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JOHN D. HADDEN
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SCBD # 6890

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA



ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY COMMISSION
AS COMPILED BY THE
OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL
OF THE
OKLAHOMA BAR ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 1, 2019 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2019

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INTRODUCTION:

Pursuant to the provisions of Rule 14.1, Rules Governing Disciplinary Proceedings (RGDP), 5 O.S. 2011, ch. 1, app. 1-A, the following is the Annual Report of grievances and complaints received and processed for 2019 by the Professional Responsibility Commission and the Office of the General Counsel of the Oklahoma Bar Association.

THE PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY COMMISSION:

The Professional Responsibility Commission is composed of seven persons - five lawyer and two non-lawyer members. The attorney members are nominated for rotating three-year terms by the President of the Association subject to the approval of the Board of Governors. The two non-lawyer members are appointed by the Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Oklahoma Senate, respectively. Terms expire on December 31st at the conclusion of the three-year term.

Attorney members serving on the Commission during 2019 were R. Richard Sitzman, Oklahoma City; Heather Burrage, Durant; Phillip J. Tucker, Edmond; Sidney K. Swinson, Tulsa; Richard Stevens, Norman; and Karen A. Henson, Shawnee. Ms. Henson was appointed to the Commission on October 18, 2019, to replace Mr. Stevens after he resigned to take the position of Ethics Counsel with the Oklahoma Bar Association. The Non-Lawyer members were John Thompson, Oklahoma City and James W. Chappel, Norman. Mr. Chappel was appointed to the Commission on October 1, 2019, by the President Pro Tempore. R. Richard Sitzman served as Chairperson. Commission members serve without compensation but are reimbursed for actual travel expenses.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Professional Responsibility Commission considers and investigates any alleged ground for discipline, or alleged incapacity, of any lawyer called to its attention, or upon its own motion, and takes such action as deemed appropriate to effectuate the purposes of the Rules Governing Disciplinary Proceedings. Under the supervision of the Commission, the Office of the General Counsel investigates all matters involving alleged misconduct or incapacity of any lawyer called to the attention of the General Counsel by grievance or otherwise, and reports to the Commission the results of investigations made by or at the direction of the General Counsel. The Commission then determines the disposition of grievances or directs the instituting of a formal complaint for alleged misconduct or personal incapacity of an attorney. The attorneys in the Office of the General Counsel prosecute all proceedings under the Rules Governing Disciplinary Proceedings, supervise the investigative process, and represent the Oklahoma Bar Association at all reinstatement proceedings.

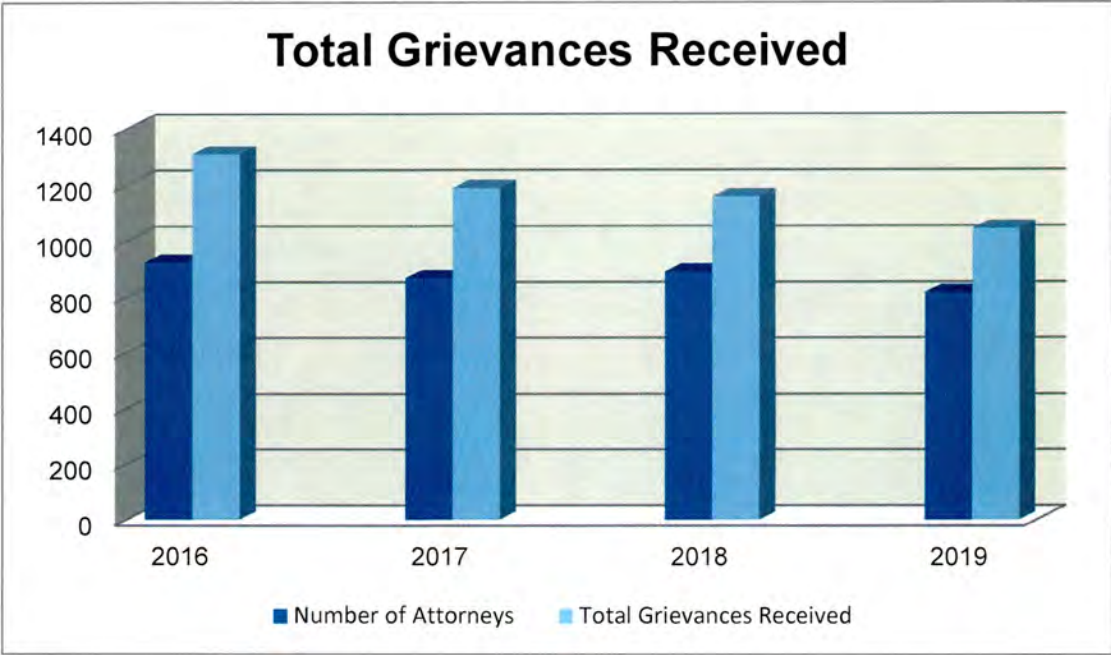
VOLUME OF GRIEVANCES:

During 2019, the Office of the General Counsel received 212 formal grievances involving 158 attorneys and 829 informal grievances involving 656 attorneys. In total, 1,041 grievances were received against 814 attorneys. The total number of attorneys differs because some attorneys received both formal and informal grievances. In addition, the Office handled 191 items of general correspondence, which is mail not considered to be a grievance against an attorney.¹

¹ The initial submission of a trust account overdraft notification is classified as general correspondence. The classification may change to a formal grievance after investigation.

