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WSSFC 2026

Quality of Life/Ethics Track – Session 1

Parade of Perils

Presented By:

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About the Presenters...

Brian C. Anderson is Director of Claims for Wisconsin Lawyers Mutual Insurance Company, a professional liability insurance carrier in Madison, Wisconsin. He works with lawyers in resolving malpractice claims made against policyholders. He enjoys the challenge of helping place policyholders at ease during a time of stress, when they are facing a legal malpractice claim or an OLR grievance. Before joining Wisconsin Lawyers Mutual in 2003, Anderson practiced personal injury law and served as legal counsel for an insurance company in Madison. He began his career in general practice in Janesville. Mr. Anderson has written and lectured on legal topics relating to law firm risk management and legal malpractice. He earned his J.D. in 1992 from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School and his B.S. in 1989 also from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is a member of the State Bar of Wisconsin, Dane County Bar Association and the Wisconsin Defense Counsel.

Stacie H. Rosenzweig is a shareholder at Halling & Cayo, S.C. in Milwaukee. Her practice emphasizes representation of regulated professionals, including lawyers and health care professionals who face possible disciplinary action by licensing authorities, as well as ethics and compliance counseling.

WILMIC 2025-2026 Parade of Perils

Review of Policyholder Grievances and Related Ethical Rules and Malpractice Claims

State Bar of Wisconsin Solo and Small Firm Conference
October 22, 2026

Attorney Brian Anderson
WILMIC, Director of Claims

Attorney Stacie H. Rosenzweig
Halling & Cayo, S.C.

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I. Introduction

A. Annual review of legal malpractice trends by WILMIC

B. 2025 and first half of 2026 presented mixed trends:

- Claims frequency remained historically low
- Severity (cost to defend and resolve claims) increased significantly

C. The evolving nature of legal malpractice risks

II. Claims Frequency: A Continuing Decline

A. Claims frequency has been decreasing since 2019

B. 2025 claims reported decreased by more than 50 claims versus 2016

C. Four of the past six years set record lows for claims reported

III. Claim Matters Reported: Continue to Rise

A. Definition of "claim matters":

- Incidents that could lead to claims, potential claims, Office of Lawyer Regulation grievances

B. 2025 saw over 325 claim matters reported

C. Average of 27 new claim matters reported monthly

D. 2026 we have opened 237 claim matters in the 1st seven months

E. We are on pace to open over 400 new claim matters this year or an average of 34 new claim matters per month

F. Importance of early reporting:

- Secures coverage

  Most professional liability policies are "claims made and reported" policies--if you wait too long to notify the carrier, coverage may be denied

- Allows for mitigation, repair, and defense

- Strengthens trust between insurer and insured

G. **Relevant Rules of Professional Conduct:**

- Client Communication

  "The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." --*George Bernard Shaw*

  SCR 20:1.4 Communication.
  (a) A lawyer shall:
  (1) promptly inform the client of any decision or circumstance with respect to which the client's informed consent, as defined in SCR 20:1.0 (f), is required by these rules;
  (2) reasonably consult with the client about the means by which the client's objectives are to be accomplished;
  (3) keep the client reasonably informed about the status of the matter;
  (4) promptly comply with reasonable requests by the client for information; and
  (5) consult with the client about any relevant limitation on the lawyer's conduct when the lawyer knows that the client expects assistance not permitted by the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law.
  (b) A lawyer shall explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions regarding the representation.

- With the client

  a. Candor is critical.

  b. Rules of Professional Conduct require:

  1) Keep client regularly informed (SCR 20:1.4 Communication);

  2) This includes the good and the bad. (SCR 20:1.4 and 20:1.7)

  "What to Do After Making a Serious Error." Pierce & Anderson. Wis. Law. Feb. 2010.

3) Respond to client inquiries in timely manner: If you can't, be sure someone else in your office can;

4) Provide client with sufficient information to allow client to make informed decisions (SCR 20:1.4(b)).

c. Communication must be clear:

1) Non-technical.

2) Geared toward each client's individual level of sophistication: Your job to figure out what that is (and to know that if it goes wrong, whatever you did may not be enough).

a) A primary area of claims is plaintiff's personal injury representation; an area with few claims is insurance defense.

b) Recognize relative sophistication of clients, e.g., insurance company has an understanding of costs and risks; ability to convey and receive technical information; feeling of control during lawsuit; ability to envision life after the lawsuit in a realistic manner.

d. Communication needs to be documented:

1) Letter of engagement outlining scope of representation and fee agreement;

2) Advice regarding risks and unanticipated costs;

3) Advice regarding alternative approaches;

4) Status reports: even if it's "nothing has occurred;"

5) Instructions to client or from client, particularly if instructions run counter to your advice. Do an "IAY" letter: "I advised you ..."

e. Communication includes good listening skills:

1) Conversational techniques;

2) Providing client with an opportunity to speak and think, to establish client's level of sophistication and understanding;

3) Elicit information: ask questions.

IV. Severity: Rising Costs Amid Low Frequency

A. Costs to defend and resolve claims increased

B. Key contributing factors:

- Inflation
- Higher defense counsel rates
- Increasing complexity of cases

C. More cases involve multiple claims against a single insured

D. **Relevant Rules of Professional Conduct:**

- Special Issues Governing Limited Scope Representation

1. Limitations on scope must be informed (SCR 20:1.2) and should be in writing (*must* be in writing if representation will be at least $1,000 SCR 1.5)

2. Limited scope representation in Wisconsin is permitted by the Rules of Professional Conduct.

SCR 20:1.2(c) reads as follows:

"A lawyer may limit the scope of the representation if the limitation is reasonable under the circumstances and the client gives informed consent."

3. What is reasonable?

Assisting a party with forms or providing a brief consultation may suffice for a simple uncontested divorce, but may be unreasonable for a matter involving complicated marital property and tax issues.

4. What is proper informed consent?

   SCR 20:1.0(f) defines "informed consent" as follows:

   "An agreement by a person to a proposed course of conduct after the lawyer has communicated adequate information and explanation about the material risks and reasonably available alternatives to the proposed course of conduct."

   Best advice – define the representation specifically, in writing, and get the client's confirmation in writing as well.

5. Potential risk taking limited scope cases: Failing to review the entire case, as you would if you were providing full representation in the matter.

   Remember: Limited scope cases are not an opportunity to pay less attention.

   A lawyer may have a duty to advise a client of readily apparent and relevant information, even if it falls outside the scope of a limited representation, and to advise the client to seek independent advice if appropriate.

- **SCR 20:1.6** (Confidentiality of Information) – Protecting sensitive case details is crucial in complex claims

V. Top Practice Areas for Claims (January 1, 2025 through July 31, 2026)

A. Estate, trust, and probate law & real estate law

- Accounted for 33% of claims reported (frequency)
- Represented 31% of total costs (severity)

B. Reasons for increased claims in these areas:

- Rising estate values and real estate prices lead to litigation
- Aggressive litigation tactics from plaintiff attorneys
- High financial stakes amplify risks

C. Emotional factors in estate and probate cases:

- Grieving families, financial pressures, unmet expectations
- Miscommunication and perceived errors escalate disputes

D. Relevant Rules of Professional Conduct: Dabbling – Extremely Risky

- Approximately 40% of all claims involve areas of practice in which lawyers practice LESS than 10% of the time
- Less than 1% of all claims involve areas of practice in which lawyers practice 90 – 100% of the time
- **SCR 20:1.1 Competence** – A lawyer shall provide competent representation to a client. Competent representation requires the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness, and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation.
    - Comment 2: A lawyer need not necessarily have special training or prior experience to handle legal problems of a type with which the lawyer is unfamiliar. A newly admitted lawyer can be as competent as a practitioner (Competence) – Emphasizes the need for legal knowledge and thorough preparation
- **SCR 20:1.4** (Communication) – Attorneys must clearly communicate with clients to manage expectations
- **SCR 20:1.6 –** Confidentiality - (a) A lawyer shall not reveal information relating to the representation of a client unless the client gives informed consent, except for disclosures that are impliedly authorized in order to carry out the representation, and except as stated in pars. (b) [prevent crime or fraud] and (c) [not related to use of ChatGPT]… (d) A lawyer shall make reasonable efforts to prevent the inadvertent or unauthorized disclosure of, or unauthorized access to, information relating to the representation of a client.
    - Policyholders who prepared estate planning documents and are the subject of a subsequent claim brought by a disinherited beneficiary often ask what information may be disclosed and to whom
        1. Call State Bar Ethics Hotline: They can be reached at (608) 229-2017 or (800) 254-9154, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
        2. Generally, without your client's informed consent, a lawyer may not reveal information related to the representation under Rule 1.6
- **SCR 20: 1.7 and 1.9** – Conflicts of Interest
    - Distinction between conflicts with respect to a current (SCR 20:1.7) and former client (SCR 20:1.9)
        1. SCR 20:1.7 prohibits any representation of a client that will be directly adverse to another client, unless the exception in 1.7(b) applies

2. SCR 20:1.9 prohibits representing a person whose interests are materially adverse to a former client's interests in the same or a substantially related matter, absent the former client's informed written consent. The rule also regulates representation in a substantially related matter of a person adverse to a former client of an attorney's former firm

3. Both rules protect two client expectations:

    - Loyalty-that their attorney will not turn against them, even after the representation is completed; and

    - Confidentiality-information imparted to an attorney will remain confidential, permanently.

