

STATE BOARD OF LAW EXAMINERS

2011-F COMMERCE PARK DRIVE

ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401

(410) 260-3640

MARYLAND-RELAY SERVICE (TT/VOICE) 1-800-735-2258

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To: All Maryland Bar Applicants
From: State Board of Law Examiners
Date: January 11, 2016
RE: Rule 11 - Mandatory Orientation Program

On January 1, 2016, a revised Bar Admission Rule 11 requiring a mandatory orientation program for applicants passing the bar exam took effect. (The revised Rule replaces the previous requirement that applicants passing the Bar exam attend a full day course on legal professionalism prior to being admitted to the Bar.) Instead, Rule 11 now requires:

- All applicants who pass the Maryland Bar Examination, beginning with the February 2016 administration, will be required to participate in an online orientation program (the “Rule 11 Orientation Program”), not to exceed three (3) hours in length, prior to taking the oath of admission.
 - The subject matter of the Rule 11 Orientation Program will include: (1) reporting requirements established by Rules of the Court, (2) obligations to the Client Protection Fund and the Disciplinary Fund established by Rule or statute, (3) Rules governing attorney trust accounts and the handling of client funds and papers, and (4) the Rules of Professional Conduct regarding competence, scope of representation, diligence, communications with clients, fees, confidentiality, conflicts of interest, declining representation, meritorious claims, candor toward tribunals, and law firms.
- Applicants who pass the Bar exam will be notified, by email only, of their obligation to participate in the Rule 11 Orientation Program and given information on how to access the Rule 11 Orientation Program online.
- The Rule 11 Orientation Program will be continuously available online for at least three (3) weeks beginning at 8:00am on the Monday after the release of Bar Exam results (the “post-results window”).
- Applicants who fail to complete the Rule 11 Orientation Program during the post-results window will be precluded from participating in the Court’s formal admissions ceremonies in June or December, unless their participation is excused by Order of the Court of Appeals.

(Text of Rule on next page)

Rule 11. REQUIRED ORIENTATION PROGRAM

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(b) Contents of Program - The program shall include information regarding (1) reporting requirements established by Rules of the Court, (2) obligations to the Client Protection Fund and the Disciplinary Fund established by Rule or statute, (3) Rules governing attorney trust accounts and the handling of client funds and papers, and (4) the Rules of Professional Conduct regarding competence, scope of representation, diligence, communications with clients, fees, confidentiality, conflicts of interest, declining representation, meritorious claims, candor toward tribunals, and law firms.

(c) Timing - The program shall be given at the times and for the periods directed by the Court.

(d) Duration; Materials; Participation from Remote Location - The program shall not exceed three hours in duration. It may include the provision of written materials distributed in a manner determined by the Court but, to the extent practicable, it shall be given in electronic form, so that a candidate may participate from a remote location, subject to appropriate verification of the candidate's actual participation.

(e) Participation Requirement - Commencing June 1, 2016, a candidate may not be admitted to the Bar unless (1) prior to admission, the candidate has produced evidence satisfactory to the Board that the candidate satisfactorily participated in the program, or (2) the candidate has been excused from that requirement by Order of the Court of Appeals.

Committee note: The purpose of the orientation program is to assure that newly admitted attorneys are familiar with core requirements for practicing law in Maryland, the violation of which may result in their authority to practice law being suspended or revoked. The program is not intended to take the place of broader programs on professionalism offered by law schools, bar associations, and other entities, in which the Court of Appeals strongly encourages all attorneys to participate.

Source: This Rule is new.