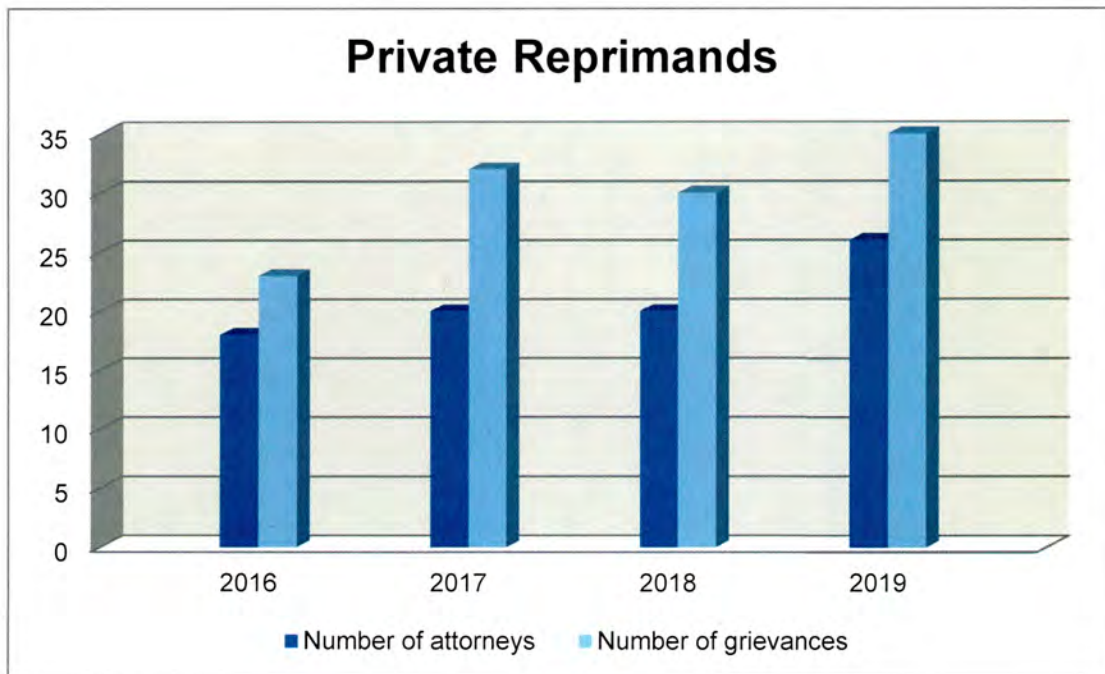
On January 1, 2019, 147 formal grievances were carried over from the previous year. During 2019, 212 new formal grievances were opened for investigation. The carryover accounted for a total caseload of 359 formal investigations pending throughout 2019. Of those grievances, 179 investigations were completed by the Office of the General Counsel and presented for review to the Professional Responsibility Commission. Therefore, 180 investigations were pending on December 31, 2019.

The time required for investigating and concluding each grievance varies depending on the seriousness and complexity of the allegations and the availability of witnesses and documents. The Commission requires the Office of the General Counsel to report monthly on all informal and formal grievances received and all investigations completed and ready for disposition by the Commission. In addition, the Commission receives a monthly statistical report on the pending caseload. The Board of Governors is advised statistically each month of the actions taken by the Commission.

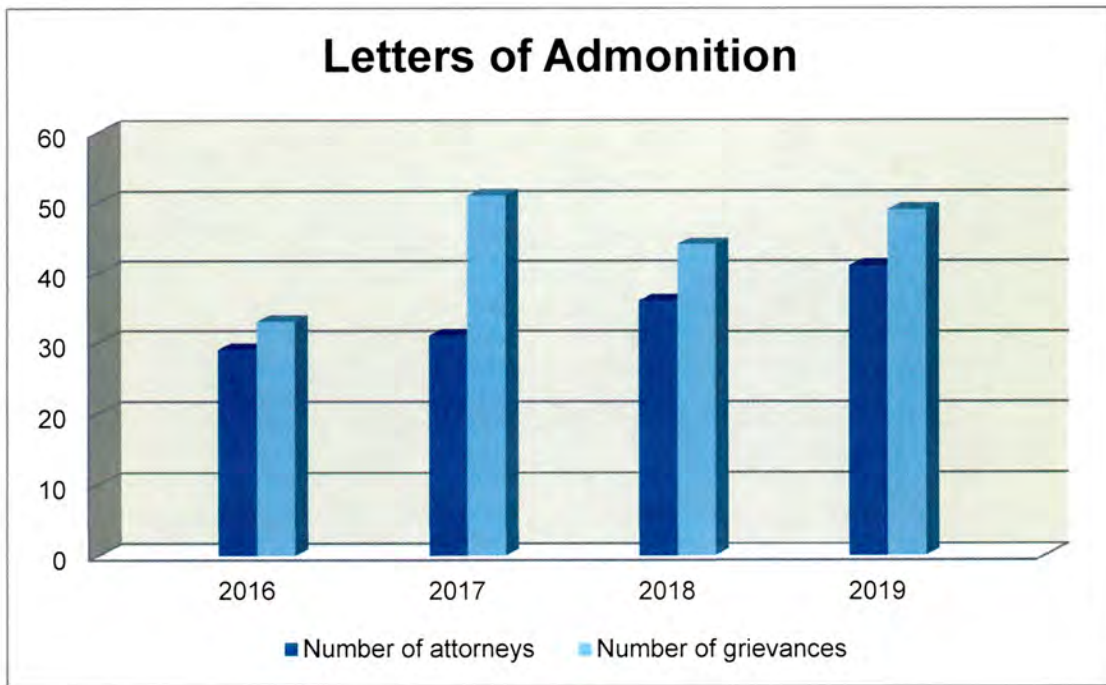


DISCIPLINE IMPOSED BY THE PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY COMMISSION:

1. **Formal Charges.** During 2019, the Professional Responsibility Commission voted the filing of formal disciplinary charges against fourteen lawyers involving 25 grievances. In addition, the Commission also oversaw the investigation of 12 Rule 7, RGDP matters filed with the Chief Justice of the Oklahoma Supreme Court.
2. **Private Reprimands.** Pursuant to Rule 5.3(c), RGDP, the Professional Responsibility Commission has the authority to impose private reprimands, with the consent of the attorney, in matters of less serious misconduct or if mitigating factors reduce the sanction to be imposed. During 2019, the Commission issued private reprimands to 26 attorneys involving 35 grievances.



3. **Letters of Admonition.** During 2019, the Professional Responsibility Commission issued letters of admonition to 41 attorneys involving 49 grievances cautioning that the conduct of the attorney was dangerously close to a violation of a disciplinary rule which the Commission believed warranted a warning rather than discipline.



4. **Dismissals.** The Professional Responsibility Commission dismissed eight grievances due to the resignation of the attorney pending disciplinary proceedings, a continuing lengthy suspension or disbarment of the respondent attorney. Furthermore, the Commission dismissed one grievance upon successful completion of a diversion program by the attorney. The remainder were dismissed where the investigation did not substantiate the allegations by clear and convincing evidence.

5. **Diversion Program.** The Professional Responsibility Commission may also refer respondent attorneys to the Discipline Diversion Program where remedial measures are taken to ensure that any deficiency in the representation of a client does not occur in the

future. During 2019, the Commission referred 26 attorneys to be admitted into the Diversion Program for conduct involving 31 grievances.

