

Subpart D. CODE OF CIVILITY

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CHAPTER 99. CODE OF CIVILITY

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Source

The provisions of this Chapter 99 adopted December 6, 2000, effective December 6, 2000, 30 Pa.B. 6541; amended April 21, 2005, effective May 7, 2005, 35 Pa.B. 2722. Immediately preceding text appears at serial pages (276507) to (276508) and (272355) to (272356), unless otherwise noted.

§ 99.1. Preamble.

The hallmark of an enlightened and effective system of justice is the adherence to standards of professional responsibility and civility. Judges and lawyers must always be mindful of the appearance of justice as well as its dispensation. The following principles are designed to assist judges and lawyers in how to conduct themselves in a manner that preserves the dignity and honor of the judiciary and the legal profession. These principles are intended to encourage lawyers, judges and court personnel to practice civility and decorum and to confirm the legal profession’s status as an honorable and respected profession where courtesy and civility are observed as a matter of course.

The conduct of lawyers and judges should be characterized at all times by professional integrity and personal courtesy in the fullest sense of those terms. Integrity and courtesy are indispensable to the practice of law and the orderly administration of justice by our courts. Uncivil or obstructive conduct impedes the fundamental goal of resolving disputes in a rational, peaceful and efficient manner.

The following principles are designed to encourage judges and lawyers to meet their obligations toward each other and the judicial system in general. It is expected that judges and lawyers will make a voluntary and mutual commitment to adhere to these principles. These principles are not intended to supersede or alter existing disciplinary codes or standards of conduct, nor shall they be used as a basis for litigation, lawyer discipline or sanctions.

§ 99.2. A Judge’s Duties to Lawyers and Other Judges.

1. A judge must maintain control of the proceedings and has an obligation to ensure that proceedings are conducted in a civil manner.
2. A judge should show respect, courtesy and patience to the lawyers, parties and all participants in the legal process by treating all with civility.

3. A judge should ensure that court-supervised personnel dress and conduct themselves appropriately and act civilly toward lawyers, parties and witnesses.

4. A judge should refrain from acting upon or manifesting racial, gender or other bias or prejudice toward any participant in the legal process.

5. A judge should always refer to counsel by surname preceded by the preferred title (Mr., Mrs., Ms. or Miss) or by the professional title of attorney or counselor while in the courtroom.

6. A judge should not employ hostile or demeaning words in opinions or in written or oral communications with lawyers, parties or witnesses.

7. A judge should be punctual in convening trials, hearings, meetings and conferences.

8. A judge should be considerate of the time constraints upon lawyers, parties and witnesses and the expenses attendant to litigation when scheduling trials, hearings, meetings and conferences to the extent such scheduling is consistent with the efficient conduct of litigation.

9. A judge should ensure that disputes are resolved in a prompt and efficient manner and give all issues in controversy deliberate, informed and impartial analysis and explain, when appropriate, the reasons for the decision of the court.

10. A judge should allow the lawyers to present proper arguments and to make a complete and accurate record.

11. A judge should not impugn the integrity or professionalism of any lawyer on the basis of the clients whom or the causes which he or she represents.

12. A judge should recognize that the conciliation process is an integral part of litigation and thus should protect all confidences and remain unbiased with respect to conciliation communications.

13. A judge should work in cooperation with all other judges and other jurisdictions with respect to availability of lawyers, witnesses, parties and court resources.

14. A judge should conscientiously assist and cooperate with other jurists to assure the efficient and expeditious processing of cases.

15. Judges should treat each other with courtesy and respect.

§ 99.3. The Lawyer's Duties to the Court and to Other Lawyers.

1. A lawyer should act in a manner consistent with the fair, efficient and humane system of justice and treat all participants in the legal process in a civil, professional and courteous manner at all times. These principles apply to the lawyer's conduct in the courtroom, in office practice and in the course of litigation.

2. A lawyer should speak and write in a civil and respectful manner in all communications with the court, court personnel, and other lawyers.

3. A lawyer should not engage in any conduct that diminishes the dignity or decorum of the courtroom.

4. A lawyer should advise clients and witnesses of the proper dress and conduct expected of them when appearing in court and should, to the best of his or her ability, prevent clients and witnesses from creating disorder and disruption in the courtroom.

5. A lawyer should abstain from making disparaging personal remarks or engaging in acrimonious speech or conduct toward opposing counsel or any participants in the legal process and shall treat everyone involved with fair consideration.

6. A lawyer should not bring the profession into disrepute by making unfounded accusations of impropriety or personal attacks upon counsel and, absent good cause, should not attribute improper motive or conduct to other counsel.

7. A lawyer should refrain from acting upon or manifesting racial, gender or other bias or prejudice toward any participant in the legal process.

8. A lawyer should not misrepresent, mischaracterize, misquote or miscite facts or authorities in any oral or written communication to the court.

9. A lawyer should be punctual and prepared for all court appearances.

10. A lawyer should avoid ex parte communications with the court, including the judge's staff, on pending matters in person, by telephone or in letters and other forms of written communication unless authorized. Communication with the judge on any matter pending before the judge, without notice to opposing counsel, is strictly prohibited.

11. A lawyer should be considerate of the time constraints and pressures on the court in the court's effort to administer justice and make every effort to comply with schedules set by the court.

12. A lawyer, when in the courtroom, should make all remarks only to the judge and never to opposing counsel. When in the courtroom a lawyer should refer to opposing counsel by surname preceded by the preferred title (Mr., Mrs., Ms. or Miss) or the professional title of attorney or counselor.

13. A lawyer should show respect for the court by proper demeanor and decorum. In the courtroom a lawyer should address the judge as "Your Honor" or "the Court" or by other formal designation. A lawyer should begin an argument by saying "May it please the court" and identify himself/herself, the firm and the client.

14. A lawyer should deliver to all counsel involved in a proceeding any written communication that a lawyer sends to the court. Said copies should be delivered at substantially the same time and by the same means as the written communication to the court.

15. A lawyer should attempt to verify the availability of necessary participants and witnesses before hearing and trial dates are set or, if that is not feasible, immediately after such dates have been set and promptly notify the court of any anticipated problems.

16. A lawyer should understand that court personnel are an integral part of the justice system and should treat them with courtesy and respect at all times.

17. A lawyer should demonstrate respect for other lawyers, which requires that counsel be punctual in meeting appointments with other lawyers and considerate of the schedules of other participants in the legal process; adhere to commitments, whether made orally or in writing; and respond promptly to communications from other lawyers.

18. A lawyer should strive to protect the dignity and independence of the judiciary, particularly from unjust criticism and attack.

19. A lawyer should be cognizant of the standing of the legal profession and should bring these principles to the attention of other lawyers when appropriate.

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