

## About the AGC

The Attorney Grievance Commission of Maryland was established in 1975 by the Court of Appeals of Maryland. The Commission, through the Office of Bar Counsel, regulates the professional conduct of attorneys and determines attorneys' conformance to the Maryland Lawyers' Rules of Professional Conduct, the ethical rules adopted by the Court of Appeals. The AGC also seeks to prevent the unauthorized practice of law.

In addition, the Commission provides financial support to the Lawyer Assistance Program of the Maryland State Bar Association. This program was created to aid lawyers who have an addiction to alcohol or drugs, a mental illness, a gambling problem or serious administrative difficulties. Because some complaints result from these issues, the Lawyer Assistance Program works to aid in the prevention and detection of problems and to provide help.

In short, the AGC's main purpose is to assist in protecting the public by enforcing the professional standards that regulate the conduct of lawyers and by educating lawyers concerning their professional responsibilities.

## *Mission Statement*

*The Attorney Grievance Commission of Maryland is dedicated to protecting the public and maintaining the integrity of the legal profession. The Commission, through the Office of Bar Counsel, seeks to encourage and promote the ethical practice of law and the highest standards of professionalism by members of the Bar. In carrying out their functions of evaluating complaints and enforcing ethical standards for lawyers, the Commission and Bar Counsel strive for fairness and equity.*



Attorney Grievance Commission of Maryland  
200 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Suite 300  
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<http://mdcourts.gov/attygrievance/index.html>

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# The Attorney Grievance Commission of Maryland

## Frequently Asked Questions

The Attorney Grievance Commission (AGC) works to ensure that Maryland lawyers adhere to the highest standards of professional ethics whether they're explaining and interpreting the law for you, representing you or your opponent in legal matters or appearing in court on your behalf.

If you are having a problem with your own lawyer, first try to solve the problem by having an open and honest conversation with him or her. If this doesn't work, you can file a complaint with the AGC. Similarly, if you believe a lawyer is acting unethically, regardless of his or her relationship with you, you may file a complaint.

A lawyer on Bar Counsel's staff will review your complaint to determine if an investigation is warranted.

### What your lawyer needs from you:

Clear and open communication is the key to maintaining a productive, positive relationship with a lawyer. To help avoid costly and lengthy miscommunications always:

- Come to meetings prepared.
- Clearly communicate your wishes and expectations.
- Establish and understand a fee arrangement at the beginning of your representation.
- Ask questions if you don't understand something.
- Disclose all information and background on your case.
- Promptly discuss and resolve miscommunications with your lawyer.

### What your lawyer should provide:

- An honest appraisal of the likelihood of the case's success.
- Prompt disclosure of alternative ways to resolve a matter.
- Copies of court documents and letters.
- A satisfactory explanation of your case's status at your request.
- Adequate and prompt attention to your case.
- Reasonable and timely bills and descriptions of expenses.

### How to handle a problem:

If you are not satisfied with the service provided by your lawyer, first try to resolve it by meeting with him or her. But if talking doesn't work, you can file a complaint with the AGC. There is no charge for this. The AGC will investigate your complaint, if warranted, and will pursue disciplinary action against the lawyer, if appropriate.

### To file a complaint:

Call 410-514-7051 to request a complaint form. Complete, sign and return the form to the Attorney Grievance Commission of Maryland, 200 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Suite 300, Annapolis, MD 21401-7479. This form can also be downloaded at

<http://mdcourts.gov/attygrievance/index.html>

Or:

Write a letter to the above address including your name, address and telephone number; the name, address and telephone number of the lawyer; and a description of the complaint. Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged, generally within thirty days.

### What happens after I file the complaint?

Your written complaint will be reviewed by a lawyer on staff to determine if there were provable violations of the Maryland Lawyers' Rules of Professional Conduct. You will be notified of any action or disposition.

### Will the lawyer find out that I filed a complaint?

Yes. Usually the lawyer is notified that a complaint has been filed against him or her, and who filed it.

### Can I find out about prior complaints against this lawyer?

No. All complaints—either pending or dismissed—are private and confidential. You can, however, be told if the lawyer received a public sanction (e.g., disbarment, suspension or reprimand).

### How do I get back things I may be entitled to, such as fees, other money and documents?

Although a lawyer's refusal to return money or documents may be the basis for discipline and can be reported, the AGC cannot force a lawyer to return them. You should discuss this with another lawyer who can give you legal advice. The AGC does not resolve fee disputes. The State and County Bar Associations may be able to help.

### What will happen to the case my lawyer was handling?

The AGC does not represent clients, and it cannot assist in any type of litigation. You may need to seek the services of another lawyer who can assist you with your ongoing legal matter.

### Must my lawyer continue to represent me if I file a complaint?

A complaint to the AGC may have the effect of causing a breakdown in trust between the lawyer and client. If so, the lawyer may be able to withdraw from the representation if such withdrawal is legally permissible.

### Why was my complaint dismissed by the AGC?

The Office of Bar Counsel pursues complaints against lawyers when there is a substantial basis to conclude that the Maryland Lawyers' Rules of Professional Conduct have been violated and that such a case can be proven by the requisite standard of proof. When these conditions are not met, the complaint cannot be pursued. The determination to pursue a complaint may involve a number of factors, including the assessment of the likelihood of success on the merits of the complaint. The determination by the Office of Bar Counsel to dismiss a matter is final.