The Discipline Diversion Program is tailored to the individual circumstances of the participating attorney and the misconduct alleged. Oversight of the program is by the OBA Ethics Counsel with the OBA Management Assistance Program Director involved in programming. Program options include: Trust Account School, Professional Responsibility/Ethics School, Law Office Management Training, Communication and Client Relationship Skills, and Professionalism in the Practice of Law class. In 2019, instructional courses were taught by OBA Ethics Counsels Joe Balkenbush and Richard D. Stevens, and OBA Management Assistance Program Director Jim Calloway, and OBA Practice Management Advisor Julie Bays.

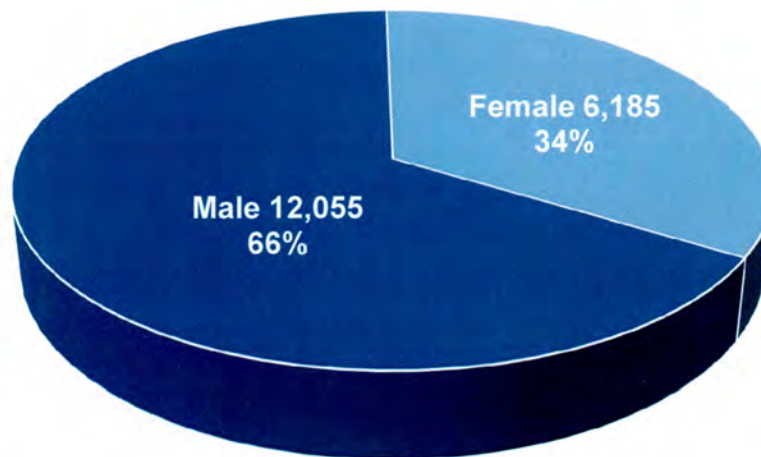
As a result of the Trust Account Overdraft Reporting Notifications, the Office of the General Counsel is now able to monitor when attorneys encounter difficulty with management of their IOLTA accounts. Upon recommendation of the Office of the General Counsel, the Commission may place those individuals in a tailored program designed to instruct on basic trust accounting procedures.

2019 Attorney Participation in Diversion Program Curriculum	
Law Office Management Training:	9 Attorneys
Communication and Client Relationship Skills:	12 Attorneys
Professionalism in the Practice of Law:	6 Attorneys
Professional Responsibility / Ethics School:	11 Attorneys
Client Trust Account School:	7 Attorneys
Law Office Consultations:	4 Attorneys

SURVEY OF GRIEVANCES:

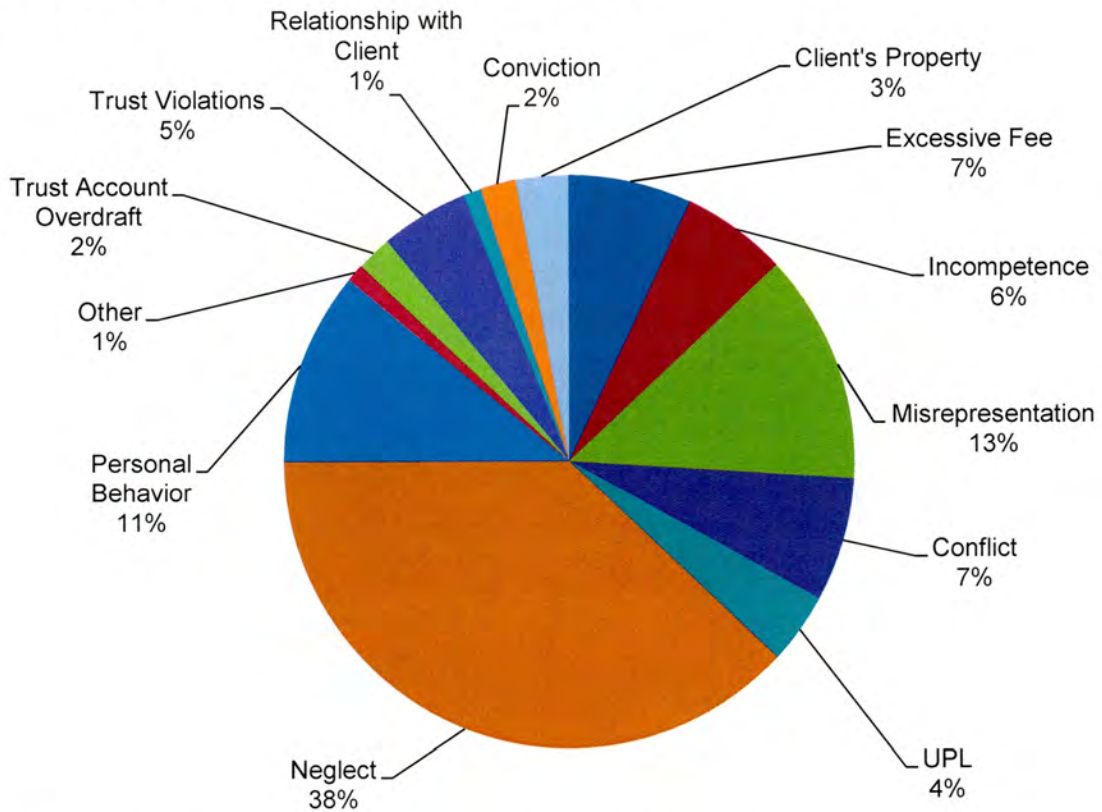
In order to better inform the Oklahoma Supreme Court, the bar, and the public of the nature of the grievances received, the numbers of attorneys complained against, and the areas of attorney misconduct involved, the following information is presented.

Total membership of the Oklahoma Bar Association as of December 31, 2019 was 18,240 attorneys. The total number of members include 12,055 males and 6,185 females.

