

IDENTIFYING THE INDICIA OF PROFESSIONALISM:
“CHARACTER COUNTS” SUBCOMMITTEE

Introduction

This report seeks to identify the indicia of professionalism in the legal field. The authors first examined how the Maryland State Bar Association’s Code of Civility articulates what it means to act in a professional manner. Then they looked to the codes of professionalism and civility adopted by four Maryland counties. These pages summarize those codes and identify those elements of professionalism that appear in several or all of them. Finally, codes of professionalism and civility from a sampling of 10 other states, chosen more or less at random, were located and analyzed. These state codes are also summarized, and any similarities with the Maryland codes are noted. The state codes will help the “Character Counts” subcommittee identify what professionalism means for lawyers and judges in this State.

CODES OF PROFESSIONALISM/CIVILITY
FROM MARYLAND

Maryland State Bar Association: Code of Civility

The 1997 Maryland Code of Civility breaks the outlined duties into two parts—those of lawyers and those of judges. The first three canons call on lawyers to treat other lawyers with respect and to act with courtesy despite any prejudices they may have against another lawyer’s race, gender, or practice area. Lawyers are to encourage clients to follow the lead of their attorneys and to refrain from inappropriate conduct. The fourth canon focuses on false accusations and refraining from attributing bad motives to

opposing counsel without good cause. Canons six through nine remind attorneys and their clients that litigation is supposed to take place in a timely and ethical way and that the decorum of the courtroom is not to be disturbed by the conduct of either party. The Code emphasizes that time is a valuable commodity for everyone involved in the legal profession and should be treated as such. Finally, *ex parte* communications on pending matters are to be avoided in both professional and social circles.

In connection with the judiciary, the Maryland code places greater emphasis on judges' showing respect for those who come before them than for their colleagues on the bench. The first two canons require judges to be respectful of and courteous to the people who come before them and not discourage the use of demeaning words or otherwise attempt to humiliate attorneys or their clients. Canons three through nine focus on respecting the time of attorneys and clients and emphasize the importance of being punctual and being considerate of others when scheduling. Finally, judges are to respect each other and to strive to accommodate all parties involved.

**Baltimore City Young Lawyers' Section of the Bar Association:
Lawyers' Code of Professionalism**

The Young Lawyers' Section of the Baltimore City Bar Association Code of Professionalism (amended in April 1989) states that as advocates of the court, attorneys are required to follow the Rules of Professional Conduct and Ethics. But it calls on them to uphold a higher standard in order to preserve the honor of their profession. The first section, titled "The General Principles of Professionalism," outlines what behavior is expected of an attorney when dealing with other professionals or advocating for a client. It reminds attorneys to observe basic human courtesies and to ensure that their word can