- Know who is your client … and who isn't:

    1. You can be liable to persons other than the person you understand is your client.

    2. "Clients" want you to represent opposing interests, e.g., husband/wife in divorce; buyer/seller in sale of business; lender/ borrower in loan.

        - Can you represent both parties? See SCR 20:1.7(b).

        - What malpractice risks are there? What do the Rules of Professional Conduct require?

        - How can risks be minimized?

- Rule SCR 20:1.7(b) contemplates representation notwithstanding a concurrent conflict with informed consent.

    1. Consent by "each affected client".

    2. Consent must be informed, i.e.: agreement . . . to a proposed course of conduct after the lawyer has communicated adequate information and explanation about the material risks of and reasonably available alternatives to the proposed course of conduct. [SCR 20:1.0(f)]

    3. Consent must be confirmed in a writing signed by the client.

    4. The Rule and the comments indicate that sometimes it's not even appropriate to ask a client for consent.

VI. Common Errors Leading to Claims

A. Top three errors (account for 39% of all claims):

1. Failure to follow client instructions
2. Procrastination performance/no follow-up
3. Failure to obtain consent/inform client

B. Importance of addressing these risks:

- Training
- Diligent documentation
- Strong calendaring systems

C. **Relevant Rules of Professional Conduct:**

- **SCR 20:1.1** (Competence) – Attorneys must provide competent representation
- **SCR 20:1.4** (Communication)
- **SCR 20:1.3** (Diligence) – A lawyer shall act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client.

ABA COMMENT

[2] A lawyer's workload must be controlled so that each matter can be handled competently.

[3] Perhaps no professional shortcoming is more widely resented than procrastination. A client's interests often can be adversely affected by the passage of time or the change of conditions; in extreme instances, as when a lawyer overlooks a statute of limitations, the client's legal position may be destroyed. Even when the client's interests are not affected in substance, however, unreasonable delay can cause a client needless anxiety and undermine confidence in the lawyer's trustworthiness. A lawyer's duty to act with reasonable promptness, however, does not preclude the lawyer from agreeing to a reasonable request for a postponement that will not prejudice the lawyer's client.

1. Client may not want you to spend a lot of time on the case in order to save on fees

2. Lawyer is busy – trusts the client provided all the necessary information

3. If you take a case – commit to it – including investigation and verifying the facts. If you can't make that commitment, consider not taking the case

VII. Inflation and Rising Defense Costs

A. Defense counsel rates increased due to inflation

B. 20% of open claims now involve active lawsuits

C. Litigation drives up costs and complexity

D. Disputes over whether an error constitutes a single or multiple claims further complicate resolutions

VIII. Decline in Claims Closed Without Costs

A. Only 21% of claims closed in 2025 resolved without costs

B. Down from a historical average of 60%

C. Indicates that more claims have merit, requiring defense and indemnity payments

D. Claims now pose higher stakes for policyholders and WILMIC

E. Relevant Rules of Professional Conduct:

- **SCR 20:3.1** (Meritorious Claims and Contentions) – Lawyers must avoid frivolous claims but also must defend against meritless allegations

IX. Looking Ahead to 2027

A. Anticipated continuation of current trends:

- Low claim frequency
- Rising severity
- Increased defense costs

B. WILMIC's recommendations for policyholders:

- Prioritize risk management
- Report potential claims early
- Invest in professional development
- Maintain meticulous records
- Consider risks and rewards of using Artificial Intelligence

C. **Relevant Rules of Professional Conduct:**

- **SCR 20:5.1** (Responsibilities of Supervisory Lawyers) – Encourages law firms to implement risk management practices

  "My Bad: Building an Ethical Error Culture." Rosenzweig. May 2026.

X. Conclusion

A. Optimism for the future despite challenges

B. The dedication of policyholders strengthens the profession

C. Facing a legal malpractice claim, potential claim or, even an OLR grievance, are some of the risks lawyers experience while practicing law. Those risks can be greatly enhanced depending upon the area of law the lawyer practices within. Frequent and clear communication with your clients is not just good client service, it can help a lawyer avoid a claim or grievance altogether. Understanding your malpractice insurance policy and the timely reporting of any claim concerns is paramount in protecting your coverage and can help to mitigate and repair a potential claim, with no damage to the client.

My Bad: Building an Ethical Error Culture

Good lawyers make mistakes. Ethical lawyers deal with them. Hiding errors doesn't fix them, and when lawyers are afraid to speak up, small problems can get much bigger. What if you could build a practice culture in which people feel comfortable owning up to mistakes, addressing them early, honestly, and in ways that prevent the next one?

BY STACIE H. ROSENZWEIG

Stacie H. Rosenzweig, Marquette 2009, practices with Halling & Cayo SC, Milwaukee, and focuses on legal ethics, professional responsibility, licensing, and election and political law. She is a member of the State Bar of Wisconsin's Litigation Section and Professional Ethics Committee and is a Fellow of the Wisconsin Law Foundation. Access the digital article at www.wisbar.org/wl.

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I'd like to tell you all about that time that I messed up in grand fashion, but I can't. It involved a client, and there is no "I'm writing a column and it's a really, really good story" exception to SCR 20:1.6. But suffice to say, it was the kind of error that required a flurry of paperwork, a gut check with the insurance carrier, and several apologies to fix (to the extent it even could be fixed).

The day I discovered the error was one of the worst days of my practice, and the next few days weren't great either. I felt horrible for the client. It was humbling, and frankly, embarrassing. It made me question whether I should keep at it or whether I should quietly disappear to a small town and open a bespoke pie shop and never speak of the law again.

So why am I telling you all of this? Because we've all been there, and if we haven't been, we will be. Yes, even you.

Mistakes are part of the human condition. Lawyers are human; ergo, we make mistakes. That's a hard concept for lawyers to internalize – we're taught to think of ourselves as the people who are paid to prevent and fix errors for other people. When your professional identity is built around being correct, confronting your own mistakes can feel existential.

What you do about the mistakes you make – and the mistakes your colleagues, associates, and staff will make – is important.

Cultivating a Positive Error Culture

The way an attorney or the attorney's firm or organization perceives and reacts to mistakes can be considered the "error culture."[1] Every organization, and every solo practitioner, has an error culture, which is defined by whether mistakes are stigmatized as personal failures or treated as opportunities for improvement.

A "positive error culture" is one in which it is acknowledged that mistakes happen and should be talked about openly, so people can learn from them and avoid repeating them. You aren't encouraging neglect but admitting your humanity. Instead of pointing fingers, you can identify the problem and update your procedures and systems. You might be able to avoid, or at least mitigate, the damage from the mistake. You can notify your carrier quickly, if necessary.

A "negative error culture," on the other hand, teaches that all mistakes are bad and should be punished. While some errors may

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be unforgivable (or, at least, warrant firing or referral to the Office of Lawyer Regulation[2]), most aren't that serious. But a negative error culture leads people to try to hide mistakes. We bury misunderstood case holdings and emails sent to "Jane Smith" instead of "Janet Smythe," hoping no one notices, then blame others if they do.

A negative error culture can be particularly precarious when a junior lawyer or staff member makes a mistake and panics. They might not know how to fix it and fear they will be fired by the client, the law firm, or both, just for bringing the mistake to someone's attention. So, they don't tell anyone and hope that the mistake just goes away. But the mistake that might have been fixable early on through a motion, an apology, or a refund snowballs into something much bigger. Suddenly (from management's perspective), the law firm is facing a malpractice claim or a motion for sanctions.[3]

Partners, managers, and supervisory lawyers have a responsibility to "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."[4] Creating a positive error culture can help meet that responsibility. If an associate or staff member promptly brings a mistake to a supervisor's attention, the firm can ensure that steps are taken to communicate with clients in an appropriate manner,[5] inform the court when necessary,[6] and figure out whether there was a systemic problem that caused or contributed to the error. Maybe the calendaring system wasn't syncing properly, and a deadline was missed. Maybe an AI tool was adopted too quickly.