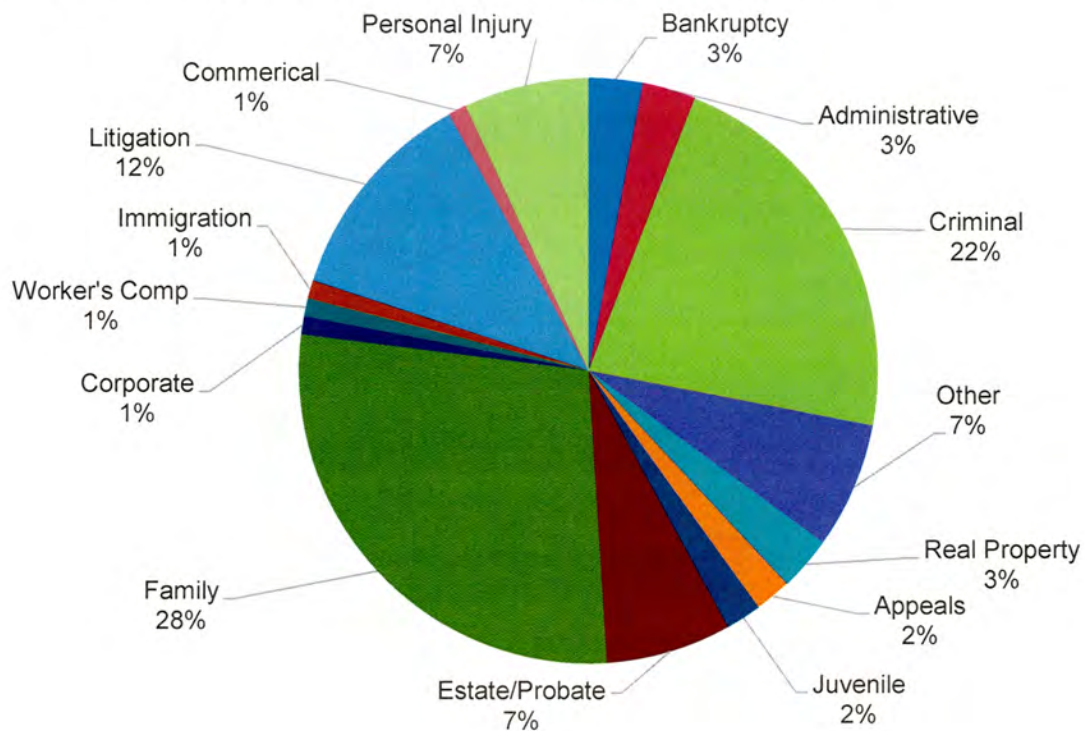


Formal and informal grievances were received against 814 attorneys. Therefore, less than five percent of the attorneys licensed to practice law in Oklahoma received a grievance in 2019.

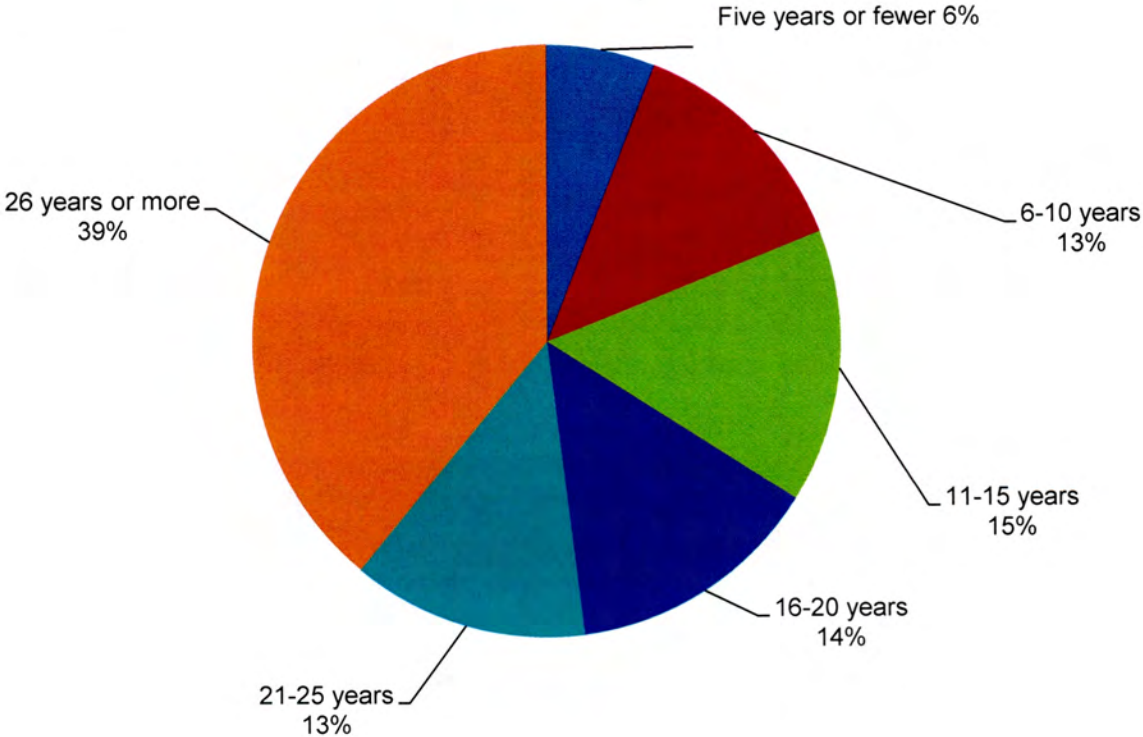
A breakdown of the type of attorney misconduct alleged in the 212 formal grievances opened by the Office of the General Counsel in 2019 is as follows:



Of the 212 formal grievances, the area of practice is as follows:



The number of years in practice of the 158 attorneys receiving formal grievances is as follows:



The largest number of grievances received were against attorneys who have been in practice for 26 years or more. The age of attorneys involved in the disciplinary system is depicted below.

<i>Type of Complaint Filed</i>	Rule 6, RGDP	Rule 7, RGDP	Rule 10, RGDP	Rule 8, RGDP
<i>Number of Attorneys Involved</i>	11	12	2	1
<i>Age of Attorney</i>				
21-29 years old	0	0	0	0
30-49 years old	3	7	0	0
50-74 years old	8	4	2	1
75 or more years old	0	1	0	0

<i>Type of Discipline Imposed</i>	Dismissals	Confidential Suspension	Disciplinary Suspension	Resignation Pending Disciplinary Proceedings	Disbarment
<i>Number of Attorneys Involved</i>	10	2	7	5	1
<i>Age of Attorney</i>					
21-29 years old	0	0	0	0	0
30-49 years old	5	0	4	2	1
50-74 years old	4	2	3	3	0
75 or more years old	1	0	0	0	0

DISCIPLINE IMPOSED BY THE OKLAHOMA SUPREME COURT:

In 2019, discipline was imposed by the Oklahoma Supreme Court in 25 disciplinary cases. The sanctions are as follow:

1. Disbarment.

Respondent

Bednar, Alexander L.

