



ANNUAL REPORT

September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2023

**Office of the Ombudsman for the
Attorney Discipline System of the State Bar of Texas**

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Presented to the Supreme Court of Texas on October 17, 2023

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CREATION OF THE OFFICE, STATUTORY MANDATES, AND PUBLIC ACCESS

The Office of the Ombudsman for the Attorney Discipline System of the State Bar of Texas (Ombudsman) was created during the Sunset Review process for the 85th Legislature.¹ As the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission explained, the Ombudsman position was recommended along with other changes “to help improve efficiency and responsiveness for attorneys and the public, and help the Office of the Chief Disciplinary Counsel better do its job to monitor and take action against unethical attorneys.”² This was echoed by the Chief Disciplinary Counsel, who noted that “[a]lthough the Office of the Chief Disciplinary Counsel [was already] subject to oversight and accountability, the [Texas] Legislature established the position of ombudsman for the attorney discipline system as an additional measure.”³ The Texas Legislature codified the recommendation during the 85th Legislative Session, it went into effect on June 1, 2018, with the Texas Supreme Court’s adoption of amendments, and the current Ombudsman started on July 14, 2018.⁴ The statute makes it clear that the Ombudsman is:

- A source of information for the public – The Ombudsman is tasked with answering questions from the public on the grievance system’s operations, accessing the system, the filing of grievances, and the availability of other State Bar of Texas (State Bar) programs.⁵
- A monitor of the attorney discipline system – The Ombudsman is responsible for receiving complaints about the system and investigating complaints to make sure the proper procedures were followed by the State Bar.⁶ Also, the Ombudsman makes recommendations to the Supreme Court of Texas and the State Bar Board of Directors for improvements to the attorney discipline system.⁷
- Independent – The Ombudsman reports directly to the Supreme Court of Texas and is independent of the State Bar Board of Directors, the Commission for Lawyer Discipline, the Chief Disciplinary Counsel, and the Board of Disciplinary Appeals.⁸ The independence allows the Ombudsman to impartially evaluate any complaints from the public about the grievance system and provide reports to the Supreme Court of Texas as an outside party.
- Confidential – The Ombudsman cannot disclose any information, proceedings, hearing transcripts, or statements she receives, including documents from various State Bar departments, to any person other than the Chief Disciplinary Counsel.⁹

The Texas Legislature also made it clear in the statute that there are certain actions the Ombudsman cannot take regarding the attorney discipline system.

Namely, the Ombudsman is prohibited from:

- (1) “draft[ing] a complaint for a member of the public;

¹ See Staff Report with Final Results, Tex. Sunset Advisory Comm’n (Jun. 2017). A copy of the Staff Report with Final Results, redacted for relevancy, is included as Exhibit 1 to the Appendix.

² *Id.* at A7.

³ Linda A. Acevedo, *Texas Attorney Discipline System Update*, 81 Tex. B. J. 444, 445 (2018).

⁴ *See id.*

⁵ Tex. Gov’t Code § 81.0883(a). A copy of Tex. Gov’t Code §§ 81.0881 – 81.0885 is included as Exhibit 2 to the Appendix.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.* at § 81.0883(a)(6).

⁸ *Id.* at § 81.0882(b).

⁹ *Id.* at § 81.0885(a).

- (2) act[ing] as an advocate for a member of the public;
- (3) revers[ing] or modify[ing] a finding or judgment in any disciplinary proceeding; or
- (4) intervene[ing] in any disciplinary matter.”¹⁰

Despite these statutory restrictions, the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission, the Texas Legislature, and those involved in the attorney disciplinary process trusted the Ombudsman to “provide an additional means to receive information and support regarding the attorney discipline system and an independent avenue to verify compliance with the grievance process.”¹¹ Ultimately, the Ombudsman was created to “foster further confidence in the attorney discipline system.”¹²

Based on the statutory mandates explained above and the overarching goals of increasing transparency, independence, and access within the attorney disciplinary system, the Ombudsman built a program focused on public customer service. Other than the enabling statute, the main source of public information about the Ombudsman’s office is its website, which explains the role of the Ombudsman, details what the Ombudsman can and cannot do for the public, lists contact methods, and gives useful links to resources within the State Bar and other disciplinary entities.¹³ Since the Ombudsman is an employee of the Supreme Court of Texas, the website was placed under the Bar & Education section of the Texas Judicial Branch’s webpage, with additional links placed on the State Bar’s and Supreme Court of Texas’ websites, including the Supreme Court of Texas’ FAQs page and the State Bar’s Contact Us, Grievance and Ethics Information, and File a Grievance pages.