Of course, slipups are not solely the purview of associates and staff. Partners, general counsel, and other managers aren't immune. Attorneys in leadership or managerial positions can model a positive error culture for our own firms or for other lawyers we mentor — we can be open about our mistakes, what we did once they came to light, and what we're doing to prevent them from happening again. Admitting that we're fallible humans, while showing that the world has not ended, will encourage others to come forward when they have problems.

Solos, too, can do this — even if you're accountable only to your clients and yourself, acknowledging that you are an imperfect human who will occasionally screw up is helpful. Your practice and your mental health will benefit if you don't beat yourself up (too much) after every hiccup but instead acknowledge the errors and determine how to prevent them from recurring.

The Aftermath of the Mistake

For the record, I did remain in Milwaukee and did not open the bespoke pie shop (though I do take requests; people seem to really like the key lime).

Instead, I did what I didn't want to do but what I had to do after a bad mistake: I dealt with it. I spent some quality time in my managing partner's office and then made a bunch of uncomfortable phone calls. I figured out what went wrong and what needed to happen to avoid a repeat. I also spoke with my associates about that error and encouraged them to talk to me or someone else in the firm if they had a similar issue. I took a long walk and played songs of self-loathing from my phone.[7]

And then I dusted myself off and got back to it. **WL**

ENDNOTES

[1]The phrase "error culture" shows up in various places, but I first encountered it in Gerd Gigerenzer, *Risk Savvy* (2014).

[2]The Wisconsin Supreme Court Rules of Professional Conduct are "rules of reason" (SCR chapter 20 Preamble [14]); not every mistake is a violation of the rules or a violation worthy of discipline. Whether an act was willful, negligent, or inadvertent may mean the difference between a suspension and a reprimand, or between any discipline and no discipline at all. *See ABA Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions*, https://www.americanbar.org/products/inv/book/364918410/.

[3]This scenario is particularly evident in cases involving hallucinated or misquoted decisions and citations resulting from generative artificial intelligence. But that's a topic for another column.

[4]SCR 20:5.1(a) and SCR 20:5.3 impose a similar responsibility on lawyers to supervise nonlawyer assistants.

[5]SCR 20:1.4.

[6]SCR 20:3.3(a)(1), (3).

[7]My "everyone hates me" playlist is not suitable for a family publication, sorry. **WL**

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Wisconsin Capitol
photo: Carol M. Highsmith

Wisconsin Supreme Court
Lawyer Regulation System
Office of Lawyer Regulation

Annual Report

FY 2024-2025
July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

Office of Lawyer Regulation
Director Timothy C. Samuelson

Board of Administrative Oversight
Chairperson Rene L'Esperance

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"A lawyer, as a member of the legal profession, is a representative of clients, an officer of the legal system and a public citizen having special responsibility for the quality of justice."

- Wisconsin Supreme Court Rules, Chapter 20, Preamble, Cmt. 1

Genius of Wisconsin
artist: Helen Farnsworth Mears

Message from the Board of Administrative Oversight

It is an honor and a privilege to serve as Chairperson of the Wisconsin Board of Administrative Oversight. I am excited to lead this distinguished body entrusted with the critical responsibility of monitoring the fairness, effectiveness, and efficiency of Wisconsin's attorney regulation system.

Our work is foundational to the integrity of the legal profession and, by extension, the public's confidence in the administration of justice. The Supreme Court has delegated to us a vital role: to serve as an independent and engaged oversight body that not only monitors the disciplinary actions imposed by the Court but also proposes substantive and procedural rules for its consideration. In carrying out these duties, we must remain efficient and economical, especially in times of rising costs, ensuring that every action we take reflects both fiscal responsibility and our unwavering commitment to quality oversight.

As Chairperson, I am committed to ensuring the Board remains a strong, independent, and principled component of the attorney regulation system. I look forward to our continued work together in service of the Court, the legal profession, and the people of Wisconsin.

- Rene L'Esperance - Chairperson, Board of Administrative Oversight

Message from the Office of Lawyer Regulation

I am honored to present the Office of Lawyer Regulation's annual report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, which reflects a pivotal year of growth and transformation for our agency. We emphasized outreach, restructured our investigation department, and invested in software to increase operational efficiencies.

We expanded our educational offerings, providing Wisconsin lawyers with accessible, high-quality CLE programming at low or no cost. We took our Ethics School program on the road again to five cities. We presented our trust account update seminar online and at no charge. And we created a series of free, online CLEs that emphasize lawyer well-being.

We restructured our investigation department and provided it with additional resources. The investigation team has strengthened its focus on prioritizing investigations of lawyers that appear to pose the greatest risk to the public and profession. It also emphasized collaboration within and across OLR teams, and increased its use of investigatory tools to better assess and timely respond to potential risks.

We invested in electronic practice management software to modernize operations. OLR entered into an agreement with Actionstep to design a cloud-based legal practice software solution that we expect to go live by the end of the calendar year.

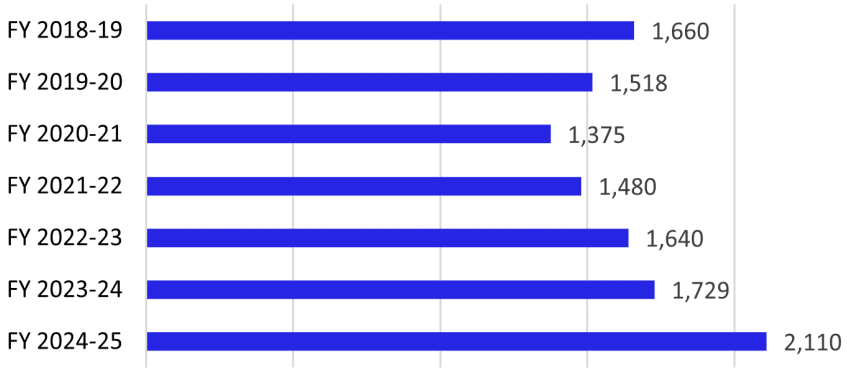
As we move forward under the leadership of a new Chief Justice, our focus remains on balancing regulation with proactive education and support. I thank the Wisconsin Supreme Court for its support, the Board of Administrative Oversight for its guidance, and all Lawyer Regulation System participants for their shared commitment to upholding the integrity of the legal profession. I look forward to continuing our work together in shaping a profession that earns and sustains the public's trust.

- Timothy C. Samuelson - Director, Office of Lawyer Regulation

FY 2024-2025 Statistics

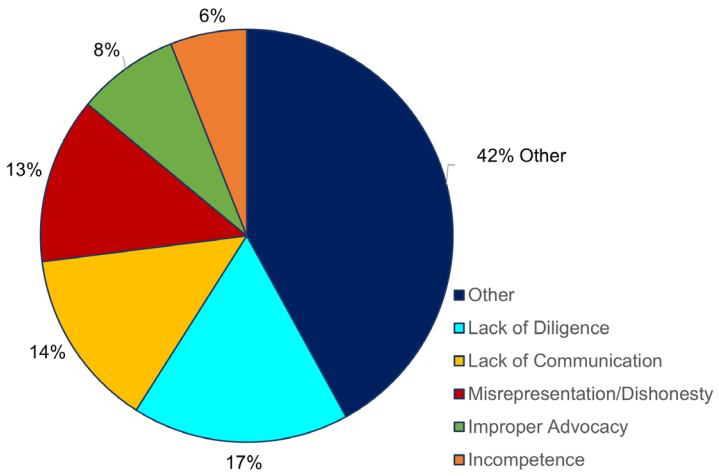
The number of new grievance and inquiry matters received by OLR increased for the fourth consecutive year.

OLR received 2,110 new matters this year, which is a 53% increase since FY 2021-2022.

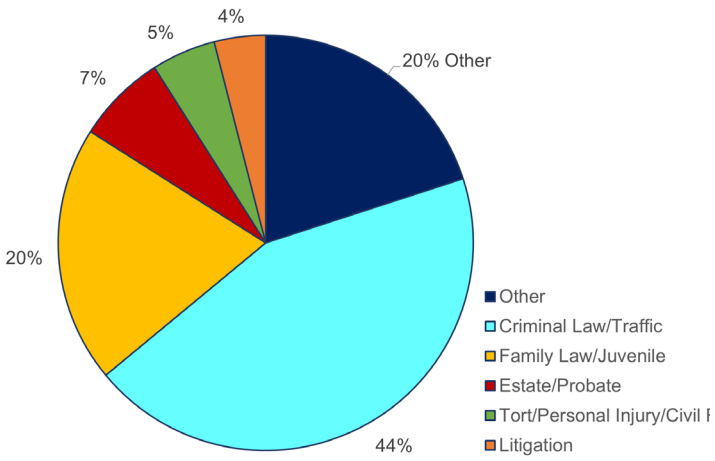


Wisconsin has over 26,000 members of the bar, 20,744 of which are active and in good standing. 1,502 lawyers (less than 6%) were the subject of grievance or inquiry matters. 394 of those lawyers were the subject of multiple matters.