Order Date

3/12/19

2. Resignations Pending Disciplinary Proceedings Approved by Court.

(Tantamount to Disbarment)

<u>Respondent</u>	<u>Order Date</u>
Patton, Matthew	3/4/19
Claborn, Charlotte	3/25/19
Darley, III, Lon J.	6/10/19
Tripp, Douglas S.	9/10/19
Rule 10 Confidential	12/10/19

3. Disciplinary Suspensions.

<u>Respondent</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Order Date</u>
Rule 10 Confidential	Indefinite	1/28/19
Rule 10 Confidential	Indefinite	5/28/19
Withers, Shad K.	90 days	6/18/19
Moisant, Jay P.	6 months	9/10/19
Stout, Richard E.	3 months	10/1/19
Arnett, Emma B.	2 years + 1 day	10/7/19
Koss, Jr., Theodore	2 years + 1 day	10/29/19
Watkins, Brandon D.	2 years + 1 day	11/19/19
Elsley, Jackie D.	2 year Deferred	12/17/19

4. Dismissals.

<u>Respondent</u>	<u>Order Date</u>
Barteaux, Timothy L. (Misdemeanor Conviction; Rule 7, RGDP)	2/4/19
Rogers, Jason T. (Misdemeanor Conviction; Rule 7, RGDP)	3/25/19
Sill, James D. (Misdemeanor Conviction; Rule 7, RGDP)	4/22/19
Gragg, Brandi L. (Misdemeanor Conviction; Rule 7, RGDP)	6/17/19
Collier, Creighton C. (Misdemeanor Conviction; Rule 7, RGDP)	6/17/19
Kurth, T. Elaine (Dismissed due to death of Respondent)	8/27/19
Glaption, Raphael T. (Misdemeanor Conviction; Rule 7, RGDP)	9/9/19
Hall, Adam C. (Misdemeanor Conviction; Rule 7, RGDP)	9/9/19
Kennedy, Curtis L. (Misdemeanor Conviction; Rule 7, RGDP)	10/21/19

There were 16 discipline cases filed with the Supreme Court as of January 1, 2019. During 2019, 26 new formal complaints were filed for a total of 42 cases pending with the Supreme Court during 2019. On December 31, 2019, 17 cases remain filed and pending before the Oklahoma Supreme Court².

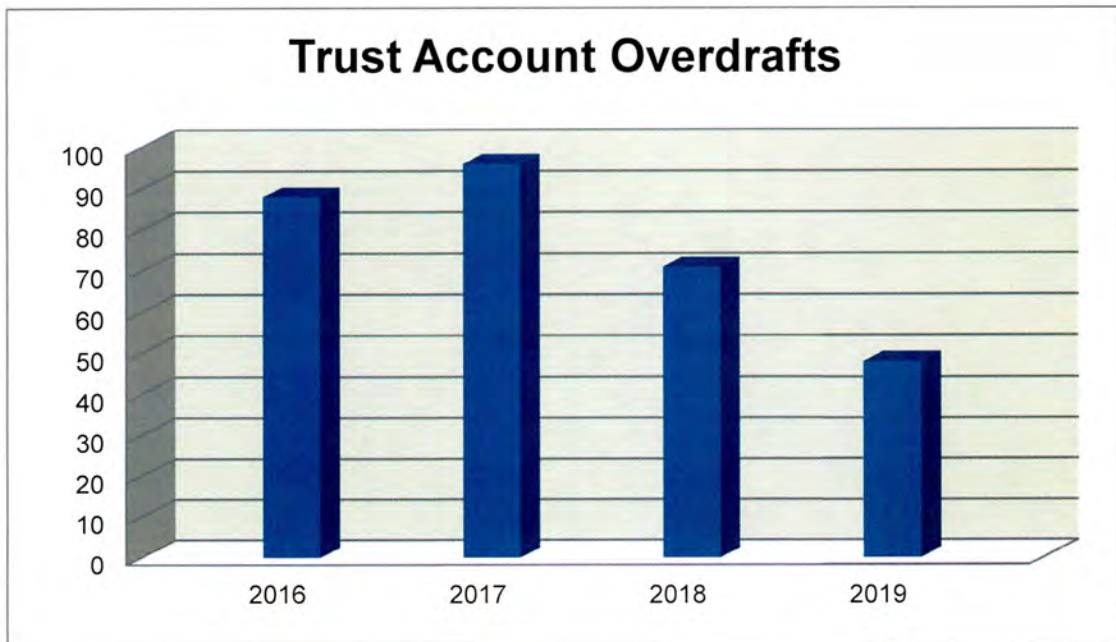
² Four cases were stayed by the Court and are still considered pending by the Office of the General Counsel: SCBD 6318, Rule 7, RGDP; SCBD 6354, Rule 7, RGDP; SCBD 6512, Rule 7, RGDP; SCBD 6723, Rule 6, RGDP.

REINSTATEMENTS:

There were three Petitions for Reinstatement pending before the Professional Responsibility Tribunal and two Petitions for Reinstatement pending with the Supreme Court as of January 1, 2019. There were three new Petitions for Reinstatement filed in 2019. In 2019, the Supreme Court granted two reinstatements, denied one reinstatement, and two were withdrawn by the Petitioners. On December 31, 2019, there were two Petitions for Reinstatement pending before the Professional Responsibility Tribunal and two Petitions for Reinstatement pending before the Oklahoma Supreme Court.

TRUST ACCOUNT OVERDRAFT REPORTING:

The Office of the General Counsel, under the supervision of the Professional Responsibility Commission, has implemented the Trust Account Overdraft Reporting requirements of Rule 1.15(j), Oklahoma Rules of Professional Conduct, 5 O.S. 2011, ch. 1, app. 3-A (ORPC). Trust Account Overdraft Reporting Agreements are submitted by depository institutions. In 2019, 48 notices of overdraft of a client trust account were received by the Office of the General Counsel. Notification triggers a general inquiry to the attorney requesting an explanation and supporting bank documents for the deficient account. Based upon the response, an investigation may be commenced. Repeated overdrafts due to negligent accounting practices may result in referral to the Discipline Diversion Program for instruction in proper trust accounting procedures.



