

**REPORT...**  
**LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BOARD**

By  
Mike Hoover, Administrative Director  
Minnesota Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility

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*In this month's column I will discuss several administrative matters which I believe are of interest to the Bar.*

**ABA EVALUATION**

From April 29 through May 1 the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Professional Discipline will send a team to conduct an on-site evaluation of the Minnesota lawyer discipline system. The team will examine the structure, operation, practice and procedures of the disciplinary system and make recommendations for improving its effectiveness. During its evaluation the team will meet with members of the Supreme Court, the Board, District Ethics Committees, and my staff. Complainants, respondents, and members of the Bar will also be interviewed. We will join Idaho and the District of Columbia as the third jurisdiction to receive an ABA evaluation. I will undoubtedly have more to say about the results of the evaluation at a later date.

**COMPLAINTS CONTINUE TO RISE**

In my next column I will make a complete report on the statistics for 1980. I regret to report now, however, that complaints received during 1980 showed a shocking thirty percent increase to a record 919. Unfortunately, through April 15, 1981, complaints received are again up by approximately ten percent making it increasingly likely that 1981 will be the first year in the Board's history when more than 1000 complaints are received.

This increase has made it more difficult for us to cope with our workload. Despite the addition of a fourth attorney and a paralegal and despite closing a record 721 matters during 1981, our backlog continues to grow. In an effort to minimize staff increases we have added automated equipment in our offices and have attempted to streamline our procedures to eliminate needless red tape. Nevertheless, I fear we will again have to consider further staff increases to cope with our ever-mounting workload.

We have managed for four consecutive years to finance the operation of our agency without an increase in the portion of the license registration fee earmarked for the Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board. An increase will not be necessary for the fiscal year beginning on July 1, 1981. The fiscal situation will, however, be monitored carefully as inflationary pressures will undoubtedly dictate an increase in the assessment in the not too distant future.

**INFORMAL ETHICS OPINIONS**

Despite our growing disciplinary workload we continue to render informal ethics opinions to attorneys who write or call us. We do so because of our belief that the availability to issue such opinions is a preventive measure which lessens our disciplinary workload in the long run. We may need eventually to re-evaluate the way this service is rendered to the Bar. In the meantime, however, I do ask your cooperation in several respects:

1. Please review the Code of Professional Responsibility before requesting our opinion. Many calls concern questions which could be answered easily by reviewing the Code. It may also be helpful to discuss the problem with other members of your office or with other colleagues.
2. While we desire to assist you, we cannot conduct lengthy and exhaustive legal research on all of the ethics opinions which are sought. We may ask you to do your own research and to discuss the results of that research with us.
3. We answer many of the inquiries in the same telephone call in which they are received. Obviously, however, a very complex problem cannot be answered instantly.
4. Please understand that I cannot personally respond to each of the 1500 to 2000 inquiries we receive annually. Your calls will, therefore, frequently be referred to one of my three very able assistants.
5. We can only give opinions, not sure answers. Our opinions are subject to modification by the Board or the Supreme Court.