NOTABLE UPDATES FROM THE 2022-2023 REPORTING PERIOD

Aside from yet another winter storm, there were no major changes or events affecting the Ombudsman’s office this year. Once again, the Ombudsman met with various other departments within the State Bar as well as outside entities to explain the purpose and duties of the Ombudsman’s office and determine how to work with these other groups to better serve its mission. Such groups included the regional managers for the Chief Disciplinary Counsel’s office, the Commission for Lawyer Discipline, the Grievance Oversight Committee, the State Bar of California, and the State Bar of South Dakota. As detailed in the statute that created the office, the Ombudsman also attended a State Bar Board of Directors meeting on January 27, 2023, where she presented her report for the 2021-2022 year and took questions and comments from the attendees.

PUBLIC INQUIRIES – CONTENT AND RESPONSES

Inquiry Content

The Ombudsman received 799 inquiries from September 1, 2022, to August 31, 2023. This volume is generally consistent with the last reporting period, representing a 4% increase. This levelling off after the initial precipitous growth in inquiries could indicate that knowledge of the office has reached a saturation point and denote the typical number of inquiries that can be expected in a normal year. The Ombudsman will continue to evaluate and report on this in future reporting periods. In the meantime, the office maintained the high level of efficiency needed to continue accommodating the high level of inquiries.

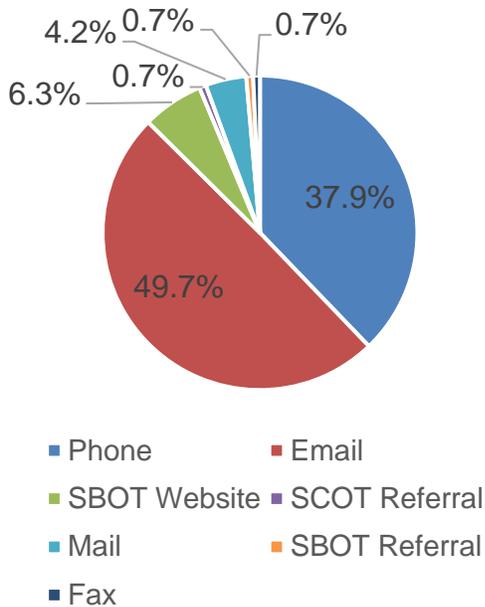
¹⁰ *Id.* at § 81.0883(b).

¹¹ Acevedo, *supra* note 3, at 445.

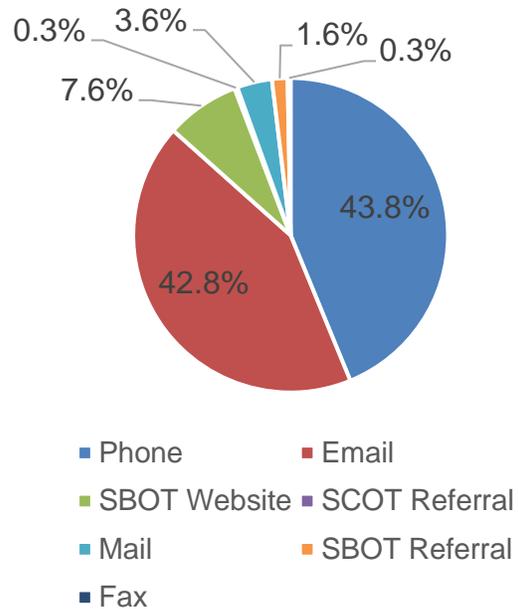
¹² *Id.*

¹³ A copy of the Ombudsman’s current website is included as Exhibit 3 to the Appendix.