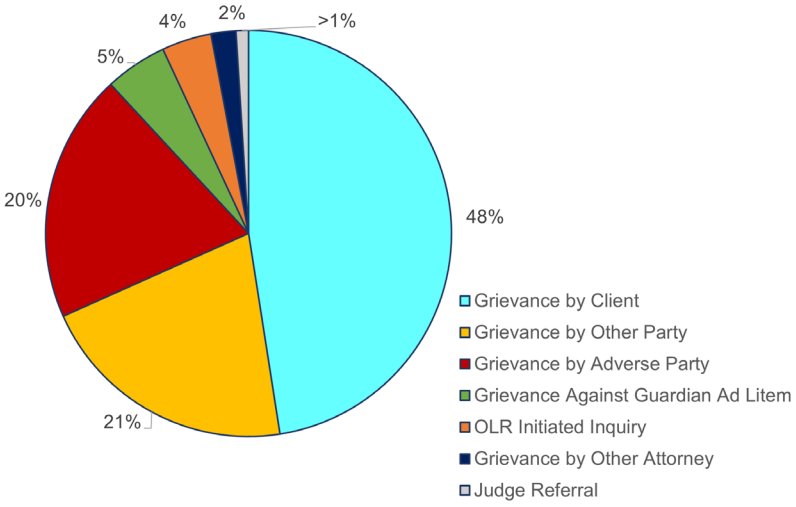
Most Common Allegations



Most Prevalent Practice Areas



Most Common Grievance Sources



Lack of diligence was the most common primary allegation this year, followed by lack of communication and misrepresentation. Lack of diligence has been the most common allegation in each of the past five years, while lack of communication has been in the top three allegations.

The most common practice area was criminal law, followed by family law. This is also consistent with recent years.

FY 2024-2025 Statistics

2047 evaluations were completed by OLR Intake.

123 matters were referred from OLR Intake to OLR Investigation.

26 matters were granted cause to proceed after presentation to the Preliminary Review Committee and were assigned to OLR Litigation.

18 complaints were filed by OLR Litigation to initiate disciplinary proceedings with the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

OLR Intake Resolutions

Closed for Insufficient Evidence	1,443	71%
Referred to Investigation	123	6%
Closed with Advice to Respondent	113	6%
Withdrawn by Grievant	92	4%
Closed for Grievant Non-Response	91	4%
Inquiries Falling Outside Jurisdiction	58	3%
Dispute Resolution	31	2%
Referred to Another Agency	29	1%
Diverted	23	1%
Consensual Reprimand	23	1%
Other	21	1%

Dispositions and Disciplinary Sanctions

OLR entered into 36 agreements for consensual reprimands with respondent lawyers: 25 private and 11 public reprimands. 23 of these reprimands were entered into at OLR Intake, before referral to investigation. This is an increase over the past two years, each having 16 reprimands at OLR Intake. Supreme Court-appointed referees considered the parties' agreements and issued these reprimands pursuant to SCR 22.09(3).

OLR entered into 25 diversion agreements as an alternative to discipline pursuant to SCR 22.10.

The Supreme Court imposed discipline in eight cases. Two respondent lawyers were issued reprimands by the Court. Two respondent lawyers were suspended for six months or less. Two respondent lawyers had their licenses to practice law revoked. Two additional respondent lawyers entered into stipulations with the court for the consensual revocation of their licenses pursuant to SCR 22.19. A list of publicly disciplined lawyers can be found on the Wisconsin Court System website at https://wicourts.gov/services/public/lawyerreg/statuspublic.htm.

The Lawyer Regulation System and OLR

Who We Are and What We Regulate

The Lawyer Regulation System (LRS) was designed to provide a series of checks and balances to protect the public and supervise the practice of law.

Wisconsin Supreme Court

The Supreme Court has "superintending and administrative authority over all courts," including "the power to discipline and disbar attorneys." *See* Wis. Const. Art. VII, § 3(1); *In re Stolen*, 193 Wis. 602, 610 (1927). The Court created the Office of Lawyer Regulation on October 1, 2000, to "carry out the supreme court's constitutional responsibility to supervise the practice of law and protect the public from misconduct by persons practicing law in Wisconsin." SCR, Ch. 21, Preamble.

A list of current members of the Supreme Court is included in Appendix 1.

Board of Administrative Oversight

The Supreme Court appoints eight lawyers and four public members to serve on the Board of Administrative Oversight. These members are volunteers who serve for terms of three years, for a maximum of two consecutive terms. Among other functions, the Board monitors the LRS and reports its findings to the Supreme Court. It also proposes the LRS annual budget and potential Rule changes to the Supreme Court. The Board meets with the OLR and, as necessary, other LRS components, to review their actions, consider procedure changes, and discuss potential amendments.

A list of current Board members is included in this report as Appendix 2. A complete list of responsibilities of the Board appears under SCR 21.10.

Eau Claire Federal Building and Courthouse
photo: Carol M. Highsmith

Office of Lawyer Regulation (OLR)

OLR's role is to investigate, regulate, and when necessary prosecute lawyers accused of violating the Rules of Professional Conduct. The Wisconsin model of regulation is designed to move matters involving allegations of minor misconduct toward quick resolution and devote its investigative resources to matters that involve more serious allegations of misconduct and pose a greater risk to the public. OLR handles discipline matters fairly and promptly, balancing protection of the public with the rights of the lawyers involved.

OLR is headquartered in Madison and has 25 staff members. Further details on OLR's divisions and their activity in FY 2024-2025 are included in this report.

Preliminary Review Committee

The Supreme Court appoints nine lawyers and five public members to serve on the Preliminary Review Committee. These members are volunteers who serve for terms of three years, for a maximum of two consecutive terms. The Committee meets at least quarterly to review the results of OLR investigations of medical incapacity and lawyer misconduct, and to determine whether there is cause to proceed to disciplinary proceedings. The Committee also meets yearly with the Board to review operations of the Committee.

A list of current Committee members appears in Appendix 3. Responsibilities of the Committee appear under SCR 21.07.

Wisconsin State Capitol Statue
photo: Richard Hurd

Special Investigators

The Supreme Court appoints lawyers to serve as Special Investigators. These investigators volunteer to take the place of OLR staff in evaluating matters against a participant of the Lawyer Regulation System. In FY 2024-2025, five grievances were made regarding participants in the LRS.

A list of current Special Investigators is included in this report as Appendix 4. Responsibilities of Special Investigators appear under SCR 22.25.

Special Preliminary Review Panel

The Supreme Court appoints four lawyers and three public members to serve on the Special Preliminary Review Panel. These members are volunteers who serve for terms of three years, for a maximum of two consecutive terms. They review results of Special Investigator investigations to determine if there is cause to proceed to disciplinary proceedings. If a Special Investigator closes a matter after initial evaluation, the grievant may request review of the closure decision. The Special Preliminary Review Panel handles these reviews to determine whether the closure will be affirmed or the matter referred for further evaluation.

A list of current panel members is included in this report as Appendix 5. Responsibilities of the Special Preliminary Review Panel appear under SCR 22.25.

District Committees

The Supreme Court appoints lawyers and public volunteers in each of the 16 state bar districts to District Committees. They serve terms of for three years, for a maximum of two consecutive terms.

District Committees did not convene in FY 2024-2025. Responsibilities of District Committees appear under SCR 21.06.

Supreme Court-Appointed Referees

The Supreme Court appoints lawyers and reserve judges to serve as Referees. Referees serve for terms of four years and may be appointed to serve consecutive terms. Referees preside over and conduct hearings in proceedings alleging misconduct or medical incapacity, petitions for license reinstatement after disciplinary suspension, and to review consensual private and public reprimands.

A complete list of responsibilities of Referees appears under SCR 21.08. A list of current Referees is included in this report as Appendix 6.

Lawyer Regulation System Budget

Lawyer licensure fees are the primary source of funding for the LRS.

In FY 2024-2025, the Supreme Court authorized an annual assessment of $165 for all full-dues-paying-equivalent lawyers. These fees are lower than comparable border states including Illinois ($210), Iowa ($200), and Minnesota ($171). The State Bar estimated 20,235 full-dues-paying-equivalent lawyers for FY 2024-2025, which is a slight increase after several years of decline.