UNAUTHORIZED PRACTICE OF LAW:

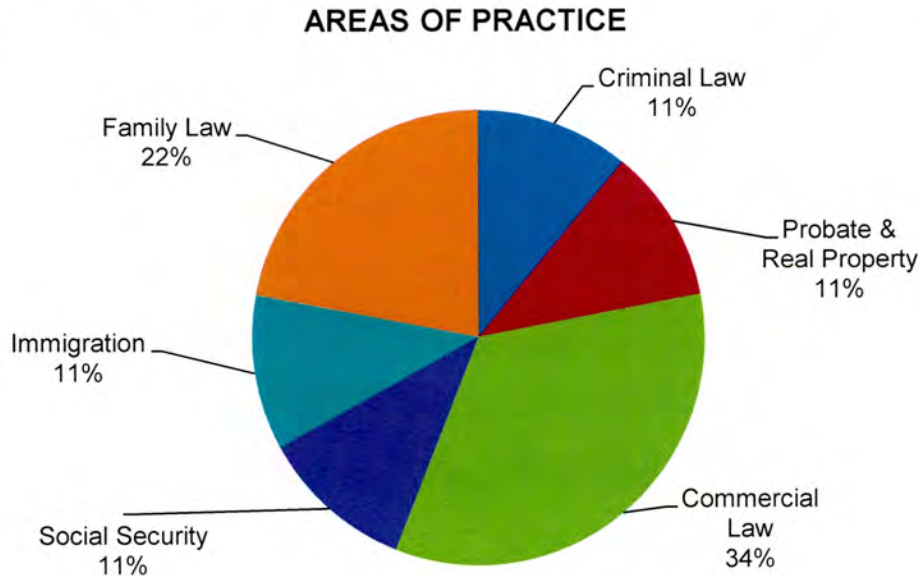
Rule 5.1(b), RGDP, authorizes the Office of the General Counsel to investigate allegations of the unauthorized practice of law (UPL) by non-lawyers, suspended lawyers and disbarred lawyers. Rule 5.5, ORPC, regulates the unauthorized practice of law by lawyers and prohibits lawyers from assisting others in doing so.

1. Requests for Investigation.

In 2019, the Office of the General Counsel received nine complaints for investigation of the unauthorized practice of law. The Office of the General Counsel fielded many additional inquiries regarding the unauthorized practice of law that are not reflected in this summary.

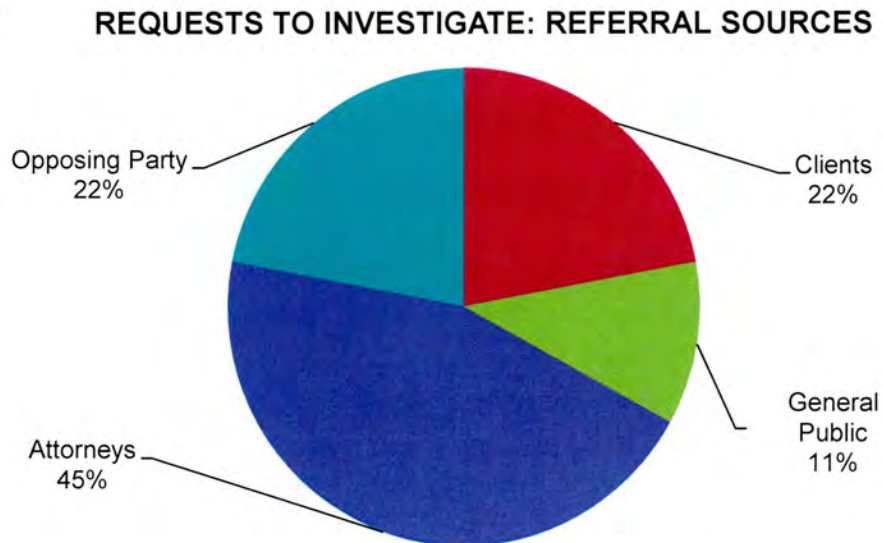
2. Practice Areas.

Allegations of the unauthorized practice of law encompass various areas of law. In previous years, most unauthorized practice of law complaints involved non-lawyers or paralegals handling divorce matters, but that trend has declined over the last few years. However, in 2019, a significant number of UPL complaints involved commercial law matters.



3. Referral Sources.

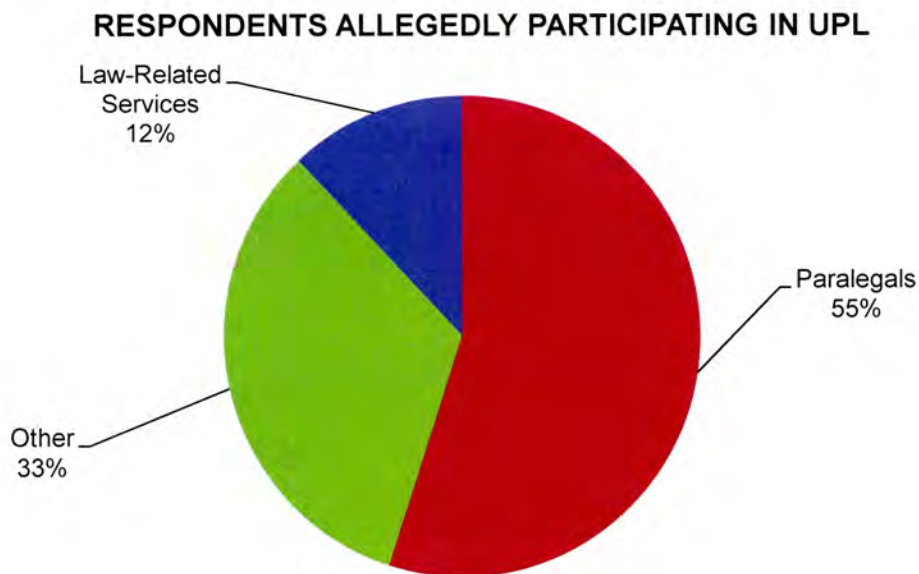
Requests for investigations of the unauthorized practice of law stem from multiple sources. In 2019, the Office of the General Counsel received the most complaints from attorneys.



4. Respondents.

For 2019, most requests for investigation into allegations of the unauthorized practice of law related to paralegals.

For purposes of this summary, the category “paralegal” refers to an individual who advertises as a paralegal and performs various legal tasks for their customers, including legal document preparation.