Inquiry Contact Method (2021-2022)



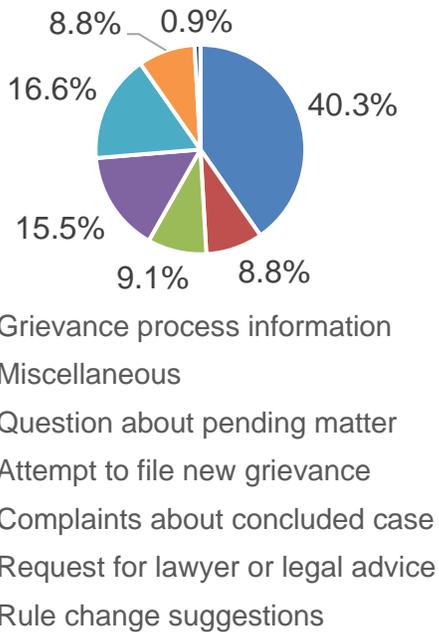
Inquiry Contact Method (2022-2023)



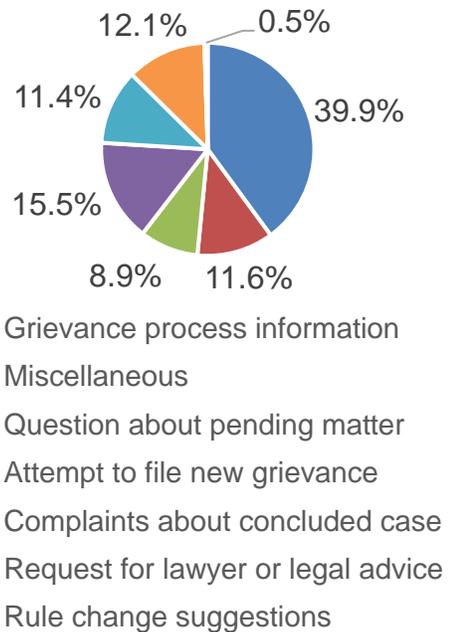
As shown above, people contacted the Ombudsman by phone, email, the State Bar website, referrals from the Supreme Court of Texas and the State Bar, mail, and facsimile. Notably, the percentage of inquirers contacting the Ombudsman via phone increased by 5.9%, and email contacts decreased by 6.9%. This continues the trend away from electronic communication that was first seen during the last reporting period. As noted last year, this could be a further reversion to pre-COVID-19 levels, when the preference was contact via phone. While this does not greatly affect the office’s operations, it could mean that the Ombudsman must spend more time on each individual inquiry because phone calls take more time than emails often do, with some calls lasting over an hour. Additionally, it can sometimes take several tries to get an individual on the phone, which expends resources and can extend the time a file is open. To give people who have called the option to reach out electronically, the Ombudsman will continue to provide her email address on the office’s outgoing voicemail message to encourage email communication in addition to or instead of phone calls.

Although they continue to be a small number of inquiries at a combined 1.9% of total contacts, the referrals from the State Bar and the Supreme Court of Texas have proven to be vital outlets for the distribution of work among those in the attorney discipline system. Additionally, this puts inquirers in touch with an independent office specifically designed to handle their complaints or questions, which can lead to continuity and more inquirer satisfaction. The hope is that the Ombudsman will continue to be a helpful outlet for others in the grievance process in the future.

Inquiry Type (2021-2022)



Inquiry Type (2022-2023)



As is shown in the charts above, most people still contacted the Ombudsman to obtain more information about the attorney discipline system. Typically, a person in this category is having an issue or disagreement with an attorney, and they get in touch with the Ombudsman to hear what their options are. However, there were also several instances of researchers or academics that contacted the office to get a more general sense of the position and how it fits into the overall grievance process that are included in this 40% of inquiries. The percentage of individuals who contacted the office for information, along with those who had questions about a pending matter, those offering rule change suggestions, and those attempting to file a new grievance, remained stable and did not deviate more than 0.4% from last year's numbers.

On the other hand, the percentage of individuals who contacted the Ombudsman's office to request an attorney or ask for legal advice increased by 3.3% during this reporting period. This category includes both members of the public seeking legal advice as well as attorneys contacting the office to ask whether a particular situation is ethical or would be sanctionable. Similarly, the miscellaneous category also saw a moderate increase this past year and was up by 2.8%. These inquiries constitute a wide variety of issues, all of which are outside the scope of the Ombudsman's expertise or purview. For example, some are people wanting an Ombudsman's help with a complaint against a judge or another government official, while many are individuals wanting more information on a specific attorney's membership status with the State Bar. While often easy to handle, neither of these categories represent a core function of the Ombudsman's office. As such, it is hoped that an increased visibility of the office and education of the public on what the Ombudsman can and cannot do will help to reduce these inquiries in the future.

