

## **27 NCAC 01B .0202 JURISDICTION & AUTHORITY OF DISTRICT GRIEVANCE COMMITTEES**

- (a) District Grievance Committees are Subject to the Rules of the North Carolina State Bar - The district grievance committee shall be subject to the rules and regulations adopted by the Council of the North Carolina State Bar.
- (b) Grievances Filed With District Grievance Committee - A district grievance committee may investigate and consider grievances filed against attorneys who live or maintain offices within the judicial district and which are filed in the first instance with the chairperson of the district grievance committee. The chairperson of the district grievance committee will immediately refer to the State Bar any grievance filed locally in the first instance which
- (1) alleges misconduct against a member of the district grievance committee;
  - (2) alleges that any attorney has embezzled or misapplied client funds; or
  - (3) alleges any other serious violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct which may be beyond the capacity of the district grievance committee to investigate.
- (c) Grievances Referred to District Grievance Committee - The district grievance committee shall also investigate and consider such grievances as are referred to it for investigation by the counsel of the North Carolina State Bar.
- (d) Grievances Involving Fee Disputes
- (1) Notice to Complainant of Fee Dispute Resolution Program - If a grievance filed initially with the district bar consists solely or in part of a fee dispute, the chairperson of the district grievance committee shall notify the complainant in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the grievance that the complainant may elect to participate in the North Carolina State Bar Fee Dispute Resolution Program. If the grievance consists solely of a fee dispute, the letter to the complainant shall follow the format set out in Rule .0208 of this subchapter. If the grievance consists in part of matters other than a fee dispute, the letter to the complainant shall follow the format set out in Rule .0209 of this subchapter. A respondent attorney shall not have the right to elect to participate in fee arbitration.
  - (2) Handling Claims Not Involving Fee Dispute - Where a grievance alleges multiple claims, the allegations not involving a fee dispute will be handled in the same manner as any other grievance filed with the district grievance committee.
  - (3) Handling Claims Not Submitted to Fee Dispute Resolution by Complainant - If the complainant elects not to participate in the State Bar's Fee Dispute Resolution Program, or fails to notify the chairperson that he or she elects to participate within 20 days following mailing of the notice referred to in Rule .0202(d)(1) above, the grievance will be handled in the same manner as any other grievance filed with the district grievance committee.
  - (4) Referral to Fee Dispute Resolution Program - Where a complainant timely elects to participate in fee dispute resolution, the chairperson of the district grievance committee shall refer the portion of the grievance involving a fee dispute to the State Bar Fee Dispute Resolution Program for resolution. If the grievance consists entirely of a fee dispute, and the complainant timely elects to participate in fee dispute resolution, no grievance file will be established.
- (e) Authority of District Grievance Committees - The district grievance committee shall have authority to
- (1) assist a complainant who requests assistance to reduce a grievance to writing;
  - (2) investigate complaints described in Rule .0202(b) and(c) above by interviewing the complainant, the attorney against whom the grievance was filed and any other persons who may have relevant information regarding the grievance and by requesting written materials from the complainant, respondent attorney, and other individuals;
  - (3) explain the procedures of the district grievance committee to complainants and respondent attorneys;
  - (4) find facts and recommend whether or not the State Bar's Grievance Committee should find that there is probable cause to believe that the respondent has violated one or more provisions of the Revised Rules of Professional Conduct. The district grievance committee may also make a recommendation to the State Bar regarding the appropriate disposition of the case, including referral to the Lawyer Assistance Program pursuant to Rule .0112(j) or to a program of law office management training approved by the State Bar;
  - (5) draft a written report stating the grounds for the recommended disposition of a grievance assigned to the district grievance committee;
  - (6) notify the complainant and the respondent attorney where the district grievance committee recommends that the State Bar find that there is no probable cause to believe that the respondent has violated the Rules of Professional Conduct. Where the district grievance committee recommends that the State Bar find that there is probable cause to believe that the respondent has

violated one or more provisions of the Rules of Professional Conduct, the committee shall notify the respondent attorney of its recommendation and shall notify the complainant that the district grievance committee has concluded its investigation and has referred the matter to the State Bar for final resolution. Where the district grievance committee recommends a finding of no probable cause, the letter of notification to the respondent attorney and to the complainant shall follow the format set out in Rule .0210 of this subchapter. Where the district grievance committee recommends a finding of probable cause, the letter of notification to the respondent attorney shall follow the format set out in Rule .0211 of this subchapter. The letter of notification to the complainant shall follow the format set out in Rule .0212 of this subchapter;

- (7) maintain records of grievances investigated by the district grievance committee for at least one year from the date on which the district grievance committee makes its final recommendation regarding a grievance to the State Bar.

*History Note:* Authority G.S. 84-23;  
Readopted Eff. December 8, 1994;  
Amendments Approved by the Supreme Court: March 3, 1999; December 20, 2000; August 23, 2007; September 25, 2019.