

SECTION .1500 – RULES GOVERNING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

27 NCAC 01D .1501 SCOPE, PURPOSE AND DEFINITIONS

(a) Scope

Except as provided herein, these rules shall apply to every active member licensed by the North Carolina State Bar.

(b) Purpose

The purpose of these continuing legal education rules is to assist lawyers licensed to practice and practicing law in North Carolina in achieving and maintaining professional competence for the benefit of the public whom they serve. The North Carolina State Bar, under Chapter 84 of the General Statutes of North Carolina, is charged with the responsibility of providing rules of professional conduct and with disciplining lawyers who do not comply with such rules. The Rules of Professional Conduct adopted by the North Carolina State Bar and approved by the Supreme Court of North Carolina require that lawyers adhere to important ethical standards, including that of rendering competent legal services in the representation of their clients.

At a time when all aspects of life and society are changing rapidly or becoming subject to pressures brought about by change, laws and legal principles are also in transition (through additions to the body of law, modifications and amendments) and are increasing in complexity. One cannot render competent legal services without continuous education and training.

The same changes and complexities, as well as the economic orientation of society, result in confusion about the ethical requirements concerning the practice of law and the relationships it creates. The data accumulated in the discipline program of the North Carolina State Bar argue persuasively for the establishment of a formal program for continuing and intensive training in professional responsibility and legal ethics.

It is in response to such considerations that the North Carolina State Bar has adopted these minimum continuing legal education requirements. The purpose of these minimum continuing legal education requirements is the same as the purpose of the Rules of Professional Conduct themselves—to ensure that the public at large is served by lawyers who are competent and maintain high ethical standards.

(c) Definitions

- (1) "Active member" shall include any person who is licensed to practice law in the state of North Carolina and who is an active member of the North Carolina State Bar.
- (2) "Administrative Committee" shall mean the Administrative Committee of the North Carolina State Bar.
- (3) "Approved program" shall mean a specific, individual educational program approved as a continuing legal education program under these rules by the Board of Continuing Legal Education.
- (4) "Board" means the Board of Continuing Legal Education created by these rules.
- (5) "Continuing legal education" or "CLE" is any legal, judicial or other educational program accredited by the Board. Generally, CLE will include educational programs designed principally to maintain or advance the professional competence of lawyers and/or to expand an appreciation and understanding of the professional responsibilities of lawyers.
- (6) "Council" shall mean the North Carolina State Bar Council.
- (7) "Credit hour" means an increment of time of 60 minutes which may be divided into segments of 30 minutes or 15 minutes, but no smaller.
- (8) "Ethics" shall mean programs or segments of programs devoted to (i) professional responsibility, or (ii) professionalism as defined in Rules .1501(c)(14) and (15) below.
- (9) "Inactive member" shall mean a member of the North Carolina State Bar who is on inactive status.
- (10) "In-house continuing legal education" shall mean courses or programs offered or conducted by law firms, either individually or in connection with other law firms, corporate legal departments, or similar entities primarily for the education of their members.
- (11) A "newly admitted active member" is one who becomes an active member of the North Carolina State Bar for the first time.
- (12) "On demand" program shall mean an accredited educational program accessed via the internet that is available at any time on a provider's website and does not include live programming.
- (13) "Online" program shall mean an accredited educational program accessed through a computer or telecommunications system such as the internet and can include simultaneously broadcast and on demand programming.

- (14) "Professional responsibility" shall mean those programs or segments of programs devoted to (i) the substance, underlying rationale, and practical application of the Rules of Professional Conduct; (ii) the professional obligations of the lawyer to the client, the court, the public, and other lawyers; or (iii) moral philosophy and ethical decision-making in the context of the practice of law.
- (15) "Professionalism" programs are programs or segments of programs devoted to the identification and examination of, and the encouragement of adherence to, non-mandatory aspirational standards of professional conduct which transcend the requirements of the Rules of Professional Conduct. Such programs address principles of competence and dedication to the service of clients, civility, improvement of the justice system, diversity of the legal profession and clients, advancement of the rule of law, service to the community, and service to the disadvantaged and those unable to pay for legal services.
- (16) "Rules" shall mean the provisions of the continuing legal education rules established by the Supreme Court of North Carolina.
- (17) "Sponsor" is any person or entity presenting or offering to present one or more continuing legal education programs.
- (18) "Professional well-being" (PWB) is a program focused on the relationship between stressors inherent in the profession, competence, professionalism, and fitness to practice. Topics may include the prevention, detection, treatment, and etiology of a range of substance use and mental health conditions, as well as resources available for assistance and strategies for improving resilience and well-being. Experiential exercises, practices, or demonstrations of tools for improving resilience and well-being are permitted provided they do not exceed a combined total of 20 minutes in any 60-minute presentation.
- (19) "Technology training" shall mean a program, or a segment of a program, devoted to education on information technology (IT) or cybersecurity (see N.C. Gen. Stat. 143B-1320(a)(11), or successor statutory provision, for a definition of "information technology"), including education on an information technology product, device, platform, application, or other tool, process, or methodology that is specific or uniquely suited to the practice of law. A technology training program must have the primary objective of enhancing a lawyer's proficiency as a lawyer.
- (20) "Registered Sponsor" shall mean an organization that is registered by the Board after meeting the eligibility standards in Rule .1522(b).

History Note: Authority - Order of the North Carolina Supreme Court, October 7, 1987, 318 N.C. 711; Readopted Eff. December 8, 1994; Amendments Approved by the Supreme Court: March 6, 1997; March 3, 1999; June 7, 2001; March 3, 2005; March 8, 2007; October 9, 2008; August 25, 2011; April 5, 2018; September 20, 2018; September 25, 2019; Amendments Approved by the Supreme Court December 20, 2023 and re-entered into the Supreme Court's minutes March 20, 2024.