One category that actually decreased was contacts complaining about a concluded case, which dropped by 5%. This represents a significant shift in this category, which saw a 4% increase during the last reporting

period. Hopefully this decrease indicates that individuals who go through the grievance process are more satisfied with the outcome or have fewer complaints about the process. Whatever the cause, this is helpful because these inquiries typically require the most time to review and respond to. In this category, individuals have already gone through the grievance process, and usually their grievance has been dismissed and their opportunity to appeal has passed. To fully discharge the Ombudsman's duty in these matters, the office must request and review the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's files on the specific grievance to ensure that proper procedures were followed. This often also mandates taking suggestions and complaints about the attorney discipline system from the inquirer. Therefore, while the number of inquirers who contact the Ombudsman with the main purpose of suggesting changes to the disciplinary system is a miniscule 0.5%, the overall number of recommendations received from the public is significantly greater.

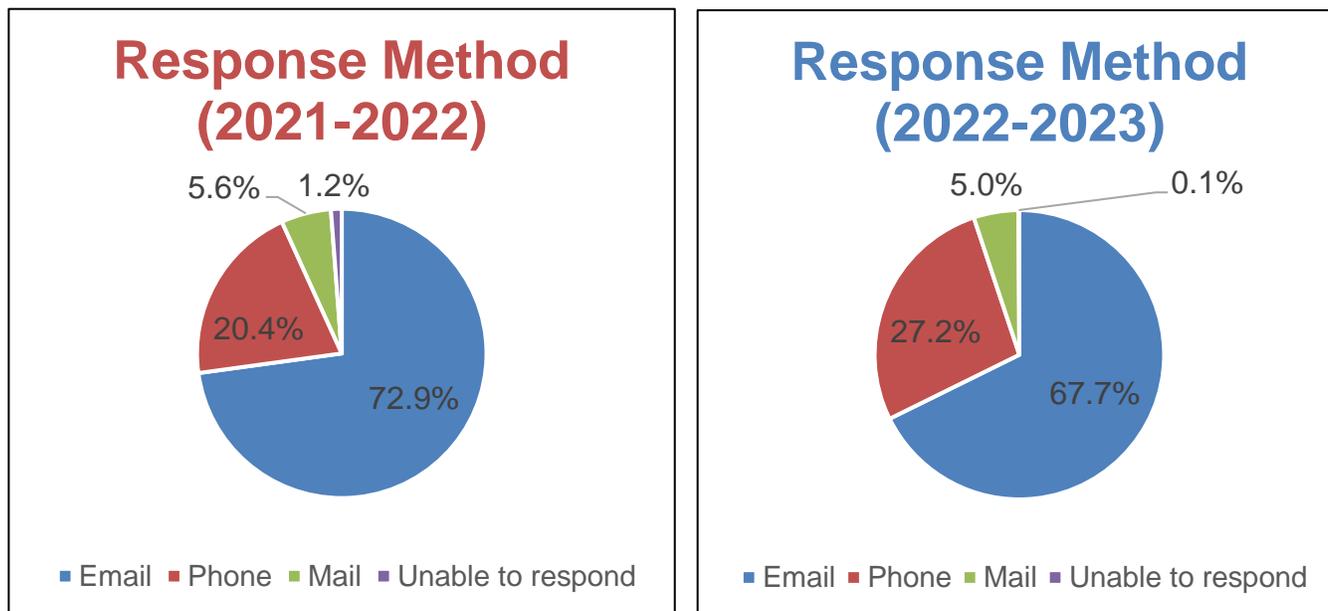
Beyond the statistics collected and provided above, the Ombudsman also compiled information about: (1) the types of cases inquirers were contacting the Ombudsman about; (2) the relationship of the respondent-attorney to the inquirer; and (3) the alleged attorney behavior that is the subject of the inquiry. While it was impossible to gather this information for every inquiry, the data yields some insight into the case types that are likely to result in grievances. Criminal cases continued to be the most common case type mentioned, making up 41% of those who mentioned case type. However, the precipitous growth seen in this category last year significantly slowed, increasing only 4.7% during this reporting period versus last year's 16%. On the other hand, the percentage of inquirers who mentioned personal injury or family law cases decreased, by 6% and 5.2% respectively. The statistics indicating the relationship of the respondent to the inquirer remained stable this reporting period, with most inquirers who identified the target of their complaint mentioning their own attorney (50%), followed by opposing counsel (20%) and an attorney of a relative or friend (17%). This reporting period, the attorney behavior brought up the most by inquirers continued to be non-responsiveness, with 36% mentioning this issue. As this problem endures, programs such as the Client Attorney Assistance Program and the Grievance Referral Program, which help resolve communication issues between attorneys and their clients, become increasingly important. Notably, this reporting period saw a 4.5% increase in the number of inquirers who mentioned unprofessional behavior unrelated to the law and a 6% increase in those claiming ineffective assistance of counsel or malpractice.

