

Rule 46. Attorneys

(a) Admission to the Bar.

- (1) **Eligibility.** An attorney is eligible for admission to the bar of a court of appeals if that attorney is of good moral and professional character and is admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States, the highest court of a state, another United States court of appeals, or a United States district court (including the district courts for Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands).
- (2) **Application.** An applicant must file an application for admission, on a form approved by the court that contains the applicant's personal statement showing eligibility for membership. The applicant must subscribe to the following oath or affirmation:

"I, _____, do solemnly swear [or affirm] that I will conduct myself as an attorney and counselor of this court, uprightly and according to law; and that I will support the Constitution of the United States."
- (3) **Admission Procedures.** On written or oral motion of a member of the court's bar, the court will act on the application. An applicant may be admitted by oral motion in open court. But, unless the court orders otherwise, an applicant need not appear before the court to be admitted. Upon admission, an applicant must pay the clerk the fee prescribed by local rule or court order.

(b) Suspension or Disbarment.

- (1) **Standard.** A member of the court's bar is subject to suspension or disbarment by the court if the member:
 - (A) has been suspended or disbarred from practice in any other court; or
 - (B) is guilty of conduct unbecoming a member of the court's bar.
 - (2) **Procedure.** The member must be given an opportunity to show good cause, within the time prescribed by the court, why the member should not be suspended or disbarred.
 - (3) **Order.** The court must enter an appropriate order after the member responds and a hearing is held, if requested, or after the time prescribed for a response expires, if no response is made.
- (c) **Discipline.** A court of appeals may discipline an attorney who practices before it for conduct unbecoming a member of the bar or for failure to comply with any court rule. First, however, the court must afford the attorney reasonable notice, an opportunity to show cause to the contrary, and, if requested, a hearing.

Local Rule 46(a). Legal Assistance to Indigents by Law Students.

An eligible law student with the written consent of an indigent and the attorney of record may appear in this Court on behalf of that indigent in any case. An eligible law student with the written consent of the United States Attorney or authorized representative may also appear in this Court on behalf of the United States in any case. An eligible law student with the written consent of the State Attorney General or authorized representative may also appear in this Court on behalf of that state in any case. In each case, the written consent shall be filed with the clerk.

An eligible law student may assist in the preparation of briefs and other documents to be filed in this Court, but such briefs or documents must be signed by the attorney of record. The student may also participate in oral argument with leave of the Court, but only in the presence of the attorney of record. The attorney of record shall assume personal professional responsibility for the law student's work and for supervising the quality of that work. The attorney should be familiar with the case and prepared to supplement or correct any written or oral statement made by the student.

In order to make an appearance pursuant to this rule, the law student must:

- 1. Be duly enrolled in a law school approved by the American Bar Association;*
- 2. Have completed legal studies amounting to at least four (4) semesters, or the equivalent if the school is on some basis other than a semester basis;*
- 3. Be certified by the dean of the student's law school as being of good character and competent legal ability which certification shall be filed with the clerk. This certification may be withdrawn by the dean at any time by mailing notice to the clerk or by termination by this Court without notice of hearing and without any showing of cause;*
- 4. Be introduced to the Court by an attorney admitted to practice before this Court;*
- 5. Neither ask for nor receive any compensation or remuneration of any kind from the person on whose behalf the student renders services, but this shall not prevent an attorney, legal aid bureau, law school, public defender agency, a State, or the United States from paying compensation to the eligible law student, nor shall it prevent any agency from making such charges for its services as it may otherwise properly require;*
- 6. Certify in writing that he or she has read and is familiar with the Code of Professional Responsibility or Rules of Professional Conduct in force in the state in which the student's law school is located.*

Local Rule 46(b). Admission to Practice.

Only attorneys admitted to the bar of this Court may practice before the Court. An attorney may be named on a brief filed in this Court without being admitted to the bar of the Fourth Circuit, provided that at least one lawyer admitted to practice in this Court also appears on the brief. Any other document submitted by an attorney who is not a member of the bar of the Fourth Circuit will be accepted for filing conditioned on his or her qualifying for membership within a reasonable time.