In addition to lawyer licensure fees, the LRS also receives revenue from several other sources. Under SCR 22.24(1), the Supreme Court may assess costs against lawyers disciplined in Supreme Court proceedings and other matters. The LRS also receives fees for petitions for law license reinstatement, see SCR 10.03(3) & (5), and when out-of-state lawyers file pro hac vice applications. See Wis. Stat. § 20.680(3)(h). In FY 2024-2025, these revenue sources generated $57,704.

The Supreme Court approves the LRS budget. Under Supreme Court Rules 21.03(6)(m) and 21.10(2)(h), the OLR Director prepares an annual budget and submits it to the Board for review, presentation, comment, and proposal to the Supreme Court.

The FY 2024-2025 budget was $3,779,600. Total projected expenditures and commitments for FY 2024-2025 were $3,740,902, which was under budget by $38,698 (1%).

The FY 2025-2026 budget is $3,730,700 which is a 1.3% decrease from last year. The LRS remains on a solid fiscal footing with a sufficient reserve fund balance.

Assembly Chamber Mural, Wisconsin State Capitol
photo: Carol M. Highsmith

Office of Lawyer Regulation Leadership

Timothy C. Samuelson, Director

The Supreme Court appointed Samuelson to serve as OLR Director in August 2021. He was formerly the Civil Chief Assistant United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, an Assistant Attorney General with the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ), and a Dane County Circuit Court Judge. Before joining the DOJ, Samuelson worked in private practice as a civil litigator in Chicago.

Julie M. Spoke, Deputy Director - Intake

Spoke joined OLR in 2002 as the agency's first Assistant Litigation Counsel. Spoke was promoted to Deputy Director of Central Intake in 2017 and promoted to Deputy Director in 2022. Spoke also serves on the Board of Directors for the National Organization of Bar Counsel. Before joining OLR, Spoke served as a staff attorney and Court Commissioner in Marathon County, held a judicial clerkship, and worked in private practice as a civil litigator in Wausau.

Francis X. Sullivan, Deputy Director - Litigation

Sullivan joined OLR in 2022 after 17 years with the Wisconsin Department of Justice, where he served as Director of the Consumer Protection and Antitrust Unit, Deputy Director of the Civil Litigation Unit, and Counsel to the Division of Law Enforcement Services. Before joining the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Sullivan held a judicial clerkship and worked in private practice in Madison.

Emily E. Kokie, Investigation Manager

Kokie joined OLR in 2004 as a grievance and trust account investigator. In 2024, she was named Lead Investigative Counsel. In 2025, she was promoted to Investigation Manager, where she currently serves as part of OLR's leadership team. Kokie taught legal research and writing and advanced legal writing at the University of Wisconsin Law School from 2004 to 2008. Prior to joining OLR, Kokie was an associate with a small law firm in Richmond, Virginia.

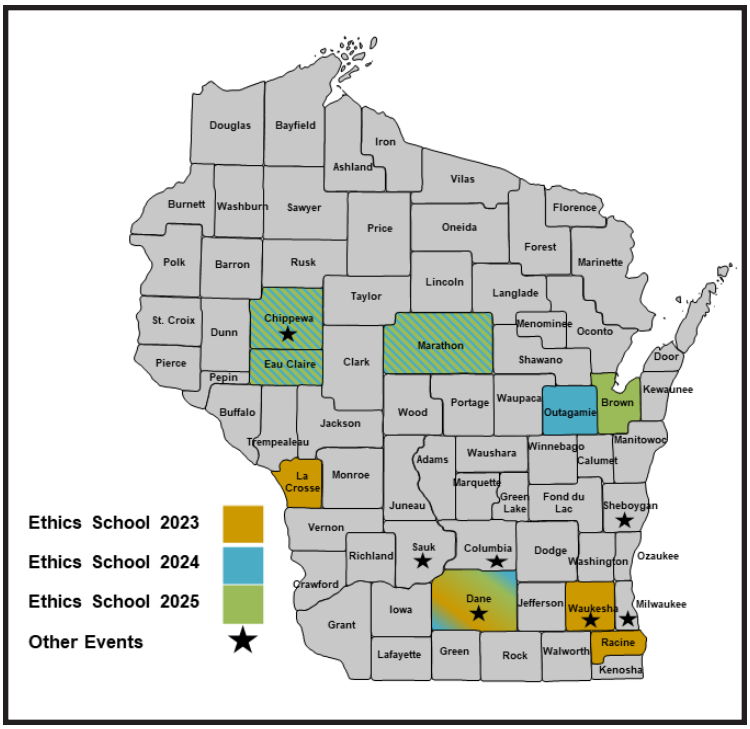
Krissi Lee, Executive Staff Assistant

Lee is OLR's Executive Staff Assistant. She joined OLR in 2023 after serving in the Wisconsin Court System as the Fifth Judicial District administrative assistant. Lee has experience working as a legal assistant, legal department coordinator, and quality control specialist. Lee manages OLR's support staff and administrative operations.

Developments and Initiatives at OLR

Education and Outreach

We expanded our education and outreach initiatives, providing hundreds of lawyers with free or low-cost CLE programming. We enhanced our Ethics School program and developed a series of online seminars promoting lawyer well-being. Our focus remains on balancing discipline with proactively offering educational opportunities to help lawyers develop the tools they need to practice effectively, ethically, and well.



In September 2024, OLR presented its annual trust account management seminar, and nearly 200 Wisconsin lawyers attended. We will broadcast the next trust account update seminar on October 10, 2025, with an expanded focus on financial security. This training will again be presented online and at no charge to maximize accessibility.

OLR also posts educational materials related to trust accounts on its webpage, as well as materials and resources regarding its other educational programming.

A full list of OLR's outreach in FY 2024-2025 is included in this report as Appendix 7.

Ethics School 2024
Madison College, Gateway Tech College
photos: Krissi Lee, Francis Sullivan

Lawyer Well-Being

OLR is committed to promoting well-being within the legal profession. Deputy Director Julie Spoke continued her leadership by developing a series of lunch & learn CLE seminars focused on wellness. The seminars are intended to be accessible: they are held at noon, online, for free, and eligible for CLE credit. Our first lunch & learn sessions have already been attended by hundreds of Wisconsin lawyers, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

State Bar of Wisconsin Clerkship Program Reception (June 2025)
photo: Shannon Green

Technology and Innovation

Our multiyear project to modernize OLR's use of technology in its operations is nearing an end. After working collaboratively with the Court System's technical support team, Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP), we contracted with Actionstep in June 2025 to secure a cloud-based legal practice software solution that we expect will be implemented by the end of 2025. We anticipate this software will help us streamline operations, increase collaboration, and improve overall effectiveness.

Training and Professional Development

OLR staff attended several training sessions in FY 2024-2025 to continue developing new legal skills and expanding the depth of their professional knowledge. Intake counsel, investigative counsel, and assistant litigation counsel attended full-day trainings regarding bankruptcy law, wills, trusts, and probate, as well as seminars on wire fraud, title fraud, and effective communication.

OLR Intake

Deputy Director
Julie M. Spoke
J.D., William Mitchell, 1996

Intake Counsel
Kathryn Galarowicz (Lead)
J.D., Wisconsin, 2012

Emma Babler
J.D., Wisconsin, 2015

Kenneth E. Broderick
J.D., Syracuse, 1999

Cathe J. Hahn
J.D., Delaware, 2000

Michael M. Shull
J.D., Marquette, 2011

Jonathan S. Zeisser
J.D., Wisconsin, 2000

Intake Professional
Kori Anderson
B.A., Minnesota, 2005

Program Specialist
Alice Anderson

Program Associate
Veronika Sauer

The professional staff in OLR's Intake division analyze grievances and inquiries alleging misconduct and medical incapacity – referred to generally as matters – to determine whether they present sufficient legal bases and factual information to proceed with further investigation or discipline.

Intake preliminarily evaluates each matter to determine whether a matter presents sufficient evidence of lawyer misconduct that potentially warrants discipline or other action.

Intake's average processing time was 53 days, an improvement of two weeks from FY 2023-2024 (67 days) and another four weeks from FY 2022-2023 (95 days). Intake completed 87% of evaluations in 90 days or less, which is up 6% from FY 2023-2024 (82%) and a significant increase from FY 2022-2023, when about half were completed within that period. Intake resolved 48% of matters within 30 days, which is consistent with FY 2023-2024 (49%) and an improvement from FY 2022-2023 (20%).

Intake Resolutions

The overwhelming majority of matters are resolved at Intake. After preliminary evaluation, Intake's professional staff may forward the matter to another agency, attempt to reconcile a minor dispute, or close the matter if it lacks sufficient factual or legal bases. If the matter presents sufficient evidence of lawyer misconduct or medical incapacity, Intake may refer it for investigation, diversion, or consensual reprimand.