Finally, as was also true last year, most inquirers were members of the public or current or potential complainants. After noticing this previously, the Ombudsman took particular note of when an inquirer identified themselves as an attorney. This reporting period saw a slight increase of 0.6% in the percentage of attorney inquirers. Although not a significant increase, the hope is that the office's interaction with other groups that include attorneys along with the continued presentation of these annual reports at the State Bar's board of directors' meeting will increase its visibility within the attorney community and encourage them to use the Ombudsman as a resource. These inquiries occurred for a wide variety of reasons, including attorneys wanting to know whether particular actions constitute misconduct, people asking for certified copies of their disciplinary history, and even instances of attorneys acting as a complainant or respondent in a pending or completed grievance. As with members of the public, most attorneys that contacted the office did not do so to provide suggestions for improvement to the disciplinary system, but the office did receive a few complaints and recommendations. In the future, the Ombudsman hopes more attorneys will contact the office to offer their insights into the attorney discipline system, particularly since they hold a unique position in the grievance ecosystem.

[Response Content](#)

Although each inquiry requires some customization, the Ombudsman has developed a standard response to inquirers who request general information about the attorney discipline system. The response includes

information about the Client Attorney Assistance Program and how to file a grievance through the Office of the Chief Disciplinary Counsel. With both programs, the letter or email provides background details, contact information, brochures, and forms needed to enroll in the program or file a grievance.¹⁴



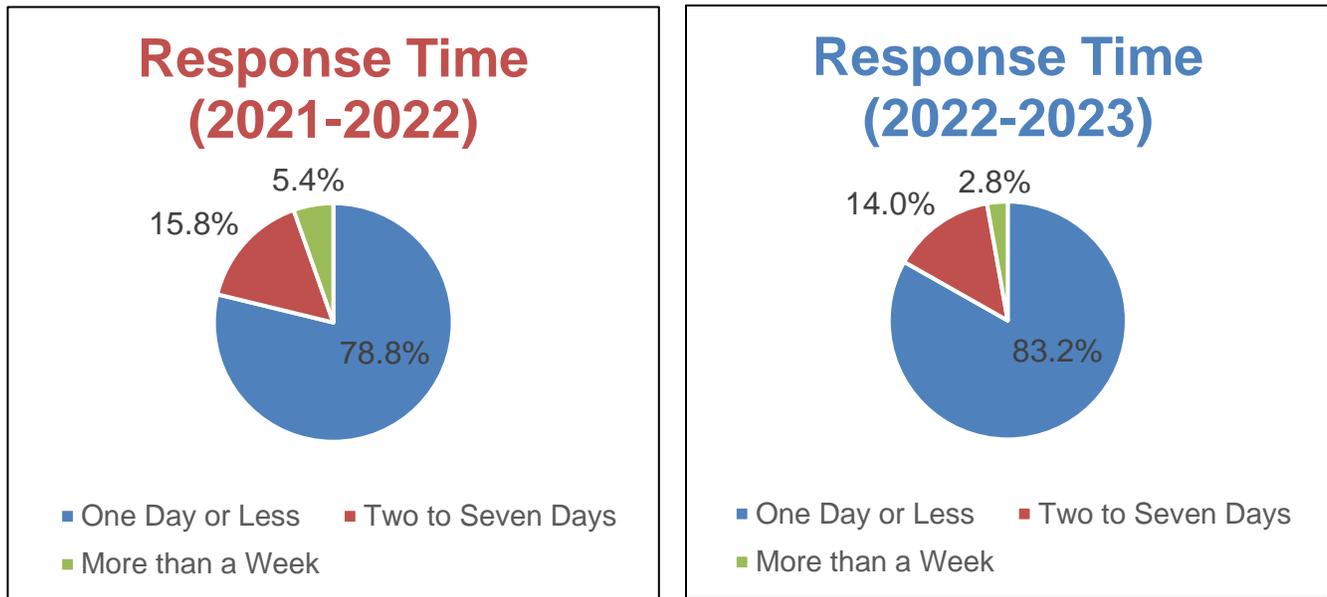
For some responses, it was also necessary to include information on other programs or agencies. For example, when someone wishes to file a complaint against a judge, the response would include information on how to contact the State Commission on Judicial Conduct. On the other hand, when a person is having trouble with his or her attorney and would like assistance in finding a new one, the response directs them to resources like the Lawyer Referral and Information Service or other resources matching the particular legal needs. Similarly, if an inquirer is solely concerned with the amount of fees charged by an attorney, the response will include a link to information about local bar associations’ fee dispute committees. In the event the Ombudsman receives an inquiry from a Supreme Court of Texas or State Bar referral, the first step is always to send an acknowledgement letter to the inquirer. In that letter, the Ombudsman explains how she received the communication, why it was forwarded to her, and the role she plays in the disciplinary system.¹⁵ This standard response lets the inquirer know that their communication was received, provides context and contact information for the Ombudsman, and in the event follow-up is required, assures them that someone is looking into the issues.