Each applicant for admission to the bar of this Court shall file with the clerk an application on the form approved by the Court and furnished by the clerk. Thereafter, upon written or oral motion of a member of the bar of the Court, the Court will act upon the application. A qualified attorney may be admitted upon personal appearance in open court. It is not necessary that an applicant appear in open court for the purpose of being admitted unless the Court shall otherwise order.

The requisite \$239 fee must accompany the application, but attorneys appointed by the Court to represent a party in forma pauperis, counsel for the United States and any agency thereof who has a case pending before this Court, and law clerks to the judges of the Court and to the district judges, magistrate judges, and bankruptcy judges within this Circuit shall be admitted to the bar of this Court without the payment of an admission fee. The clerk shall credit \$199 of each \$239 fee to the

Judiciary's fee account and designate the remaining \$40 for deposit to a fund maintained by the Court for the benefit of the bench and bar in the administration of justice.

A certificate indicating that an attorney has been admitted to practice before the Fourth Circuit will be sent to counsel by mail after admission.

Local Rule 46(c). Appearance of Counsel; Withdrawal; Substitutions.

Each attorney of record must file a written appearance with the clerk within 14 days after the appeal is docketed or after being retained or appointed. At the time of docketing, the clerk will send to each counsel or party in the trial court an "appearance of counsel" form. This form should be filled out and returned to the Clerk of the Fourth Circuit within 14 days. Thereafter, the Court will send correspondence, notices of oral argument, and copies of final decisions only to those attorneys who have filed their appearance forms. This form does not affect the attorney information listed on opinions, as that information is drawn from the names listed on the principal briefs.

Once an appearance in an appeal has been filed, an attorney may not withdraw from representation without notice to the party he or she is representing and consent of the Court. A motion to withdraw should state fully the reason for the request. Substitution of counsel of record can be accomplished by submitting a counsel of record form or written appearance for new counsel along with existing counsel's motion to withdraw or strike appearance.

Local Rule 46(d). Appointment of Counsel.

In any appeal in which appointment of counsel is mandated by section (a)(1) of the Criminal Justice Act, 18 U.S.C. § 3006A(a)(1), counsel is appointed upon the docketing of the appeal without prior notice to the attorney who represented the indigent in the case below. The duty of counsel appointed under the CJA extends through advising an unsuccessful appellant in writing of the right to seek review in the Supreme Court. If the appellant requests in writing that a petition for a writ of certiorari be filed and in counsel's considered judgment there are grounds for seeking Supreme Court review, counsel shall file such a petition. If appellant requests that a petition for a writ of certiorari be filed but counsel believes that such a petition would be frivolous, counsel may file a motion to withdraw with the Court of Appeals. The motion must reflect that a copy was served on the client and that the client was informed of the right to file a response to the motion within seven days. The Clerk will hold the motion after filing for fifteen days before submitting it to the Court to allow time for appellant's response, if any, to be received.

Assignment of counsel is discretionary in other indigent cases. Therefore, such cases receive a preliminary review before a decision is made regarding appointment of counsel. In assigning counsel, the Court may direct counsel to brief a particular issue, but counsel is free to address any additional issues which appear to be meritorious.

Payment of counsel appointed under the CJA is governed by 18 U.S.C. § 3006A(d) and this Circuit's Plan in Implementation of the Criminal Justice Act. Unless compensation for legal services becomes available to assigned counsel by statute, the Court will pay counsel assigned for appellate representation not covered by the CJA a maximum fee of \$750 plus expenses from the Attorney Admission Fund.

To receive payment from the Court, court-appointed or court-assigned counsel in all cases must submit to the Clerk's Office an itemized statement of expenses, with receipts, within sixty days of final disposition of the case. Depending upon the course of the case, this may be sixty days from (1) the date of judgment, (2) dismissal of the appeal, or (3) denial of a petition for rehearing. Before the expiration of the sixty-day time period the Court, for good cause shown, may grant counsel an extension of time to file the application for compensation and reimbursement. If court-appointed

counsel files a petition for writ of certiorari with the Supreme Court, the 60-day period for applying for compensation and reimbursement runs from the date of filing the petition for writ of certiorari.

