

# Honesty, Integrity, & Trustworthiness

A message from the MSBA Student & Professionalism Committees

There are five core values in the legal profession: 1) Respect & Fairness; 2) Service; 3) Honesty, Integrity, and Trustworthiness; 4) Competent, Prompt, and Diligent Representation; and 5) Quality of Justice. This piece addresses Honesty, Integrity, and Trustworthiness.

Attorneys are officers of the court appointed to assist the court in the administration of justice. Property, liberty and sometimes the lives of our clients are committed into our hands. This commitment demands a high degree of intelligence, knowledge of the law, respect for its function in society, sound and faithful judgment and, above all else, integrity of character in conduct.

## Core Values: Honesty, Integrity, & Trustworthiness

**Rule 8.4** of the **Minnesota Rules of Professional Conduct** states in part that:

It is professional misconduct for a lawyer to:

- (b) commit a criminal act that reflects adversely on the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as a lawyer in other respects;
- (c) engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation;
- (d) engage in conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice;
- (g) harass a person on the basis of sex, race, age, creed, religion, color, national origin, disability, sexual preference or marital status in connection with a lawyer's professional activities; or
- (h) commit a discriminatory act, prohibited by federal, state or local statute or ordinance, that reflects adversely on the lawyer's fitness as a lawyer. . .

Prefer a loss to a dishonest gain; the one brings pain at the moment, the other for all time. - **Chilon**

## Resources

For additional resources on honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness in the legal professional, refer to:

- Ø Association of Professional Responsibility Lawyers, <http://www.aprl.net>
- Ø Legalethics.com, <http://www.legalethics.com>
- Ø ABA Center for Professional Responsibility, <http://www.abanet.org/cpr/home.html>
- Ø The Trusted Advisor by David H. Maister, Charles H. Green, Robert M. Galford

## What does this mean for me?

Maintaining these values means that you:

- **Meet commitments and deadlines.** Allow enough time to get assignments and other commitments completed on time.
- **Live up to the aspirations of the legal profession.** Your behaviors should always measure up to the aspirations of the profession. Professional misconduct jeopardizes our ability to be self-regulating.
- **Make your word your bond.** Every day you are building the reputation that will stay with you throughout your career. Do what you say you are going to do.
- **Protect Confidences.** Recognize the conversations that you should not share with others. A casual social story may be a serious breach of confidence. If you are acting as a student lawyer, realize you have both an ethical and legal obligation to protect your client's confidences. Remind your peers when you hear disclosures that you think should be confidential.
- **Candidly complete your applications.** You place yourself in serious risk if you fail to be forthright and candid in your applications for employment and to the Bar.