

/* Part 4 of 6 */

RULE 4-3.7 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 on behalf of his or her client except where:

(1) The testimony relates to an uncontested issue;

(2) The testimony will relate solely to a matter of formality and there is no reason to believe that substantial evidence will be offered in opposition to the testimony;

(3) The testimony relates to the nature and value of legal services rendered in the case; or

(4) 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 4-1.7 or 4-1.9.

/* A change from prior rules. */

Comment

Combining the roles of advocate and witness can prejudice the opposing party and can involve a conflict of interest between the lawyer and client.

The opposing party has proper objection 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.

Paragraph (a)(1) recognizes that if the testimony will be uncontested, the ambiguities in the dual role are purely theoretical. Paragraphs (a)(2) and (3) recognize 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.

Apart from these two (2) exceptions, paragraph (a)(4) recognizes that a balancing is required between the interests of the client and those of the opposing party. Whether 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 principle of imputed disqualification stated in rule 4-1.10 has no application to this aspect of the problem.

Whether the combination of roles involves an improper conflict of interest with respect to the client is determined by rule 4-1.7 or 4-1.9. For example, if there is likely to be substantial conflict between the testimony of the client and that of the lawyer or a member of the lawyer's firm, the representation is improper. 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. See comment to rule 4-1.7. If a lawyer who is a member of a firm may not act as both advocate and witness by reason of conflict of interest, rule 4-1.10 disqualifies the firm also.

RULE 4-3.8 SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PROSECUTOR

The prosecutor in a criminal case shall:

(a) Refrain from prosecuting a charge that the prosecutor knows is not supported by probable cause;

(b) Not seek to obtain from an unrepresented accused a waiver of important pre-trial rights such as a right to a preliminary hearing;

(c) 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 and to the tribunal all unprivileged mitigating information known to the prosecutor, except when the prosecutor is relieved of this responsibility by a protective order of the tribunal.

Comment

A prosecutor has the responsibility of a minister of justice and not simply that of an advocate. This responsibility carries with it specific obligations such as making a reasonable effort to assure that the accused has been advised of the right to, and the procedure for, obtaining counsel and has been given a reasonable opportunity to obtain counsel so that guilt is decided upon the basis of sufficient evidence. Precisely how far the

prosecutor is required to go in this direction is a matter of debate.

Paragraph (b) does not apply to an accused appearing pro se with the approval of the tribunal, nor does it forbid the lawful questioning of a suspect who has knowingly waived the rights to counsel and silence.

The exception is paragraph (c) 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.

RULE 4-3.9 ADVOCATE IN NONADJUDICATIVE PROCEEDINGS

A lawyer representing a client before a legislative or administrative tribunal in a nonadjudicative proceeding shall disclose that the appearance is in a representative capacity and shall conform to the provisions of rules 4-3.3(a) through (c), 4-3.4(a) through (c), and 4-3.5(a), (c), and (d).

Comment

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.

Lawyers have no exclusive right to appear before nonadjudicative 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.

This rule does not apply to representation of a client in a negotiation or other bilateral transaction with a governmental agency; representation in such a transaction is governed by rule 4-4.1 through 4-4.4.

4-4. TRANSACTIONS WITH PERSONS OTHER THAN CLIENTS

RULE 4-4.1 TRUTHFULNESS IN STATEMENT 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, unless disclosure is prohibited by rule 4-1.6.

Comment

Misrepresentation

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 failure to act.

Statements of fact

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 a claim are in this category and so is the existence of an undisclosed principal except where nondisclosure of the principal would constitute fraud.

Fraud by client

Paragraph (b) recognizes that substantive law may require a lawyer to disclose certain information to avoid being deemed to have assisted the client's crime or fraud. The requirement of disclosure created by this paragraph is, however, subject to the obligations created by rule 4-1.6.

RULE 4-4.2 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.

/* This is why attorneys simply will not talk to clients represented by other attorneys. */

Comment

This rule does not prohibit communication with a party, or an employee or agent of a party, concerning matters outside the representation. For example, the existence of a controversy between a government agency and a private party, or between two (2) 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 for communicating with the other party 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.

In the case of an organization, this rule prohibits communications by a lawyer for one party 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 4-3.4(f). This rule also covers any person, whether or not a party to a formal proceeding, who is represented by counsel concerning the matter in question.

RULE 4-4.3 DEALING WITH UNREPRESENTED PERSONS

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.

Comment

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. During the course of a lawyer's representation of a client, the lawyer should not give advice to an unrepresented person other than the advice to obtain counsel.

RULE 4-4.4 RESPECT FOR RIGHTS OF THIRD PERSONS

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 knowingly use methods of obtaining evidence that violate the legal rights of such person.

