



Attorney and Judicial Complaints

By Juliann Jenson

All states enforce ethical rules and codes of conduct for judges and attorneys, and there are formal complaint systems in place to investigate and discipline misconduct if those rules are violated. In Colorado, complaints are handled by separate specialized agencies, and voters play a role by deciding whether to retain judges in elections. This issue brief explains the legal professional complaint process and provides information about judicial performance evaluations for retention elections.

Attorney Complaints

The Office of the Attorney Regulation Counsel (OARC) is an independent agency within the Colorado Supreme Court that oversees the practice of law in the state. The OARC investigates attorney misconduct, manages lawyer admissions and registration, handles disciplinary actions, and regulates the unauthorized practice of law.

Types of Misconduct

Attorneys may be disciplined for issues such as neglect, misuse of client funds, dishonesty, lack of communication, criminal conduct, and conflicts of interest.

Process and Outcome

Complaints are reviewed and investigated by staff, with penalties based on the severity of misconduct. Cases are dismissed if no

wrongdoing is found or if the complaint is based solely on dissatisfaction with a legal outcome.

OARC Contact Information

- **Online:** Complaint form
- **Address:** 1300 Broadway, Unit 500, Denver, CO 80203
- **Phone:** (303) 457-5800, or (877) 888-1370 (toll free)

Judicial Complaints

Two separate agencies handle judicial misconduct complaints, depending on location and jurisdiction.

Commission on Judicial Discipline

The Colorado Commission on Judicial Discipline (Commission) is an independent state agency charged with protecting the public from improper conduct of judges. The Commission investigates complaints against state-level judges, including Supreme Court justices, and Court of Appeals judges, district court, and county court judges.

The Commission does not have jurisdiction over Denver County Court judges, municipal court judges, administrative law judges, and magistrates.

Types of Misconduct

Examples of judicial misconduct include unethical behavior that undermines public trust in the courts. Such behavior could include substance abuse, dishonesty, retaliation, conflicts of interest, inappropriate communication, or mistreatment or harassment of staff, among other things.

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Investigative Process and Outcome

Staff reviews complaints and dismisses those outside the Commission's scope, such as requests to review rulings or order new trials. For complaints with sufficient evidence, the Commission may: dismiss them, impose private discipline (e.g., a warning), hold an informal hearing with a disciplinary plan, or initiate formal proceedings.

Judicial Discipline Contact Information

- **Online:** [Complaint form](#)
- **Email:** judicialconduct@jd.state.co.us.
- **Address:** 1300 Broadway, Ste. 210, Denver, CO 80203
- **Phone:** 303-457-5131

Denver Judicial Discipline Commission

The Denver court system operates four separate courts (County, District, Probate, and Juvenile) within the 2nd Judicial District and has its own own [Judicial Discipline Commission](#). The Denver commission handles complaints against Denver County and municipal court judges (Denver district court judges fall under the Commission on Judicial Discipline).

Types of Misconduct

Complaints encompass willful misconduct, persistent failure to perform duties, issues with substance abuse, and violation of the code of conduct.

Investigative Process and Outcome

Staff investigates and reports findings to the Mayor, who has sole authority to discipline, suspend, or remove judicial officers.

Denver Court Contact Information

- **Online:** [Complaint form](#)
- **Email:** judicialconduct@denvercountycourt.org
- **Address:** 1437 Bannock Street, Room 108, Denver, CO 80202
- **Phone:** 720-865-7870

Judicial Performance Evaluation and Retention

The [Colorado Office of Judicial Performance Evaluation](#) (OJPE) gathers feedback about judges through surveys of attorneys, jurors, and litigants, alongside public comments, to assess judges on fairness, legal knowledge, and temperament before providing recommendations to voters.

The evaluations and recommendations are published online on the [OJPE homepage](#) and in the [Colorado Blue Book](#), which is mailed to every voter prior to an election.

OJPE Contact Information

- **Online:** [Judicial performance public comment form](#)
- **Email:** JudicialPerformanceOffice@judicial.state.co.us
- **Address:** 1300 Broadway, Suite 220, Denver, CO 80203
- **Phone:** 303-928-7777