Intake Resolutions FY 2024-2025

Closed for Insufficient Evidence	1,443	71%
Referred to Investigation	123	6%
Closed with Advice to Respondent	113	6%
Withdrawn by Grievant	92	4%
Closed for Grievant Non-Response	91	4%
Inquiries Falling Outside Jurisdiction	58	3%
Dispute Resolution	31	2%
Referred to Another Agency	29	1%
Diverted	23	1%
Consensual Reprimand	23	1%
Other	21	1%

Closure

Intake closed 71% of matters due to lack of sufficient factual or legal support.

If Intake closes a matter after its evaluation, the grievant may request review. After review, closure is either affirmed, or the appeal is granted and the matter returned to Intake for additional evaluation. In FY 2024-25, grievants submitted 385 requests to review closure decisions. 481 reviews were completed, which included reviews submitted in the previous fiscal year. Ten appeals were granted and reopened to further evaluation. Six were later closed for insufficient evidence, one closed after the dispute was resolved by the parties, and one closed as de minimis. One matter was diverted, and one remains under re-evaluation.

Diversion to Alternatives to Discipline Program

In appropriate cases, OLR may offer a lawyer a diversion agreement to obtain remedial programming to address the underlying causes of a violation. Instead of receiving professional discipline, the lawyer can agree to participate in training to improve their legal or practice management skills or to address underlying medical, mental health, or substance abuse issues. Common diversion programming includes consultation with the State Bar's Practice411 and Lawyer Assistance programs, State Bar Ethics Counsel, or attendance at OLR's trust account seminar.

OLR Intake entered into 23 diversion agreements after preliminary evaluation in FY 2024-25. An additional two diversion agreements were entered into at OLR Investigation. Although this represents a reduction from the prior three years – 33 diversion agreements in FY 2023-24, 43 in FY 2022-23, and 54 in FY 2021-22 – OLR continues to prioritize diversion agreements because they protect the public while allowing otherwise competent lawyers to continue practicing.

Consensual Reprimands

Reprimands are the least severe sanction of professional discipline. If OLR and the lawyer agree on a reprimand, the Supreme Court appoints a referee to evaluate and consider the parties' proposed written reprimand. If the referee approves the proposed sanction, the referee imposes the reprimand without without additional Supreme Court review. This is unlike other forms of discipline, which the Supreme Court itself must review and impose.

Referral to OLR Investigation

If a matter warrants further investigation or involves allegations of misconduct that are likely to result in discipline more severe than a reprimand, the matter is referred to OLR Investigation. In FY 2024-25, Intake referred 123 grievances (6% of all matters) to Investigation. This is roughly consistent with FY 2023-2024.

OLR Investigation

Investigation Manager
Emily E. Kokie
J.D., Richmond, 1998

Investigative Counsel
Lorry Eldien
J.D., Wisconsin, 1989

Rita Knauss
J.D., Wisconsin, 1996

Beth Kugler
J.D., Wisconsin, 1998

Travis J. Stieren
Trust Account Program Administrator
J.D., Notre Dame, 1998

Joel Witt
J.D., Wisconsin, 2016

Paralegal
Jackson McAndrew

Supreme Court Rule 22.03 lays out OLR's investigative powers and duties.

Under SCR 22.03, if a lawyer does not promptly provide a full and fair response to the initial notice, or otherwise fails to cooperate at any time during the investigation, their license is automatically suspended under SCR 22.03(4). The threat of automatic suspension has been an effective tool to compel respondents to cooperate with OLR.

In FY 2024-2025, OLR issued notices of impending suspension under SCR 22.03(4) to 17 lawyers, regarding approximately 31 investigations. Seven lawyers who received those notices promptly cooperated in the investigations. Ten were suspended for failure to cooperate. Three were reinstated within six days and a fourth was reinstated within 25 days. Five remain suspended for continuing failure to cooperate with OLR's investigations into their conduct. One lawyer's matters were dismissed after the respondent's death.

After completing the investigation, OLR may dismiss the matter, resolve the matter with a diversion or consensual reprimand, or seek cause to proceed to litigation. If OLR dismisses a matter, the grievant may request review of that decision by the Preliminary Review Committee under SCR 22.05(2).

If the lawyer's conduct warrants suspension or revocation of their license, OLR will present the matter to the Committee for determination that there is cause for OLR to proceed to litigation. When OLR presents a matter to the Committee, it submits investigative reports – including all relevant inculpatory and exculpatory information – to one of the Committee's two panels. After OLR's presentation, the Committee panel meets in closed sessions to discuss each matter. If at least four panel members determine there is cause to proceed, the matter is assigned to OLR Litigation to file and prosecute a complaint alleging professional misconduct or medical incapacity before the Supreme Court. If the panel does not find cause to proceed, OLR may dismiss the matter or continue the investigation and resubmit the matter to a different panel under SCR 22.08(1)(a).

When appropriate, Investigative Counsel collaborate with Litigation Counsel to conduct a narrow, targeted investigation so that OLR may seek the lawyer's immediate suspension under SCR 22.20 when a lawyer is convicted or found guilty of serious crime, or SCR 22.21 when it is determined the lawyer's continued practice of law poses a threat to the interests of the public and to the administration of justice.

OLR Litigation

Deputy Director
Francis X. Sullivan
J.D., Wisconsin, 2000

Assistant Litigation Counsel
Jonathan Hendrix
J.D., Wisconsin, 2006

Kim Kluck
J.D., Florida State, 1994

Tom Laitsch
J.D., Chicago-Kent, 1994

John Payette
J.D., Wisconsin, 1995

Paralegal
Melissa Chicker

Once the Preliminary Review Committee determines that OLR has established cause to proceed in a matter, the Litigation team prepares and files a complaint with the Supreme Court that alleges professional misconduct or medical incapacity. Once OLR files proof of service, the Supreme Court appoints a referee to preside over the litigation.

The Supreme Court-appointed referee presides over the case with the powers of a judge presiding over a civil action. Both OLR and the lawyer are able to use civil discovery tools, including written discovery and depositions. Either party may file dispositive motions.

If the matter proceeds to hearing, the referee conducts the hearing as the trial of a civil action to a court. OLR has the burden of proving misconduct or medical incapacity by clear, satisfactory, and convincing evidence. The referee may – but is not required to – order post-hearing briefing from the parties.

After the hearing and any subsequent briefing, the referee files a report with the Supreme Court that sets forth proposed findings of fact, conclusions of law, and a recommendation for dismissal or discipline. Either party may appeal the referee's report. If neither party appeals, the Supreme Court reviews the referee's report and determines appropriate discipline in cases of misconduct or appropriate action in cases of medical incapacity. If either party appeals the referee's report, the Supreme Court orders briefing and may order oral argument.

Badger - Wisconsin State Capital
photo: Adam Fagen

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Supreme Court

The Supreme Court is composed of seven justices and is the state's highest court. In addition to its law-declaring function, the Supreme Court has administrative and regulatory authority over all Wisconsin courts and lawyers who practice law in Wisconsin.

Chief Justice Jill J. Karofsky
Justice Annette Kingsland Ziegler
Justice Rebecca G. Bradley
Justice Rebecca F. Dallet
Justice Brian K. Hagedorn
Justice Janet C. Protasiewicz
Justice Susan M. Crawford

Appendix 2 - Board of Administrative Oversight

Attorney Rene L'Esperance (Chair) is in private practice and a partner in the L'Esperance & Feidt LLC law firm. He earned his J.D. from William Mitchell College of Law in 2011. His first term expires September 30, 2025.

Attorney Kathleen Pakes (Vice Chair) serves as Assigned Counsel Division Director at the Wisconsin Office of the State Public Defender. She earned her J.D. from Louis D. Brandeis School of Law in 1995. Her first term expires September 30, 2025.

Attorney Michael F. Bartzen is the Director of Contracts and Ethics Officer for Derco Aerospace, Inc., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Lockheed Martin. He earned his J.D. from Marquette University Law School in 2008. His first term ends September 30, 2027.

Mr. Denis Donohoe is a public member and the principal of Celtic Holdings, LLC. His background is in the manufacturing business for operations consulting and information systems support customizations. His second term expires September 30, 2025.

Mr. Bruce Hutler is a public member and a partner at the accounting firm of Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP. His first term expires September 30, 2025.

Attorney William Jones is in private practice and the principal of the Jones Law Firm. He earned his J.D. from the University of Tulsa College of Law in 1997. His first term expires September 30, 2025.