Comment

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 restriction on methods of obtaining evidence from third persons.

4-5. LAW FIRMS AND ASSOCIATIONS

RULE 4-5.1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PARTNER OR SUPERVISORY LAWYER

(a) A partner 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 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 in the law firm in which the other lawyer practices, or has direct supervisory authority over the other lawyer, and knows of the conduct at a time when its consequences can be avoided or mitigated but fails to take reasonable remedial action.

Comment

Paragraphs (a) and (b) refer to lawyers who have supervisory authority over the professional work of a firm or legal department of a government agency. This includes members of a partnership and the shareholders in a law firm organized as a professional corporation; lawyers have supervisory authority in the law department of an enterprise or government agency; and lawyers who have intermediate managerial responsibilities in a firm.

The measures required to fulfill the responsibility prescribed in paragraphs (a) and (b) can depend on the firm's structure and the nature of its practice. In a small firm, informal supervision and occasional admonition ordinarily might be sufficient. In a large firm, or in practice situations in which intensely 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 4-5.2. 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 a lawyer having authority over the work of another may not assume that the subordinate lawyer will inevitably conform to the rules.

Paragraph (c)(1) expresses a general principle of responsibility for acts of another. See also rule 4-8.4(a).

Paragraph (c)(2) defines the duty of a lawyer having direct supervisory authority over performance of specific legal work by another lawyer. Whether a lawyer has such supervisory authority in particular circumstances is a question of fact. Partners of a private firm have at least indirect responsibility for all work being done by the firm, while a partner in charge of a particular matter ordinarily has direct authority over other firm lawyers engaged in the matter. Appropriate remedial action by a partner would depend on the immediacy of the partner's involvement and the seriousness of the misconduct. The supervisor is required to intervene to prevent avoidable consequences of misconduct if the 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.

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.

Apart from this rule and rule 4-8.4(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.

RULE 4-5.2 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.

/* An extremely unusual concession to the large firms, governmental agencies etc. allowing supervisors the right to direct the activities of supposedly independent, educated, professionals. */

Comment

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.

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 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 (2) clients conflict under rule 4-1.7, the supervisor's reasonable resolution of the question should protect the subordinate professionally if the resolution is subsequently challenged.

RULE 4-5.3 RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING NONLAWYER ASSISTANTS

With respect to a nonlawyer employed or retained by or associated with a lawyer.

(a) A partner in a law 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 obligation 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:

(1) The lawyer orders or, with the knowledge of the specific conduct, ratifies the conduct involved; or

(2) The lawyer is a partner in the law firm in which the person is employed, or had 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.

Comment

Lawyers generally employ assistants in their practice, including secretaries, investigators, law student interns, and paraprofessionals. Such assistants, whether employees or independent contractors, act for the lawyer in rendition of the lawyer's professional services. A lawyer should 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.

RULE 4-5.4 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 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 which fairly represents the services rendered by the deceased lawyer; and

(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.

(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 such 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; or

(2) A nonlawyer has the right to direct or control the professional judgment of a lawyer.

Amended and effective June 8, 1989 (544 So.2d 193).

Comment

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.

RULE 4-5.5 UNLICENSED 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 unlicensed practice of law.

Comment

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. 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 4-5.3. 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.

RULE 4-5.6 RESTRICTIONS ON RIGHT TO PRACTICE

A lawyer shall not participate in offering or making:

(a) A partnership or employment agreement that restricts the rights of a lawyer to practice after termination of the relationship, except an agreement concerning benefits upon retirement; or

(b) An agreement in which a restriction on the lawyer's right to practice is part of the settlement of a controversy between private parties.

/* Unlike doctors, non-competition clauses are simply made unlawful. */

Comment

An agreement restricting the right of partners or associates 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.

Paragraph (b) prohibits a lawyer from agreeing not to represent other persons in connections with settling a claim on behalf of a client.

4-6. PUBLIC SERVICE

RULE 4-6.1 PROBONO PUBLIC SERVICE

A lawyer should render public interest legal service, A lawyer may discharge this responsibility by:

(a) Providing professional services at no fee or a reduced fee to persons of limited means or to public service or charitable groups or organizations;

(b) Service without compensation in public interest activities that improve the law, the legal system or the legal profession; or

(c) Financial support for organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means.

Comment

Each lawyer engaged in the practice of law has a responsibility to provide public interest legal services without fee, or at a substantially reduced fee, in one or more of the following areas: poverty law, civil rights law, public rights law, charitable organization representation, and the administration of justice. This rule expresses that policy but is not intended to be enforced through disciplinary process.