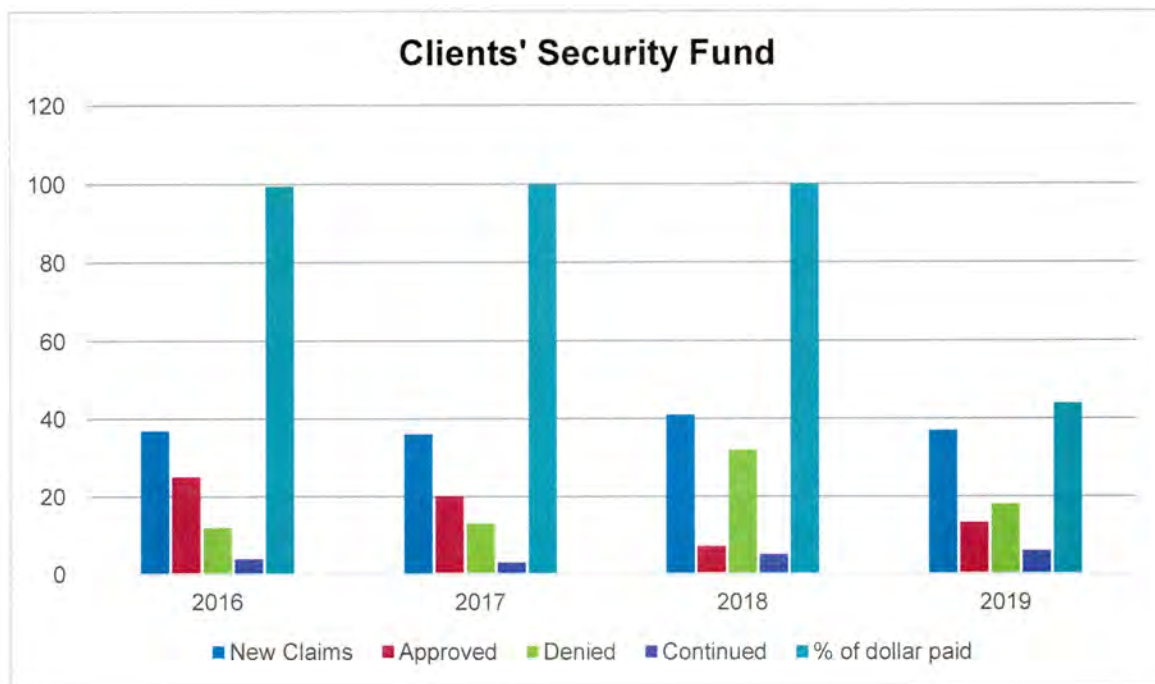
5. Enforcement.

In 2019, of the nine matters received, the Office of the General Counsel took formal action in one matter. Formal action includes issuing cease and desist letters, initiating formal investigations through the attorney discipline process, referring a case to an appropriate state and/or federal enforcement agency, or filing the appropriate district court action. Four matters were closed for no finding of the unauthorized practice of law. The remainder of the matters are under investigation.

CLIENTS' SECURITY FUND:

The Clients' Security Fund was established in 1965 by Court Rules of the Oklahoma Supreme Court. The Fund is administered by the Clients' Security Fund Committee which is comprised of 17 members, 14 lawyer members and 3 non-lawyers, who are appointed in staggered three-year terms by the OBA President with approval from the Board of Governors. In 2019, the Committee was chaired by lawyer member Micheal Salem, Norman. Chairman Salem has served as Chair for the Clients' Security Fund Committee since 2006. The Fund furnishes a means of reimbursement to clients for financial losses occasioned by dishonest acts of lawyers. It is also intended to protect the reputation of lawyers in general from the consequences of dishonest acts of a very few. The Board of Governors budgets and appropriates \$175,000.00 each year to the Clients' Security Fund for payment of approved claims.

In years when the approved amount exceeds the amount available, the amount approved for each claimant will be reduced in proportion on a prorata basis until the total amount paid for all claims in that year is \$175,000.00. The Office of the General Counsel reviews, investigates, and presents the claims to the committee. In 2019, the Office of the General Counsel presented 37 new claims to the Committee. The Committee approved 13 claims, denied 18 claims, and continued 6 claims into the following year for further investigation. In 2019, the amount available for reimbursement was increased by the OBA Board of Governors resulting in payment of \$349,542.88 on 13 approved claims from the Client Security Fund.



CIVIL ACTIONS (NON-DISCIPLINE) INVOLVING THE OBA:

The Office of the General Counsel represented the Oklahoma Bar Association in several civil (non-discipline) matters during 2019. Two cases carried forward into 2020. The following is a summary of all 2019 civil actions against or involving the Oklahoma Bar Association:

1. *Alexander Bednar v. Farabow, Willis, Blasier and Oklahoma Bar Association*, Oklahoma County Case No. CJ-2017-1192. Bednar filed suit against the OBA Defendants on February 28, 2017, alleging, among other things, that Defendants exhibited a pattern of harassment and attacks against him and requested the district court declare that his prior attorney discipline was not based on ethical violations and enjoin the OBA from further investigating his actions. Bednar also filed a Motion for Special Master to Investigate, Motion to Quash Administrative Subpoenas and for Protective Order, Motion to Seal Confidential Information and a Supplemental Petition. The OBA moved to dismiss the matter, and, after argument, an Order of Dismissal with Prejudice was entered by Judge Dixon and filed August 4, 2017. Bednar filed a Motion to Set Aside for Good Cause on September 5, 2017. After the OBA response and argument, the Court allowed Bednar to supplement his filing with a transcript from the motion to dismiss hearing. At the hearing on January 19, 2018, Judge Davis reconsidered Judge Dixon's order and dismissed Bednar's suit *without* prejudice to refiling. At the hearing, Bednar indicated he filed another lawsuit that morning against Defendants (see

below). Thereafter, Bednar filed a Supplemental Petition, Application for Emergency Orders and other documents. After response and argument, Bednar's motions were overruled, and the case was transferred to another county.

