



OFFICE OF DISCIPLINARY COUNSEL

March 11, 2022

Hamilton P. Fox, III
Disciplinary Counsel

Julia L. Porter
Deputy Disciplinary Counsel

Senior Assistant Disciplinary Counsel
Myles V. Lynk
Becky Neal

Assistant Disciplinary Counsel
Jerri U. Dunston
Dru Foster
Jason R. Horrell
Ebtehaj Kalantar
Jelani C. Lowery
Sean P. O'Brien
Joseph C. Perry
Melissa J. Rolffot
William R. Ross
Caroll Donayre Somoza
Traci M. Tait
Cynthia G. Wright

Senior Staff Attorney
Lawrence K. Bloom

Staff Attorney
Amanda Urefia
Angela Walker

Manager, Forensic Investigations
Charles M. Anderson

Investigative Attorney
Azadeh Matinpour

William S. Stancil, Esquire

Via email only at
williamsheldonstancil@gmail.com

In re William S. Stancil, Esquire
(D.C. Bar Registration No. 370895)
Disciplinary Docket No. 2021-D215

Dear Mr. Stancil:

This office has completed its investigation of the above-referenced matter. We find that your conduct reflected a disregard of certain ethical standards under the District of Columbia Rules of Professional Conduct (the "Rules"). We are therefore issuing you this Informal Admonition pursuant to D. C. Bar Rule XI, §§ 3, 6, and 8.

This matter was docketed for investigation based on a complaint filed by your client, W.J. Based on our investigation of this matter, we find that your conduct violated Rules 1.4(a), 1.16(d), and 8.4(d). We find as follows:

W.J. was in a dispute over the possession of property for her business. On October 20, 2019, the property owner (Plaintiff) filed a complaint for possession of real property against W.J. in D.C. Superior Court. On November 19, 2019, you entered your notice of appearance with the court. The court scheduled the matter for a December 19, 2019 trial date. In her complaint to our office, W.J. alleges that during this case, you "abandoned" her matter.

You appeared with W.J. at the bench trial, and at the conclusion of the trial, the Court granted Plaintiff non-redeemable judgment for possession of the property. Several days later, on December 23, 2019, W.J. filed a handwritten *pro se* Motion to Vacate Default Judgment. She did not tell you she was going to file a motion and did not provide you with a copy before doing so. Court records corroborate that you did not receive notice of this filing. On February 7, 2020, the court denied W.J.'s *pro se* Motion to Vacate Judgment.

On December 31, 2019, you filed a motion for review of the court's order entering non-redeemable judgment. On March 2, 2020, the court denied your motion. On March 11, 2020, the plaintiff filed a motion to amend the complaint to reflect W.J.'s change of address. In May 2020, the court cancelled a scheduled

Serving the District of Columbia Court of Appeals and its Board on Professional Responsibility

515 5th Street NW, Building A, Room 117, Washington, DC 20001 ▪ 202-638-1501, FAX 202-638-0862

motion hearing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In January 2021, the court scheduled a hearing on February 25, 2021, and on January 8, 2021, the court mailed notice of the hearing to you, W.J., plaintiff, and his counsel. The notice was mailed to your correct address of record. Neither you nor W.J. appeared at the February 25, 2021 hearing, and the Court granted the Plaintiff's motion to amend the complaint. According to handwritten notes in your file, you were aware that a motion hearing was scheduled for February 25, 2021 at 2:00 PM, and you spoke to W.J. that day. You acknowledge that you did not attend the hearing being conducted by Zoom, and you did not file a motion to withdraw with the court before or after the February 25, 2021 hearing. You took no further action on the case, but you did not communicate to W.J. or the court that you no longer represented W.J.

