

# **A Lawyer's and Legal Paraprofessional's Creed of Professionalism of the State Bar of Arizona**

## **Preamble**

As a [lawyer/legal paraprofessional], I must strive to make our system of justice work fairly and efficiently. To carry out that responsibility, I will comply with the letter and spirit of the disciplinary standards applicable to all [lawyers/ legal paraprofessionals] and I will conduct myself in accordance with the following Code of Professionalism when dealing with my client, opposing parties, their counsel, tribunals and the general public.

### **A. With respect to my client:**

1. I will be loyal and committed to my client's cause, but I will not permit that loyalty and commitment to interfere with my ability to provide my client with objective and independent advice;
2. I will endeavor to achieve my client's lawful objectives in business transactions and in litigation as expeditiously and economically as possible;
3. In appropriate cases, I will counsel my client with respect to alternative methods of resolving disputes;
4. I will advise my client against pursuing litigation (or any other course of action) that is without merit and I will not engage in tactics that are intended to delay the resolution of a matter or to harass or drain the financial resources of the opposing party;
5. I will advise my client that civility and courtesy are not to be equated with weakness;
6. While I must abide by my client's decision concerning the objectives of the representation, I nevertheless will counsel my client that a willingness to initiate or engage in settlement discussions is consistent with effective and honorable representation.

### **B. With respect to opposing parties and their counsel:**

1. I will be courteous and civil, both in oral and written communication;
2. I will not knowingly make statements of fact or law that are untrue;
3. In litigation proceedings, I will agree to reasonable requests for extensions of time or for waiver of procedural formalities when the substantive interests of my client will not be adversely affected;
4. I will endeavor to consult with opposing counsel before scheduling depositions and meetings and before rescheduling hearings, and I will cooperate with opposing counsel when scheduling changes are requested;

5. I will not utilize litigation or any other course of conduct to harass the opposing party;
6. I will not engage in excessive and abusive discovery; and I will advise my client to comply with all reasonable discovery requests;
7. I will not threaten to seek sanctions against any party lawyer, or legal paraprofessional unless I believe that they have a reasonable basis in fact and law;
8. I will not delay resolution of a matter, unless the delay is incidental to an action reasonably necessary to ensure the fair and efficient resolution of that matter;
9. In depositions and other proceedings, and in negotiations, I will conduct myself with dignity, avoid making groundless objections and not be rude or disrespectful; 10. I will not serve motions and pleadings on the other party or the party's counsel at such a time or in such a manner as will unfairly limit the other party's opportunity to respond;
10. In business transactions I will not quarrel over matters of form or style but will concentrate on matters of substance and content;
11. I will identify clearly, for other counsel or parties, all changes that I have made in the documents submitted to me for review.

**C. With respect to the courts and other tribunals:**

1. I will be an honorable advocate on behalf of my client, recognizing, as an officer of the court, that unprofessional conduct is detrimental to the proper functioning of our system of justice;
2. Where consistent with my client's interests, I will communicate with opposing counsel in an effort to avoid litigation and to resolve litigation that has actually commenced;
3. I will voluntarily withdraw claims or defenses when it becomes apparent that they do not have merit;
4. I will not file frivolous motions;
5. I will make every effort to agree with other counsel, as early as possible, on a voluntary exchange of information and on a plan for discovery;
6. I will attempt to resolve, by agreement, my objections to matters contained in my opponent's pleadings and discovery requests;
7. When scheduled hearings or depositions have to be canceled, I will notify opposing counsel and, if appropriate, the court (or other tribunal) as early as possible;
8. Before dates for hearings or trial are set - or, if that is not feasible, immediately after such dates have been set - I will attempt to verify the availability of key participants and witnesses

that I can promptly notify the court (or other tribunal) and opposing counsel of any likely problem in that regard;

9. In civil matters, I will stipulate to facts as to which there is no genuine dispute;
10. I will endeavor to be punctual in attending court hearings, conferences, and dispositions;
11. I will at all times be candid with, and respectful to, the tribunal.

**D. With respect to the public and our system of justice:**

1. I will remember that, in addition to commitment to my client's cause, my responsibilities as a [lawyer/legal paraprofessional] include a devotion to the public good;
2. I will keep current in the areas in which I practice and, when necessary, will associate with, or refer my client to, counsel knowledgeable in another field or practice;
3. As a member of a self-regulating profession, I will be mindful of my obligations under the Rules of Professional Conduct to report violations of those Rules;
4. I will be mindful of the need to protect the integrity of the legal profession and will be so guided when considering methods and contents of advertising;
5. I will be mindful that the law is a learned profession and that among its desirable goals are devotion to public service, improvement or administration of justice, and the contribution of uncompensated time and civic influence on behalf of those persons who cannot afford adequate legal assistance.