While inquirers may contact the Ombudsman through a wide variety of methods, the responses have all been by email, phone, or mail, as seen in the chart above. In an effort to provide a document that can be referenced at any time, the Ombudsman will often send an email including relevant information even after explaining the applicable resources and programs over the phone. Although this often creates extra work for the Ombudsman, it reduces the likelihood that an individual will be a repeat player and should increase inquirer satisfaction. As such, the most common response method continued to be email at 67.7%. Similarly, some of the responses categorized as mail were initially discussed over the phone. The response trend follows what was seen in contact methods (discussed above) with email responses decreasing by 5.2% and phone responses increasing by 6.8%. Like last year, the Ombudsman was unable to respond to a small

¹⁴ A redacted example of a typical response to such an inquiry is included as Exhibit 4 to the Appendix.

¹⁵ A redacted example of an acknowledgement letter is included as Exhibit 5 to the Appendix.

number of inquiries. Per the chart above, this constituted only 1% of all responses and often occurred because the individual left no return contact information.



The Ombudsman makes every effort to respond to each inquiry as fully and efficiently as possible. This year, the average time to close an inquiry was 1 day. This is a 33% improvement from the 1.5-day response time achieved last year and is the quickest turnaround average ever for the office. As demonstrated in the chart above, 83.2% of all inquiries were responded to and closed within a day and 97.2% of all inquiries were handled within a week, both of which improved from the 2021-2022 reporting period. That these improvements were made despite an increase in volume indicates that the office is meeting its goal of increasing efficiency. This productivity improvement likely results from the expertise and specialized knowledge the Ombudsman has developed through the job over time. It is worth noting that the times referenced in this chart include weekends and holidays, which necessarily increase the response time.

COMMON COMPLAINTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Transparency Concerns

As in previous reporting periods, the Ombudsman received the most complaints about the alleged lack of transparency of the grievance process. Many inquirers continued to complain that the discipline system is confusing and noted that it was difficult to get information from the Chief Disciplinary Counsel’s office. Specifically, both complainants and respondents noted that they wished that they received updates more often from the investigators handling their grievances and decried the lack of transparency about the purpose of and procedures for hearings before the grievance panels. While it is not surprising that these comments persist, as they are likely common to every governmental process with bureaucracy, it would be heartening to see their volume decrease because of improvements in this area.

One new or increased refrain this reporting period was inquirers’ desire for more information on the documents reviewed or submitted during the grievance process. This complaint persisted throughout the various stages of the matter. For example, the Ombudsman fielded several comments that it was difficult for complainants to get confirmation from the Chief Disciplinary Counsel’s office that all the documents they submitted were received, whether during the initial filing or after the matter was upgraded for

investigation. Likewise, at least one person complained that it was frustrating trying to determine whether they were missing any documents submitted by the respondent in opposition to their grievance. These complaints were not limited to the initial filing or investigation. Many inquirers were concerned that the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office did not present all the documents they submitted to panels for consideration during a hearing. In many cases, the inquirers suggested that the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office provide them with a list of the documents received, considered, and provided to panel members at a hearing, or at least confirm in writing that all documents sent to the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office by both parties were considered. This request goes hand in hand with the enduring complaint that dismissal letters lack explanations and do not cite specific facts or evidence.¹⁶ Inquirers have noted that if the letters included more information about documents reviewed and specific rules considered, they would have more faith that their grievances were fully contemplated.¹⁷