On October 18, 2021, W.J. filed the following handwritten motions *pro se*: Application to Stay Execution of Writ of Restitution; Motion of Dismissal; Motion of Compel Evidence; and Praecipe to Change Address. That same day, the court mailed notice of a hearing scheduled for October 21, 2021, to you, W.J., and plaintiff's counsel. Plaintiff's counsel and W.J. appeared remotely for the hearing, but you did not. The court continued the morning hearing until later that day so that W.J. could speak to you. Court staff contacted you because you were counsel of record for W.J. and failed to appear at the hearing. You advised court staff that you were unaware of the October 21, 2021 hearing and had no recent contact with W.J. We credit your statement that you were not aware of the hearing, because the notice was mailed a couple days before the scheduled hearing. The court continued the hearing to allow W.J. to contact you or consult with legal counsel.

On January 6, 2022, W.J. appeared for a remote hearing and notified the court that she was in the process of obtaining legal representation and you were no longer representing her. The court issued an order giving W.J. extra time to seek new counsel. In its order, the court noted that you were counsel of record, and plaintiff's counsel noted that you had not withdrawn from representation at this point. The court notified you of the order.

Based on these facts, we find that you violated Rules 1.4(a), 1.16(d), and 8.4(d). Rule 1.4(a) requires that "[a] lawyer shall keep a client reasonably informed about the status of a matter and promptly comply with reasonable requests for information." You acknowledge that although you were the attorney of record, you did not communicate with W.J. that you would not attend the February 25, 2021 hearing, or that you no longer represented her. Your failure to keep your client reasonably informed violates Rule 1.4(a).

Rule 1.16(d) provides that "a lawyer shall take timely steps to the extent reasonably practicable to protect a client's interests, such as giving reasonable notice to the client, allowing time for employment of other counsel . . ." You failed to attend a court hearing you knew was scheduled on February 25, 2021, in W.J.'s case when you remained the attorney of record and before you had taken any steps to withdraw. Your failure to communicate to W.J. that you no longer represented her and your failure to withdraw from the case violates Rule 1.16(d).

Rule 8.4(d) states that it is professional misconduct for a lawyer to "engage in conduct that seriously interferes with the administration of justice." Comment [2] to Rule 8.4 provides examples of conduct prohibited under 8.4(d), including failing to appear in court for a scheduled

hearing. Notices of the February 25, 2021 and October 21, 2021 hearings were sent to your address of record and your handwritten notes confirm that you were aware of at least the February 25, 2021 hearing but chose to not attend. Your failure to appear in court for a scheduled hearing violates Rule 8.4(d).

In deciding to issue this letter of Informal Admonition rather than institute formal disciplinary charges against you, we have taken into consideration that you have cooperated with our investigation and that you have accepted responsibility for your misconduct by accepting this Informal Admonition. We also considered the aggravating factor that on April 10, 2002, you received an informal admonition for various rule violations, including Rule 1.16(d) (you filed a motion to withdraw from the court and sent a letter to client, but the court had not ruled on the motion) and Rule 8.4(d) (failure to attend a scheduled trial). As a condition of this Informal Admonition, you agree to take the Basic Training & Beyond two-day training offered by the D.C. Bar Practice Management Advisory Service. You will provide proof of completion of both days of training within one month after completion of the course. In the event you do not complete the CLE within one year, this Informal Admonition will be considered null and void and Disciplinary Counsel may initiate disciplinary proceedings against you.

If you would like to have a formal hearing, you must submit a written request for a hearing within 14 days of the date of this letter to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel, with a copy to the Board on Professional Responsibility, unless Disciplinary Counsel grants an extension of time. If a hearing is requested, this Informal Admonition will be vacated and Disciplinary Counsel will institute formal charges pursuant to D.C. Bar R. XI, §§ 8(b) and (c). The case will then be assigned to a Hearing Committee and a hearing will be scheduled by the Executive Attorney for the Board on Professional Responsibility pursuant to D.C. Bar R. XI, § 8(c). Such a hearing could result in a recommendation to dismiss the charges against you or a recommendation for a finding of culpability, in which case the sanction recommended by the Hearing Committee is not limited to an Informal Admonition.

Sincerely,

/s/ Hamilton P. Fox, III

Hamilton P. Fox, III
Disciplinary Counsel

Enclosure: Attachment letter to Informal Admonition

cc: W.J. (via email w/o Attachment)

HPF/AU/eaf