Local Rule 46(e). Attorney's Fees and Expenses.

The Court may award attorney's fees and expenses whenever authorized by statute. Any application for an award must include a reference to the statutory basis for the request and a detailed itemization of the amounts requested. Court-appointed counsel may apply for an award of fees and expenses, but any award by the Court is in lieu of the regular appointment fees provided by the Court. In certain agency cases, counsel may submit the standard government form for fees and expenses provided by the agency for approval by the Court.

Local Rule 46(f). Proceeding Pro Se.

An individual may proceed without the aid of counsel, but should so inform the Court at the earliest possible time. In any pro se appeal, the clerk shall notify the parties that they shall file informal briefs as provided by Local Rule 34(b). The Court will limit its review to the issues raised in the informal briefs and will consider the need for the appointment of counsel when reviewing the appeal under Local Rule 34(a). Cases involving pro se litigants are ordinarily not scheduled for oral argument.

Local Rule 46(g). Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement.

- (1) *A member of the bar of this Court may be disciplined by this Court as a result of*
 - (a) *Conviction in any court of the United States, the District of Columbia, or any state, territory or commonwealth of the United States, of any felony or of any lesser crime involving false swearing, misrepresentation, fraud, willful failure to file income tax returns, deceit, bribery, extortion, misappropriation, or theft;*
 - (b) *Imposition of discipline by any other court of whose bar the attorney is a member, or an attorney's disbarment by consent or resignation from the bar of such court while an investigation into allegations of misconduct is pending;*
 - (c) *Conduct with respect to this Court which violates the rules of professional conduct or responsibility in effect in the state or other jurisdiction in which the attorney maintains his or her principal office, the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure, the local rules of this Court, or orders or other instructions of this Court; or*
 - (d) *Any other conduct unbecoming a member of the bar of this Court.*
- (2) *Discipline may consist of disbarment, suspension from practice before this Court, monetary sanction, removal from the roster of attorneys eligible for appointment as Court-appointed counsel, reprimand, or any other sanction that the Court may deem appropriate. Disbarment is the presumed discipline for conviction of a crime specified in paragraph (1)(a) above. The identical discipline imposed by another court is presumed appropriate for discipline taken as a result of that other court's action pursuant to paragraph (1)(b). A monetary sanction imposed on disciplinary grounds is the personal responsibility of the attorney disciplined, and may not be reimbursed by a client.*
- (3) *The clerk reviews reports received from other courts concerning discipline imposed on members of the bar of this Court. He refers to the Court all disbarments, suspensions, resignations during the pendency of misconduct investigations, and other actions sufficient to cast doubt upon the member's continuing qualification to practice before this Court.*
- (4) *The clerk issues a notice to show cause why a member of the bar shall not be disciplined by this Court upon receipt of official notification of an attorney's conviction of a crime specified in paragraph (1)(a) or of the imposition of discipline by another court referred to this Court pursuant to paragraph (3) above, or upon the Court's determination that cause*

may exist for discipline pursuant to paragraphs (1)(c) or (1)(d). Such notice is sent by certified mail, directs that a response be filed within 30 days of the date of the notice, and directs that the attorney complete and return to the clerk within that time a declaration of the names and addresses of other bars to which he or she is admitted, using the form supplied by the clerk, whether or not the attorney chooses otherwise to respond to the notice. The clerk also appends a copy of Local Rule 46(g).

- (5) *Upon receiving official notification that a member of the bar has been convicted of a crime specified in paragraph (1)(a), the clerk automatically will issue an order suspending the attorney's privilege to practice before this Court pending the Court's determination of appropriate discipline.*
- (6) *An attorney to whom a notice to show cause has been sent may consent to disbarment, by filing with the clerk an affidavit stating that the attorney desires to consent to disbarment and that:
 - (a) *The attorney's consent is freely and voluntarily rendered; the attorney is not being subjected to coercion or duress; the attorney is fully aware of the implications of so consenting;*
 - (b) *The attorney is aware that there is a presently pending proceeding involving allegations that there exist grounds for the attorney's discipline, the nature of which the attorney shall specifically set forth;*
 - (c) *The attorney acknowledges that the material facts so alleged are true; and*
 - (d) *The attorney so consents because the attorney knows that he or she cannot successfully defend himself or herself.**

The order disbarring the attorney on consent is a matter of public record. However, the affidavit will not be publicly disclosed or made available for use in any other proceeding except upon order of this Court.

