seek assistance from these programs, which may then result in additional harm to their professional careers and additional injury to the welfare of clients and the public. These Rules do not otherwise address the confidentiality of information received by a lawyer or judge participating in the Attorneys and Judges Assistance Program; such an obligation, however, may be imposed by the rules of the program or other law.*

#### **Rule 8.4. MISCONDUCT.**

It is professional misconduct for a lawyer to:

(a) attempt to violate the Rules of Professional Conduct, knowingly assist or induce another to do so, or do so through the acts of another;

(b) commit a criminal act that reflects adversely on the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness as a lawyer in other respects;

(c) engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation;

(d) Reserved;

(e) state or imply an ability to influence improperly a government agency or official; or

(f) knowingly assist a judge or judicial officer in conduct that is a violation of applicable rules of judicial conduct or other law; or

(g) fail to cooperate during the course of an ethics investigation or disciplinary proceeding.

(h) In a professional capacity, a lawyer shall not engage in sexual harassment.

"Professional capacity" under this Rule means acts, including communications, occurring in

(1) the course of a client representation;

(2) interactions with coworkers, court personnel, jurors, and witnesses;

(3) the operation or management of a law firm, law practice, or organization with which the lawyer is employed, including acts at events sponsored by the law firm, law practice, or organization; and/or

(4) bar association, bar organization, legal education conferences or events.

"Sexual harassment" under this Rule means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature which a reasonable lawyer would know are offensive.

#### **COMMENTS:**

[1] *Lawyers violate Rule 8.4(a) of these Rules, and are subject to discipline, when they attempt to violate the Rules of Professional Conduct, knowingly assist or induce another to do so, or violate the Rules through the acts of another, as when they request or instruct an agent to do so on the lawyer's behalf. Paragraph (a), however, does not prohibit a lawyer from advising a*

*client concerning action the client is legally entitled to take.*

*[2] Many kinds of illegal conduct reflect adversely on fitness to practice law, such as offenses involving fraud and the offense of willful failure to file an income tax return. This is true whether or not the illegal conduct results in a criminal conviction. However, some kinds of offense carry no such implication. Although a lawyer is personally answerable to the entire criminal law, a lawyer should be professionally answerable only for offenses that indicate lack of those characteristics relevant to law practice. Offenses involving violence, dishonesty, breach of trust, or serious interference with the administration of justice are in that category. A pattern of repeated offenses, even ones of minor significance when considered separately, can indicate indifference to legal obligation.*

*[3] A lawyer may refuse to comply with an obligation imposed by law upon a good faith belief that no valid obligation exists. The provisions of Rule 1.2(d) of these Rules concerning a good faith challenge to the validity, scope, meaning, or application of the law apply to challenges of legal regulation of the practice of law.*

*[4] Lawyers holding public office assume legal responsibilities going beyond those of other citizens. A lawyer's abuse of public office can suggest an inability to fulfill the professional and ethical obligations of an attorney. The same is true of abuse of positions of private trust such as trustee, executor, administrator, guardian, agent and officer, director or manager of a corporation or other organization.*

*[5] An attorney who is the subject of an ethics investigation or disciplinary proceeding has an ethical duty to timely cooperate with that investigation or proceeding. Examples of failure to cooperate are described in Rule 2.12A(a) of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai'i.*

*[6] Unless authorized by a court, an attorney who uses the judiciary's electronic filing or data storage system to gain access*

*to confidential information filed in a case to which the attorney is not a party and/or an attorney of record may be subject to discipline under Rule 8.4(c) of this Rule.*

*[7] Lawyers have a duty to educate themselves on the social norms of the community, including what is likely to be considered sexual harassment, and to avoid such conduct.*

*(Amended September 26, 2019, effective September 26, 2019; further amended October 26, 2021, effective January 1, 2022.)*

### **Rule 8.5. DISCIPLINARY AUTHORITY; CHOICE OF LAW.**

**(a) Disciplinary Authority.** A lawyer admitted, specially admitted, or granted limited admission to practice in the State of Hawai'i is subject to the disciplinary authority of the Hawai'i Supreme Court and the Disciplinary Board of the Hawai'i Supreme Court ("the Board"), regardless of where the conduct occurs. A lawyer not admitted, specially admitted, or granted limited admission to practice law in the State of Hawai'i is also subject to the disciplinary authority of the Hawai'i Supreme Court and the Board if the lawyer provides or offers to provide any legal services in the State of Hawai'i. A lawyer may be subject to the disciplinary authority of both the State of Hawai'i and another jurisdiction for the same conduct.

#### **COMMENTS:**

*[1] In modern practice lawyers frequently act outside the territorial limits of the jurisdiction in which they are licensed to practice, either in another state or outside the United States. In doing so, they remain subject to the governing authority of the jurisdiction in which they are licensed to practice. If their activity in another jurisdiction is substantial and continuous, it may constitute practice of law in that jurisdiction. See Rule 5.5 of these Rules.*

[2] *If the rules of professional conduct in the two jurisdictions differ, principles of conflict of laws may apply. Similar problems can arise when a lawyer is licensed to practice in more than one jurisdiction.*

[3] *Where the lawyer is licensed to practice law in two jurisdictions which impose conflicting obligations, applicable rules of choice of law may govern the situation. A related problem arises with respect to practice before a federal tribunal, where the general authority of the states to regulate practice within their borders may conflict with the authority of federal tribunals to regulate practice before them.*

[4] *This Rule also applies to lawyers practicing in this jurisdiction on a pro hac vice basis.*

[5] *The purpose of this Rule is to establish that the Hawai'i Supreme Court and the Disciplinary Board of the Hawai'i Supreme Court ("the Board") have disciplinary jurisdiction over any attorney who engages in the practice of law within the state with respect to enforcement of its rules governing acts and omissions that may constitute grounds for discipline. Under this Rule, an attorney who is not licensed to practice in this state but engages in the practice of law in the state, and commits acts or omissions that may constitute grounds for discipline, is subject to the disciplinary jurisdiction of the Hawai'i Supreme Court and the Board. Extension of the disciplinary authority of this jurisdiction to other lawyers who provide or offer to provide legal services in the State of Hawai'i is for the protection of the public. Reciprocal enforcement of a jurisdiction's disciplinary findings and sanctions will further advance the purposes of this Rule.*

*(Amended October 21, 2013, effective January 1, 2014; further amended June 14, 2022, effective July 1, 2022.)*