Commissioner Nancy Kallgren serves as a court commissioner and register in probate in Marinette County. She earned her J.D. from William Mitchell College of Law in 1994. Her first term expires September 30, 2025.

Attorney Deanne Koll is a partner in the Bakke Norman, S.C. law firm. She earned her J.D. from William Mitchell College of Law in 2006. Her second term expires September 30, 2026.

Attorney Marissa A. Reynolds serves as an Assistant Marathon County Corporation Counsel. She earned her J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 2016. Her second term expires September 30, 2025.

The **Hon. Michael D. Rust** serves as Judge for Branch I of the Winnebago County Circuit Court. He earned his J.D. from Marquette University in 2006. His second term expires on September 30, 2025.

Mr. Peter Sorce is a public member who has also served as a Washington County Supervisor and on many other Supreme Court boards, including the Medical Mediation Panel and the Planning and Policy Advisory Committee. His second term expires September 30, 2026.

Ms. Wendie Witzke is a public member and serves as an instructor of the Legal Studies/Paralegal Program at Western Technical College in La Crosse, WI. Her first term expires September 30, 2026.

Appendix 3 - Preliminary Review Committee

Attorney Jean C. Baker (Chair) was a partner in the Quarles & Brady LLP law firm until she retired in 2020. She earned her J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School and her Ph.D. from the University of Georgia. Her second term expires September 30, 2026.

Attorney Donald A. Daugherty, Jr. (Vice Chair) is Senior Counsel, Litigation, at the Defense of Freedom Institute for Policy Studies. He earned his J.D. from Northwestern University School of Law in 1980. His second term expires September 30, 2026.

Attorney Duffy Dillon is the founder of Dillon Grube, LLC in Janesville. He earned his J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 2000. His first term expires September 30, 2026.

Mr. Gerald Faller is a public member who was the owner and President of Green Bay Title Company, Inc., Treasurer and Finance Director for the Green Bay Area Catholic Education Schools, and Finance Director for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. He graduated from Marquette University. His first term expires September 30, 2026.

Attorney Kristen Hardy is Assistant General Counsel and Assistant Secretary at Northwestern Mutual. She earned her J.D. from Marquette University Law School in 2014. Her second term expires September 30, 2025.

Mr. Brad Hopgood is a public member who works as an Information Technology professional in Madison, Wisconsin. He earned his bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee in 2010. His second term expires September 30, 2027.

Attorney Kelsey Johnson is an attorney with the law office of Renee E. Mura, S.C. She earned her J.D. from Marquette University Law School in 2017. Her first term expires September 30, 2026.

Mr. Jon Kratochvil is a public member who is a licensed private detective and CEO of State Process Service, Inc. His second term expires September 30, 2025.

Attorney Chad Lynch is Corporation Counsel for Vilas County. He earned his J.D. from Hamline University School of Law in 2014. His first term expires September 30, 2026.

Ms. Sara MacDonald is a public member who has worked as a social worker in the areas of child protective services, foster care adoptions, long-term care, domestic violence, AODA, and criminal justice. She earned her MSW from the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay in 2011. Her second term expires September 30, 2025.

Mr. David Peterson, CPA, is a public member who taught in the accounting program at Madison College before his retirement in 2014. He earned his BBA from the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire and his MBA from the University of Wisconsin – Madison. His first term expires September 30, 2026.

Attorney Amy. F. Scholl is a shareholder at Coyne, Schultz, Becker & Bauer, S.C., specializing in civil litigation, particularly insurance defense and the defense of healthcare and other professional service providers. She earned her J.D. from The John Marshall law School in 1997. Her first term ends September 30, 2027.

Attorney Gerald Sternberg is an attorney based in Madison. He earned his J.D. from the New England School of Law in 1976. His first term expires September 30, 2025.

Attorney Thomas C. Wendt serves as the paralegal program director and as full-time faculty at Northcentral Technical College – Center for Business and Industry. He earned his J.D. from Chicago-Kent College of Law in 2002. His first term ends September 30, 2027.

Appendix 4 - Special Investigators

Attorney Deborah A. Asher was appointed as a special investigator in 2020. She practices family law at Asher Law Office in Chippewa Falls. She earned her J.D. from the University of North Dakota School of Law in 2001.

Attorney Lucas Bennewitz was appointed as a special investigator in 2021. He is an Assistant Attorney General with the Wisconsin Department of Justice. He earned his J.D. from Marquette University Law School in 2015.

Attorney Peter J. Block was appointed as a special investigator in 2020. He is an Assistant City Attorney for the City of Milwaukee. He earned his J.D. from DePaul University College of Law in 2002.

Attorney Nathaniel Cade, Jr. was appointed as a special investigator in 2014. He is the owner of Cade Law Group in Milwaukee. He earned his J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School in 1996.

Attorney Robert W. Dean was appointed as a special investigator in 2020. He is Assistant Counsel for Fox Communities Credit Union in Appleton. He earned his J.D. from the Columbus School of Law at The Catholic University of America in 1997.

Attorney Nicole J. Druckrey was appointed as a special investigator in 2021. She is an attorney with EMCO Chemical Distributors, Inc., in Pleasant Prairie. She earned her J.D. from the University of Minnesota Law School in 2003.

Attorney Sarah Troupis Ferguson was appointed as a special investigator in 2016. She is of counsel with Hanson Reynolds, LLC in Madison. She earned her J.D. from the University of Notre Dame Law School in 2006.

Attorney Gretchen Gerrard was appointed as a special investigator in 2022. She is an attorney with Lawyers at Work, LLC in La Crosse. She earned her J.D. from Mitchell Hamline School of Law in 2016.

Attorney Mark J. Goldstein was appointed as a special investigator in 2014. He is the president of Goldstein Law Group, SC, in Milwaukee. He earned his J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 1994.

Attorney William A. Grunewald was appointed as a special investigator in 2014. He is a partner with Jenson, Scott, Grunewald & Shiffler, S.C. in Medford. He earned his J.D. from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1983.

Attorney Anthony P. Hahn was appointed as a special investigator in 2015. He practices at Gruber Law Offices, LLC in Milwaukee. He earned his J.D. from Marquette University Law School in 2000.

Attorney Alexander J. Hall was appointed as a special investigator in 2016. He is a senior claims practice specialist with Gallagher Bassett. He earned his J.D. from Marquette University Law School in 2014.

Attorney Victor C. Harding was appointed as a special investigator in 2005. He is an attorney with Warshafsky Rotter Tarnoff & Bloch, SC in Milwaukee. He earned his J.D. from Marquette University Law School in 1977.

Attorney Thomas W. Harnisch was appointed as a special investigator in 2012. He is the owner of Thomas W. Harnisch Law Office in Neilsville. He earned his J.D. from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1972.

Attorney Sean Harrington was appointed as a special investigator in 2024. He is the founder of Harrington Law in Prescott. He earned his J.D. from Taft Law School in 2014.

Attorney Jay E. Heit was appointed as a special investigator in 2017. He is an attorney with Herrick & Hart, S.C. in Eau Claire. He earned his J.D. from the University of South Dakota School of Law in 1995.

Attorney Krista G. LaFave was appointed as a special investigator in 2022. She is an attorney with Warshafsky, Rotter, Tarnoff & Bloch, S.C. in Milwaukee. She earned her J.D. from Tulane University School of Law in 2013.

Attorney Michael L. Laufenberg was appointed as a special investigator in 2017. He is an attorney with Keberle & Laufenberg, LLP in West Bend. He earned his J.D. from Marquette University Law School in 1995.

Attorney Amy Lonergan was appointed as a special investigator in 2022. She is a founding partner at Amenity Legal. She earned her J.D. from Chicago-Kent College of Law in 2007.

Attorney Michael S. Maistelman was appointed as a special investigator in 2021. He is the managing member and founder of Maistelman & Associates in Bayside. He earned his J.D. from Franklin Pierce Law Center in 1994.

Attorney Maxfield E. Neuhaus was appointed as a special investigator in 2014. He is a partner at Rodli, Beskar, Neuhaus, Murray & Pletcher, S.C. in River Falls. He earned his J.D. from Hamline University School of Law in 2008.

Attorney Bryce M. Pierson was appointed as a special investigator in 2020. He is a legal advisor to the Wisconsin Office of Judicial Education in Madison. He earned his J.D. from Southern Illinois University School of Law in 2012.

Attorney Ryan Poe-Galvinski was appointed as a special investigator in 2022. She is a clinical assistant professor of law at the University of Wisconsin School of Law in Madison. She earned her J.D. from Quinnipiac University School of Law in 2004.

Attorney Bryant Ray was appointed as a special investigator in 2021. He is an assistant vice president and trust officer at the Bank of Sun Prairie. He earned his J.D. from the University of Wisconsin School of Law in 2016.