Complaints Related to Bias

Beyond transparency-related complaints, inquirers also frequently alleged that the grievance process, Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office, and entire State Bar are biased in favor of attorneys. Of course, these comments are unsurprising in a self-regulatory context. However, they are still being received. Complainants continued to report feeling that the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office gave more leeway to attorneys than complainants by providing attorneys with more information about the status of the matter and giving them extensions to provide responses and documents. At least one complainant suggested that a different investigator should have processed subsequent filings to ensure fairness. Beyond the general complaint of bias against all complainants, at least one inquirer claimed that the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office is specifically biased against incarcerated individuals. He believes that they are less likely to receive prompt help from the office and their grievances are more likely to be dismissed than non-inmates. On the other hand, the Ombudsman was contacted by an attorney who represents attorney respondents, who claimed he had noticed a distinct bias against solo practitioners. He asserted that the factors the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office uses to distinguish a grievance from a simple fee dispute are unclear, which puts solo practitioners at a disadvantage. While the Ombudsman does not often hear from attorneys about this topic, their unique perspective is very welcome.

Other Complaints

Beyond complaints pertaining to transparency and bias, the Ombudsman's office received recommendations concerning various other disciplinary policies and procedures.

One complaint that was seen with more frequency was that complainants had difficulty using the online submission system to submit grievances. Several complainants noted that the system was challenging to use, did not provide complainants with confirmation of submission, and if it crashed, they were forced to start the entire process again. New to this reporting period, the Ombudsman also received several complaints about the Discretionary Referral Program, used to refer certain grievances to the Client Attorney Assistance

¹⁶ A dismissal in the attorney discipline context means one of two things. If it was dismissed as an inquiry at the classification stage, it indicates "that the grievance alleges conduct that, even if true, does not constitute professional misconduct or disability cognizable under the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct." Tex. Gov't Code, *supra* note 5 at § 81.073(a)(2). If it was dismissed after it was classified as a complaint, it means that the body making the determination has found that "there is no just cause" *See id.* at § 81.075(b)(1).

¹⁷ Redacted examples of a typical dismissal letter sent to a complainant by the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office when a grievance is classified as an inquiry, a typical letter affirming dismissal sent by the Board of Disciplinary Appeals, a typical letter sent to a complainant after a Summary Disposition Panel finds there is no just cause, and a typical letter sent to a complainant after an investigatory hearing conducted by a District Grievance Committee finds that there is not enough evidence to continue are included as Exhibits 6, 7, 8, and 9, respectively, to the Appendix.

Program. Some of the complainants whose grievances were referred using this program were upset that they were not consulted before the referral occurred. Specifically, they noted that they did not consent to having the Client Attorney Assistance Program resolve their complaints and felt that the referral took away the choice they made not to contact the Client Attorney Assistance Program in the first place. The complainants also noted that the Client Attorney Assistance Program reaches out to the respondent and encourages them to contact the complainant directly, which may be against the complainant's wishes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office and State Bar process and investigate thousands of grievances per year and have used their collective experience to create an efficient and effective system to do so. However, any process including this one can be improved. Below are recommendations for systemic improvements based on the comments and criticisms heard during this reporting period.¹⁸

Recommendation 1: Ensure Grievance Participants are Properly Notified of Recent Procedural Changes

During the last legislative session, two bills were passed that suggested changes to the Texas Rules of Disciplinary Procedure.¹⁹ Most notably, the proposed rule changes²⁰ provide a list of individuals who can submit grievances²¹ and allow respondents whose grievances have been upgraded for investigation to appeal the classification decision to the Board of Disciplinary Appeals before being required to provide a response.²² These changes will undoubtedly impact the grievance process going forward, and it is important that both complainants and respondents are notified of them. In response to these new rules, the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office has already created a new grievance form, which asks questions about the complainants connection to the respondent,²³ and has placed an eye-catching warning at the top of the "File a Grievance" webpage that warns complainants that they are required to use the new grievance form and fill it out in its entirety or it will be rejected.²⁴ The Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office is also planning changes to the letters that they send when a matter is upgraded for investigation. The Ombudsman's first suggestion for improvement is a general request that the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office implement any changes necessary to notify complainants and respondents of these changes to the discipline procedure. This should include reviewing published materials on the grievance process, such as explanatory videos,

