



FOR IMMEDIATE
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INDIANA SUPREME COURT ADOPTS 2009 JUDICIAL CODE OF CONDUCT. AN EXPECTATION FOR JUDGES TO SERVE AS FAIR AND IMPARTIAL OFFICERS REMAINS THE STANDARD.

The Indiana Supreme Court is adopting a new Code of Judicial Conduct. Indiana is the second state to adopt new judicial ethics rules based on the new national model of the American Bar Association.

The 2009 Code emphasizes the “three i’s” of judicial conduct - independence, integrity, and impartiality. It continues to hold judges to strict standards of conduct in all activities. Chief Justice Randall T. Shepard, Professor Charles G. Geyh of Indiana University School of Law, and Judge Marianne Vorhees of Muncie will review the Code with judges across the state.

- The new Code specifies that judges may take measures to assist unrepresented litigants in gaining a fair hearing (Canon 2.2) and encourages judges to promote pro bono work by lawyers (Canon 3.7).
- The Code highlights the role of judges in promoting ethics and professionalism among lawyers and other judges (Canon 1.2).
- The Code provides more concrete guidance for avoiding “the appearance of impropriety,” a rule long criticized for its vagueness (Canon 1).
- The Code imposes clear requirements for public disclosure of income, reimbursements, and gifts (Canon 3).
- The Code includes ethical principles intended as guidance for judicial candidates (Canon 4).
- The Code encourages judges to reach out to the public to promote understanding of the judicial system (Canon 2.8).

These rules and many others serve as the behavior requirement for the men and women interpreting and applying the law that governs our society. The Code sets out clear expectations for judicial conduct. If the rules are violated, a judge is subject to discipline by the Indiana Supreme Court.

The 2009 Judicial Code of Conduct was submitted to the Supreme Court by a committee of the Judicial Conference of Indiana chaired by Judge Vorhees. The draft was reviewed by judges, lawyers, and the public. The committee’s work is based on the 2007 American Bar Association Model Code of Judicial Conduct. Professor Geyh and Professor Emeritus W. William Hodes, I.U. School of Law - Indianapolis., were the official Reporters of the ABA’s commission, in whose work Chief Justice Shepard participated. The new Code can be found at courts.IN.gov/rules/jud_conduct/jud_conduct09.pdf. It is effective January 1, 2009.

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