The rights and responsibilities of individuals and organizations in the United States are increasingly defined in legal terms. As a consequence, legal assistance in coping with the web of statutes, rules, and regulations is imperative for all persons.

The basic responsibility for providing legal services for those unable to pay ultimately rests upon the individual lawyer, and personal involvement in the problems of the disadvantaged can be one of the most rewarding experiences in the life of a lawyer. Every lawyer, regardless of professional prominence or professional workload, should find time to participate in or otherwise support the provision of legal services to the disadvantaged. The provision of free legal services to those unable to pay reasonable fees continues to be an obligation of each lawyer as well as the profession generally, but the efforts of individual lawyers are often not enough to meet the need. Thus, it has been necessary for the profession and government to

institute additional programs to provide legal services. Accordingly, legal aid offices, lawyer referral services, and other related programs have been developed, and others will be developed by the profession and government. Every lawyer should support all proper efforts to meet this need for legal services.

RULES 4-6.2 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 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.

Comment

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 4-6.1. 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

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 4-1.1, 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. 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.

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 4-6.3 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 the client of the lawyer. The lawyer shall not knowingly participate in a decision or action of the organization:

(a) If participating in the decision would be incompatible with the lawyer's obligations to a client under rule 4-1.7; or

(b) Where the decision 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.

Comment

Lawyers should be encouraged to support and participate in legal service organization. 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 to a legal services organization, the profession's involvement in such organizations would be severely curtailed.

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 4-6.4 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 affected by a decision in which the lawyer participates, the lawyer shall disclose the fact but need not identify the client.

Comment

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. See also rule 4-1.2(b). 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 4-1.7. 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 affected.

4-7 INFORMATION ABOUT LEGAL SERVICES

RULE 4-7.1 COMMUNICATIONS CONCERNING A LAWYER'S SERVICES

A lawyer shall not make or permit to be made a false, misleading, deceptive or unfair communication about the lawyer or the lawyer's services. A communication violates this rule 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;

(c) Compares the lawyer's services with other lawyers' services, unless the comparison can be factually substantiated; or

(d) Contains a testimonial.

/* Whether this provision, which is really a rule regarding advertising will be upheld is now under consideration by various courts, with the trend being against upholding the rule. */

Comment

This rule governs all communications about a lawyer's services, including advertising permitted by rule 4-7.2. Whatever means are used to make known a lawyer's services, statements about them must be truthful. This precludes any material misrepresentation or misleading omission, such as where a lawyer states or implies certification or recognition as a specialist other than in accordance with rule 4-7.5, where a lawyer implies that any court, tribunal or other public body or official can be improperly influenced, or where a lawyer advertises a particular fee or a contingency fee without disclosing whether the client will also be liable for costs. Another example of a misleading omission is an advertisement for a law firm which states that all the firm's lawyers are juris doctors but does not disclose that a juris doctorate is a law degree rather than a medical degree of some sort and that virtually any law firm in the United States can make the same claim. Although rule 4-7.2 permits lawyers to list the jurisdictions and courts to which they are admitted, it also would be misleading for a lawyer who does not list other jurisdictions or courts to state that he or she is a member of The Florida bar. Standing by itself, that otherwise truthful statement implies falsely that the lawyer possesses a qualification not common to virtually all lawyers practicing in

Florida. The latter two examples of misleading omissions also are examples of unfair advertising.

The prohibition in paragraph (b) of statements that may create "unjustified expectations" precludes advertisements about results obtained on behalf of a client, such as the amount of a damage award or the lawyer's record in obtaining favorable verdicts, and advertisements obtaining favorable verdicts, and advertisements containing client endorsements or testimonials. Such information may create the unjustified expectation that similar results can be obtained for others without reference to the specific factual and legal circumstances.

The prohibition in paragraph (c) of comparisons that cannot be factually substantiated would preclude a lawyer from representing that he or she or his or her law firm is "the best," "one of the best," or "on the most experienced" in a field of law.

The prohibition in paragraph (d) would preclude endorsements or testimonials because they are inherently misleading to a layman untrained in the law. Potential clients are likely to infer from the testimonial that the lawyer will reach similar results in future cases. Because the lawyer cannot directly make this assertion, the lawyer is not permitted to indirectly make that assertion through the use of testimonials.

RULE 4-7.2 ADVERTISING

(a) Subject to all the requirements set forth in this subchapter 4-7, including the filing requirements of rule 4-7.5, a lawyer may advertise services through public media, such as a telephone directory, legal directory, or other periodical, billboards and other signs, radio television, and recorded messages the public may access by dialing a telephone number, or through written communication not involving solicitation as defined in rule 4-7.4.