Attorney Ronald S. Stadler was appointed as a special investigator in 2014. He is a founding shareholder at Stadler Sacks LLC in Richfield.

Attorney Richard J. Summerfield was appointed as a special investigator in 2015. He is a partner at Kostner-Kostner & Summerfield, S.C. in Bloomer. He earned his J.D. from Hamline University School of Law in 2006.

A**ttorney Johnathan G. Woodward** was appointed as a special investigator in 2020. He is an attorney at Houseman & Feind, LLP in Grafton. He earned his J.D. from Pepperdine University School of Law in 2006.

Attorney Daniel L. Woehrer was appointed as a special investigator in 2021. He practices at Woehrer Law Office in Wauwatosa. He earned his J.D. from the University of Wisconsin School of Law in 1987.

Appendix 5 - Special Preliminary Review Panel

Assistant Attorney General Eliot M. Held (Chair) serves as an Assistant Attorney General with the Wisconsin Department of Justice. He earned his J.D. from the University of Arizona College of Law in 2009. His first term expires September 30, 2026.

Attorney Adam Jarchow is the founder of Jarchow Law, LLC in Clear Lake. He earned his J.D. from the University of Florida Levin College of Law in 2004. His first term expires September 30, 2027.

Ms. Monelle Johnson is an Executive Assistant with Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinic in Medford. She earned her B.S. from Mount Senario College in 1984 and her M.S. from Kennedy-Western University in 2000. Her second term expires September 30, 2027.

Mr. Amos Malone serves as a probation parole officer with the Wisconsin Department of Corrections in Madison. He earned his B.S. and M.E. from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. His second term expires September 30, 2026.

Attorney Jillian Pfeifer serves as the Oneida County District Attorney in Rhinelander. She earned her J.D. from Marquette University Law School in 2016. Her first term expires September 30, 2026.

Attorney Shari Stevens is a founding partner of Vann & Chamberlain in Green Bay. She earned her J.D. from Texas Wesleyan Law School in 2009. Her first term expires September 30, 2027.

Ms. Cindy Zahrte served as the Superintendent of the Tomah Area School District until retirement in 2020. She earned her B.S. and M.S. from the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Her first term expires September 30, 2025.

Appendix 6 - Supreme Court-Appointed Referees

The **Hon. Valerie Bailey-Rihn** served as a judge of the Dane County Circuit Court from 2016-2022. She was previously a partner at the Quarles & Brady law firm in Madison. Judge Bailey-Rihn earned her J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 1991. Her term as a referee ends December 31, 2025.

Attorney Charles Barr has more than 40 years of experience in private practice. He is currently an arbitrator on the Commercial Arbitration and Consumer Arbitration Panels of the American Arbitration Association. He earned his J.D. from Harvard Law School in 1977. Attorney Barr's term as a referee ends December 31, 2025.

The **Hon. Sue Bischel** served as a judge of the Brown County Circuit Court from 1992-2012. She earned her J.D. from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1978. Her term as a referee ends December 31, 2025.

The **Hon. Steven Cray** served as a judge of the Chippewa County Circuit Court from 2008-2020. He was previously in private practice. Judge Cray earned his J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 1976. His term as a referee ends December 31, 2025.

The **Hon. Jean DiMotto** served as a judge of the Milwaukee County Circuit Court from 1997-2013. Previously, she was an administrative law judge and an attorney in private practice. Judge DiMotto earned her J.D. from Marquette University School of Law in 1984. Her term as a referee ends December 31, 2025.

Attorney James Friedman retired in 2019 after 38 years in private practice. He earned his J.D. from the University of Notre Dame Law School in 1972. His term as a referee ends December 31, 2027.

The **Hon. Joseph Jacobson** serves as an Administrative Law Judge for the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review. He earned his J.D. from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1994. His term ends December 31, 2025.

The **Hon. Edward Leineweber** served as a judge of the Richland County Circuit Court from 1997 through 2011. He has more than 30 years of experience in private practice. Judge Leineweber earned his J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 1976. His term as a referee ends December 31, 2027.

Attorney David Piehler has more than 40 years of experience in private practice. He earned his J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 1980. His term as a referee ends December 31, 2027.

The **Hon. Karen Seifert** served as a judge of the Winnebago County Circuit Court from 2006-2021. She previously was a Winnebago County Court Commissioner and Assistant Corporation Counsel. Judge Seifert earned her J.D. from the University of Iowa College of Law in 1987. Her term as a referee ends December 31, 2025.

Attorney Michael Tobin retired in 2018 after 32 years with the Wisconsin State Public Defender's Office. He earned his J.D. from the University of Texas in 1977. Attorney Tobin's term as a referee ends December 31, 2027.

Attorney James Winiarski has more than 40 years of experience in private practice. He earned his J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 1974. Attorney Winiarski's term as a referee ends December 31, 2027.

Appendix 7 - Outreach 2024-2025

Date	Event Type	Title/Location	Staff
7/15/24	CLE	Demystifying the Black Box of Lawyer Regulation (Virtual, American Bar Association)	Timothy Samuelson
8/2/24	CLE	Insider Scoop on Getting from an Idea to a Rule Change (Chicago, National Organization of Bar Counsel)	Julie Spoke
9/20/24	CLE	Annual Trust Account Update 2024	Travis Stieren Emily Kokie
10/4/24	CLE	A Grievance Was Filed -- Now What? (Madison, State Bar of WI)	Francis Sullivan
10/4/24	CLE	Ethics School (Madison, Madison College)	Timothy Samuelson Michael Shull Julie Spoke Francis Sullivan Travis Stieren Tom Laitsch
10/9/24	CLE	A Grievance Was Filed -- Now What? (Madison, Department of Health Services Office of Legal Counsel)	Francis Sullivan
10/10/24	CLE	OLR Overview (Society of Family Lawyers)	Michael Shull Jonathan Hendrix
10/18/24	CLE	50 Well-Being Tips in 50 Minutes (Wisconsin Dells, State Bar of WI)	Julie Spoke
10/31/24	CLE	Ethics School (Waukesha, Waukesha County Technical College)	Michael Shull Julie Spoke Francis Sullivan Emily Kokie Tom Laitsch
11/6/24	Publication	Dilemma: Will I Be Disciplined If I Fall for a Wire Transfer Scam?	Travis Stieren

11/7/24	CLE	OLR Grievances and Ethics in Technology (Virtual, Chippewa Co. Bar Association)	Kathryn Galarowicz
11/8/24	CLE	Ethics School (La Crosse, Western Technical College)	Michael Shull Julie Spoke Emily Kokie Tom Laitsch
11/14/24	CLE	Medical Incapacity (Elkhard Lake, Wisconsin Courts Judicial Conference)	Timothy Samuelson Francis Sullivan
11/15/24	CLE	Ethics School (Racine, Gateway Technical College)	Michael Shull Julie Spoke Francis Sullivan Emily Kokie Tom Laitsch
Date	**Event Type**	**Title/Location**	**Staff**
12/19/24	CLE	Family Law Ethics (Madison, State Bar of WI)	Timothy Samuelson
2/7/25	CLE	The Use of Temporary Orders (Phoenix, National Organization of Bar Counsel)	Francis Sullivan
2/25/25	CLE	OLR 101 (Waukesha, Waukesha Co. Bar Association)	Jonathan Hendrix
3/13/25	Event	Municipal Judges Conference (Lake Delton, Wisconsin Courts Judicial Conference)	Timothy Samuelson Francis Sullivan
3/17/25 - 3/21/25	CLE	Advanced Trial Techniques and Investigative Skills (U.S. Virgin Islands, National Association of Attorneys General)	Francis Sullivan
4/8/25	CLE	Preparing for a Legal Career (University of WI, Madison Pre-Law Society)	Francis Sullivan
4/17/25	CLE	A View from the Bench: Best Practices on Briefs and Oral Arguments from Dist. 2 COA (Madison, Wisconsin Department of Justice, Wisconsin Office of State Public Defender)	Timothy Samuelson
5/1/25	Event	2025 Law Day Pro Bono Breakfast (Madison, Dane Co. Bar Association)	Timothy Samuelson
5/15/25	CLE	Attorney Well-Being (Milwaukee, Reinhart Law Firm)	Julie Spoke
5/23/25	CLE	How to Handle a Grievance (Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin Department of Justice, State Prosecutor Education and Training)	Timothy Samuelson
6/18/25	CLE	The Role of OLR: Ethical Obligations and Risk Management for Law Firms (Wisconsin Dells, State Bar of Wisconsin, WI Association of Legal Administrators)	Timothy Samuelson

Wisconsin Capitol
Carol M. Highsmith