¹⁸ Note that this report makes different recommendations from those offered in the previous 3 reports, which were (1) enable communication and filing of grievances through email; (2) send acknowledgement communication to confirm receipt of grievances; (3) provide regular status updates to complainants during the investigation phase; (4) provide a more detailed explanation to complainants upon dismissal of grievances; (5) continue to allow communication via email; (6) provide more information about the process in the grievance form; (7) provide complainants and respondents with a way to indicate their preferred contact method; (8) provide complainants and respondents with more information about upcoming hearings; (9) for grievances upgraded for investigation, designate a point person to respond to questions from complainants and respondents; and (10) emphasize the role of complainants as witnesses at the beginning of the grievance process. That does not mean that those recommendations are no longer valid but rather is simply reflective of the Ombudsman's office's desire to offer new proposals or different insights into the grievance process.

¹⁹ See Sup. Ct. of Tex., *Preliminary Approval of Amendments to Texas Rules of Disciplinary Procedure 1.06, 2.10, 2.17, 7.08 and 7.11*, Docket No. 23-90677 (Aug. 25, 2023). A copy of this order is included as Exhibit 10 to the Appendix.

²⁰ Note that while the Supreme Court of Texas has ordered preliminary approval of these amendments, they may later be changed in response to public comment, which is open until December 1, 2023. Thus, while the amendments are currently in effect, they could change.

²¹ Tex. R. Disciplinary P. 1.06(G)(2), *reprinted in* Tex. Gov't Code Ann., tit 2, subtit. G app. A-1 (Vernon Sup. 1997).

²² *Id.* at 2.10(B).

²³ A copy of the new grievance form, which must be used for grievances filed after September 1, 2023, is included as Exhibit 11 to the Appendix.

²⁴ The warning is in a bright yellow box titled "WHAT'S NEW IN THE ATTORNEY GRIEVANCE PROCESS" and should be sufficiently visible to those visiting the page.

brochures, and webpages, to ensure that they reflect the new rules. Additionally, any staff that interacts with the public should understand the rules and how they could affect the process as a whole. For example, complainants asking about the timeline of the grievance process should know that if a respondent appeals a classification decision, it could add a month or more to the overall period. Similarly, the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office should ensure that complainants and respondents are aware of the new ability to appeal and kept informed if an appeal is requested. Likewise, the Ombudsman will have to stay abreast of the changes to properly answer the public's questions.

Recommendation 2: Provide Instructions to Lookup an Attorney's Profile on the Grievance Form

Inquirers sometimes contact the Ombudsman complaining that their grievance was rejected because they did not provide enough information about the respondent for it to be processed. In these instances, they might have given a common attorney name, not provided enough identifying information, or given a name that does not appear in the list of attorneys licensed in Texas. When this happens, the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office returns the grievance with a letter that notes it did not provide enough information. This can be frustrating for complainants who do not necessarily understand what additional information needs to be provided for it to be accepted. To avoid this scenario, the Ombudsman suggests that a link or similar directive to the "Find a Lawyer" search function on the State Bar's website be provided on the grievance form itself along with a note that complainants can confirm that the individual is in fact a Texas-licensed attorney and get the other information requested on the form by using this search. This will be particularly important given the new mandate that grievance forms that are not completely filled out will be automatically rejected and returned. Additionally, giving complainants more help and information up front should reduce the number of people contacting the Chief Disciplinary Counsel's office and Ombudsman with questions afterwards.

CONCLUSION

In a reporting period that saw a slight increase in the volume of inquiries and continued the trend towards oral communication, the Ombudsman focused on advancing customer service and response times. While the Ombudsman found the attorney discipline system and programs that support it to be professionally and skillfully run, improvements can always be made to better serve the public and further its mission of overseeing the legal profession in Texas. The Ombudsman anticipates that the operation of its office can similarly make future improvements and strives to operate more efficiently and more effectively to assist the public and demystify the attorney discipline system.