/* Note that these rules are probably unique to each jurisdiction. */

(b) Advertisements on the electronic media such as television and radio may contain the same factual information and illustrations as permitted in advertisements in the print media, but the information shall be articulated by a single voice, with no background sound other than instrumental music. The voice may be that of a full-time employee of the firm whose services are advertised; it shall not be that of a celebrity whose voice is recognizable to the public. The lawyer or full-time employee of the firm whose services are being advertised may appear on screen or on radio.

(c) All advertisements and written communications pursuant to these rules shall include the name of at least one lawyer or

the lawyer or the lawyer referral service responsible for their content.

(d) Except as provided in this paragraph, all advertisements shall contain the following disclosure: "The hiring of a lawyer is an important decision that should not be based solely upon advertisements. Before you decide, ask us to send you free written information about our qualifications and experience." This disclosure need not appear in electronic advertisements or advertisements in the public print media that contain no illustrations and no information other than that listed in paragraph (n)(1)-(8) of this rule.

(e) There shall be no dramatization in any advertisement in any medium.

(f) Illustrations used in advertisements shall present information which can be factually substantiated and is not merely self-laudatory.

(g) Every advertisement and written communication that indicates one or more areas of law in which the lawyer or law firm practices shall conform to the requirements of rule 4-7.6.

(h) Every advertisement and written communication that contains information about the lawyer's fee, including those which indicate no fee will be charged in the absence of a recovery, shall disclose whether the client will be liable for any expenses in addition to the fee. Additionally, advertisements and written communications indicating that the charging of a fee is contingent on outcome or that the fee will be a percentage of the recovery shall disclose (1) that the client will be liable for expenses regardless of outcome, if the lawyer so intends to hold the client liable; and (2) whether the percentage fee will be computed before expenses are deducted from the recovery, if the lawyer intends to compute the percentage fee before deducting the expenses.

(i) A lawyer who advertises a specific fee or range of fees for particular service shall honor the advertised fee or range of fees for at least 90 days unless the advertisement specifies a shorter period; provided that, for advertisements in the yellow pages of telephone directories or other media not published more frequently than annually, the advertised fee or range of fees shall be honored for no less than one year following publication.

(j) A lawyer shall not make statements which are merely self-laudatory or statements describing or characterizing the quality of the lawyer's services in advertisements and written communications; provided that, this provision shall not apply to information furnished to a prospective client at that person's request or to information supplied to existing clients.

(k) A lawyer shall not advertise services under a name that violates the provisions of rule 4-7.7.

(l) All advertisements and written communications provided for under these rules shall disclose the geographic location, by the city or town, of the office in which the lawyer or lawyers who will actually perform the services advertised principally practice law. If the office location is outside a city or town, the county in which the office is located must be disclosed.

(m) No lawyer shall, directly or indirectly, pay all or part of the cost of an advertisement by a lawyer not in the same firm unless the advertisement discloses the name and address of the nonadvertising lawyer, the relationship between the advertising lawyer and the nonadvertising lawyer, and whether the advertising lawyer may refer any case received through the advertisement to the nonadvertising lawyer.

(n) The following information in advertisements and written communications shall be presumed not to violate the provisions of rule 4-7.1:

(1) Subject to the requirements of this rule and rule 4-7.7, the name of the lawyer or law firm, a listing of lawyers associated with the firm, office addresses and telephone numbers, office and telephone service hours, and a designation such as "attorney" or "law firm."

(2) Technical and professional licenses granted by the state or other recognized licensing authorities.

(4) Foreign language ability.

(5) Fields of law in which the lawyer is certified or designated, subject to the requirements of rule 4-7.6.

(6) Prepaid or group legal service plans in which the lawyer participates.

(7) Acceptance of credit cards.

(8) Fee for initial consultation and fee schedule, subject to the requirements of paragraphs (h) and (i) of this rule.

(9) A listing of the name and geographic location of a lawyer or law firm as a sponsor of a public service announcement or charitable, civic or community program or event.

(o) Nothing in this rule prohibits a lawyer or law firm from permitting the inclusion in law lists and law directories intended primarily for the use of the legal profession of such information as has traditionally been included in these publications.

(p) A copy or recording of an advertisement or written or recorded communication shall be submitted to the Standing Committee on Advertising in accordance with the requirements of

rule 4-7.5, and the lawyer shall retain a copy or recording for three years after its last dissemination along with a record of when and where it was used.

(q) A lawyer shall not give anything of value to a person for recommending the lawyer's services, except that a lawyer may pay the reasonable cost of advertising or written or recorded communication permitted by these rules and may pay the usual charges of lawyer referral service or other legal service organization.