- (7) *If the attorney fails to respond to the notice within 30 days, or such other time as the Court shall allow, the clerk enters an order imposing the presumptive discipline. If no presumptive discipline is specified for the conduct, the clerk notifies the Court of the attorney's non-response and the Court takes such action as it deems appropriate.*
- (8) *All matters pertaining to discipline of attorneys are submitted to the Court's Standing Panel on Attorney Discipline, which consists of three active circuit judges, each of whom is appointed by the Chief Judge to serve on the Panel for a three-year term. The initial members of the Standing Panel are appointed for terms of one, two, and three years so that the Panel members' terms are staggered for continuity of decision making. If any member of the Standing Panel is unable to hear a particular matter, the clerk randomly designates another active circuit judge to the Panel for the purpose of disposing of that matter.*
- (9) *The Standing Panel considers all materials submitted by an attorney to whom notice to show cause has issued. The Panel may request further information from a court that has previously imposed discipline on the attorney, or from its disciplinary agency. A copy of any such information is made available to the attorney or to his or her counsel. Should an attorney request a hearing on the matter it will be heard by the Standing Panel at a time and place of its choosing.*
- (10) *The Court may at any time appoint counsel to investigate or prosecute a disciplinary matter, or to represent an indigent attorney instructed to show cause. The Court prefers to appoint as prosecuting counsel the disciplinary agency of the highest court of the state in which the attorney maintains his or her principal office. However, if the state disciplinary*

agency declines appointment, or the Court deems other counsel more appropriate, it may appoint any other member of the bar as prosecuting counsel. Counsel appointed either for prosecution or defense will be compensated for his or her services according to the Court's plan for appointment of counsel in criminal cases, from the attorney admission fund.

- (11) The Court's order imposing discipline will set forth the nature of the discipline imposed; if disbarment or suspension from practice before the Court, the terms upon which reinstatement will occur or be considered by the Court; and any instructions to the clerk concerning the notification of the Court's action to be given to other courts or official bodies.*
- (12) The clerk is responsible for*
 - (a) Automatically initiating show cause proceedings when official notice of an attorney's conviction of a crime specified in paragraph (1)(a) or discipline by another court pursuant to paragraph (3) is brought to his or her attention;*
 - (b) Bringing to the attention of the Standing Panel instances of violations by members of the bar of this Court of the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure, this Court's local rules or this Court's orders or other instructions that may warrant discipline;*
 - (c) Obtaining declarations of the names and addresses of other bars of which an attorney possibly subject to discipline by this Court may be a member; and*
 - (d) Unless directed otherwise by the Court, within 10 days of the imposition of discipline upon a member of the bar of this Court, notifying all other courts of those bars the attorney reports that he or she is a member, and the American Bar Association's National Disciplinary Data Bank, of the Court's action, enclosing a certified copy of the Court's order.*

Former Local Rule 46 amended and redesignated Local Rule 46(a) December 1, 1995.

Former I.O.P.-46.1 redesignated Local Rule 46(b) December 1, 1995; amended September 30, 2003.

Local Rule 46(b) amended September 30, 2003, February 15, 2005, November 1, 2011, December 1, 2016, January 25, 2021, and December 1, 2023.

Former I.O.P.-46.2 amended and redesignated Local Rule 46(c) December 1, 1995; amended December 1, 2002, June 1, 2013, and December 9, 2019.

Former I.O.P.-46.3 amended December 8, 1994, and October 5, 1995; amended and redesignated Local Rule 46(d) December 1, 1995; amended February 1, 2001.

Former I.O.P.-46.4 redesignated Local Rule 46(e) December 1, 1995.

Former I.O.P.-46.5 redesignated Local Rule 46(f) December 1, 1995; amended September 25, 1996.

Former I.O.P.-46.6 amended and redesignated Local Rule 46(g) December 1, 1995.