

NORTH CAROLINA
WAKE COUNTY

BEFORE
THE GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE
OF
THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR
23G1196

IN THE MATTER OF)
)
SHARON A. KEYES,) REPRIMAND
ATTORNEY AT LAW)

On April 24, 2025, the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar met and considered the grievance filed against you by J.S. The grievance was assigned to a Subcommittee, which thoroughly reviewed the results of the State Bar staff’s investigation of this matter.

Pursuant to 27 N.C. Admin. Code 1B.0113(a), the Grievance Subcommittee conducted a preliminary hearing. After considering the information available to it, including your response to the letter of notice, the Grievance Subcommittee found probable cause. Probable cause is defined in the rules as “reasonable cause to believe that a member of the North Carolina State Bar is guilty of misconduct justifying disciplinary action.”

Having found probable cause exists in your matter, the Grievance Committee next considered what level of discipline is most appropriate in your matter based upon all the facts, the nature of the misconduct, the actual or potential injury caused, and any aggravating or mitigating factors. After further discussion and deliberation, the Grievance Committee determined the conduct before it merited discipline at the level of reprimand.

A reprimand is a written form of discipline issued where an attorney is determined to have violated one or more provisions of the Rules of Professional Conduct and has caused harm or potential harm to a client, the administration of justice, the profession, or a member of the public, but the protection of the public does not require a censure.

As Chair of the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar, it is my duty to issue this reprimand, which is based on the following conduct:

In 2023, you represented the Executors of an estate involved in litigation concerning a closely held business in which your clients owned a one-third interest. J.S. represented P.P. another party to the litigation, who also holds a one-third interest. Despite knowing that J.S. had entered an appearance in a related partition proceeding, you failed to notify him of a scheduled October 4, 2023, hearing, in violation of Rule 3.4(c) and local court rules. Later that same day, you visited the business without prior notice and, in the presence of others, obtained computers and passwords from J.S.’s client’s wife, who serves as the office manager, by having her sign an asset custody form. Your communication with J.S.’s client’s wife—despite knowing her relationship with the represented party—constituted indirect communication with a represented party, in violation of Rule 4.2(a) and Rule 8.4(a). You admitted that you chose not to inform J.S. of the hearing or the visit and acknowledged directing communication through his client’s wife. These actions demonstrated a failure to comply with tribunal rules and an improper circumvention of opposing counsel.

Accordingly, you are hereby reprimanded by the North Carolina State Bar for your professional misconduct consisting of the cited violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct. The Grievance Committee trusts that you will heed this reprimand, that it will be remembered by you, that it will be beneficial to you, and that you will never again allow yourself to depart from adherence to the high ethical standards of the legal profession.

If you accept this reprimand, it will be maintained as a record in the judgment book of the North Carolina State Bar and a copy will be sent to the complainant. Please review carefully the details set forth in the formal Notice of Reprimand attached.

In accordance with the policy adopted July 23, 2010, by the Council of the North Carolina State Bar regarding the taxing of administrative fees and investigative costs to any attorney issued a reprimand by the Grievance Committee, an administrative fee in the amount of \$350.00 is hereby taxed to you.

Done and ordered, this the 20th day of May, 2025.


Charles Gordon Brown, Chair
Grievance Committee

CGB/jms