2. *Alexander Bednar v. Hammond, et al.*, Oklahoma County Case No. CJ-2018-373 (before the Honorable Paul Hesse, Canadian County). Bednar filed suit against OBA Defendants Farabow, Hendryx, Blasier and Willis on January 19, 2018, alleging, among other things, that the court must stop Defendants from discussing private bar investigation matters with judges, attorney and attorneys and that one OBA defendant acted outside the scope of employment while investigating him. Bednar also filed an Application for Emergency Orders, Application to Consolidate and/or Reassign Case to Judge Davis, and an Application for Discovery Master. Less than a month later, Bednar filed a Supplemental Application for Emergency Orders and to Transfer and/or Reassign Case to Judge Davis. The OBA filed a Motion to Dismiss. After argument, the court dismissed Bednar's Motion for Discovery Master and for an injunction against employees of the OBA. Bednar filed or caused to be filed two Applications to Intervene in Support of a Motion for Special Master. The OBA responded to said applications and filed a supplemental motion to dismiss. After argument, the applications were denied and the motions to dismiss were granted. Thereafter, Bednar filed a First Amended Petition and other motions. The OBA again responded to Bednar's filings and filed another Motion to Dismiss. In the interim, Bednar unsuccessfully attempted to have Judge Hesse recuse. Bednar then filed a Motion to Set Aside the Order Denying Recusal to which the OBA responded. This case was then transferred to Oklahoma County and back to Canadian County. On February 1, 2019, the OBA's Motion to Dismiss was sustained and the matter was dismissed with prejudice. On March 7, 2019, Bednar filed a "Motion to Set Aside Default Judgment Received Within Thirty Days."
3. *Vance-1 Properties, LLC. v. Energy Production Services, LLC.*, Oklahoma County Case No. CJ-2017-4737. On June 25, 2018, "Plaintiff, Compulsory Cross Claimant" Kris Agrawal filed a Petition for Damages in Fraud by Chris Holland and Lawyers Upon Courts to Steal Money of a Non-Judgment Debtor-Energy Production Services, LLC. Agrawal requested that "Nominal Defendant Oklahoma Bar Association" make rules to "punish Lawyers who abuse Court Procedures, who are thieves, and enforce the current Rules of Professional Conduct." The OBA filed a Motion to Dismiss based on lack of subject matter jurisdiction. On September 6, 2018, the court granted the OBA's Motion to Dismiss with Prejudice.
4. *Vance - Properties, LLC, v. Energy Production Services, LLC, v. Kris K. Agrawal v. Daniel Delluomo, Chris Holland, et al, and Oklahoma County Court Clerk, Michael T. Bridwell, Jerry Parent, Sunoco Partners Marketing and Terminals, Jerry Kite, and Oklahoma Bar Association*, Supreme Court Case Nos. 117553, 117554, 117555, 117556, 117557, 117558. On November 26, 2018, Agrawal initiated six appeals. The Oklahoma Bar Association responded to the Petitions in Error. The

cases were consolidated to Case No. 117554. On August 29, 2019, upon motion of the Appellant, the appeal was dismissed as to the Oklahoma Bar Association.

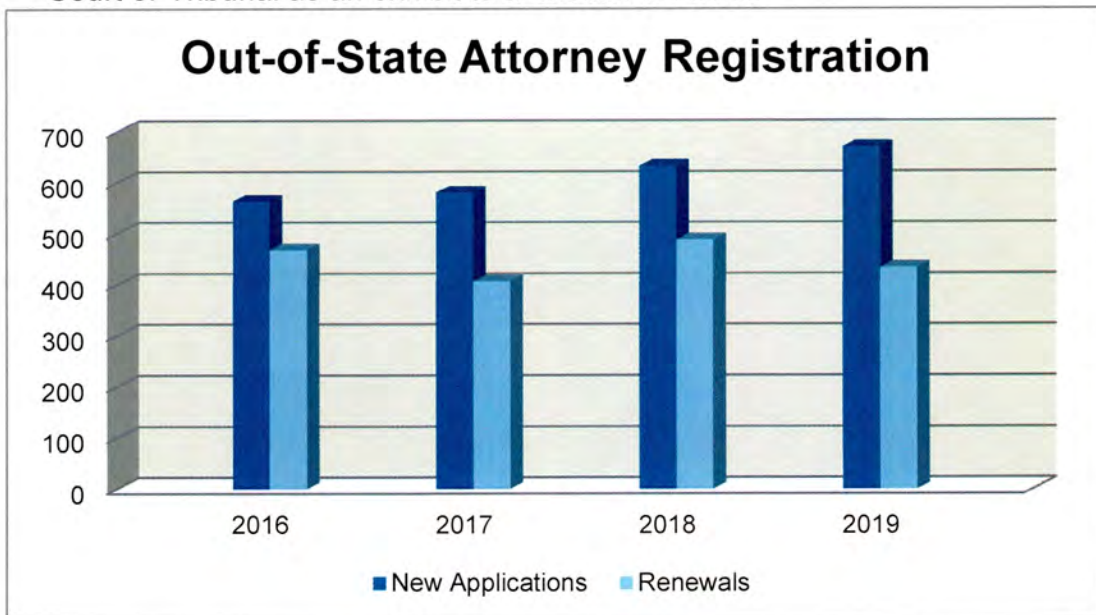
5. *Brande Samuels v. State of Oklahoma et al.*, United States District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma, Case No. 4:18-cv-267. Mr. Samuel's filed a complaint on May 17, 2018 against 52 defendants, including "Oklahoma Bar Association City of Tulsa" and multiple members of the Oklahoma Bar Association's Board of Governors. Mr. Samuels did not serve any of the Oklahoma Bar Association defendants. On December 14, 2018, the Court dismissed the case, specifically noting that Mr. Samuels failed to include any factual allegations or specific references to the individually named OBA Board of Governors. After judgment was issued, Mr. Samuels appealed the case to the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, Case No. 19-5002. The case was terminated without judicial action on April 24, 2019.
6. *Rickey White v. Oklahoma Bar Association*, Court of Criminal Appeals of Oklahoma, Case No. MA-2019-825, filed November 12, 2019. Mr. Rickey petitioned the court for an order directing the Oklahoma Bar Association to re-open and investigate a grievance he filed against an attorney. The Oklahoma Bar Association was not served. On December 4, 2019, the Court of Criminal Appeals declined jurisdiction.
7. *Johnson & Johnson ex rel., Stephen P. Wallace v. State of Oklahoma, et al.*, United States District Court for the District of New Jersey, Case No. CIV-19-14189. Mr. Johnson filed suit against multiple Oklahoma defendants alleging RICO and other violations. The facts underlying the suit are not easily discernable from Mr. Wallace's filings. Johnson & Johnson notified the court that they were not (despite Mr. Wallace's filings) associated with this case in any way. The OBA filed a Motion to Dismiss on September 26, 2019. Plaintiff filed various "Emergency" and "Supplemental Emergency" Motions. Plaintiff must respond to the Motion to Dismiss by February 7, 2020.

ATTORNEY SUPPORT SERVICES:

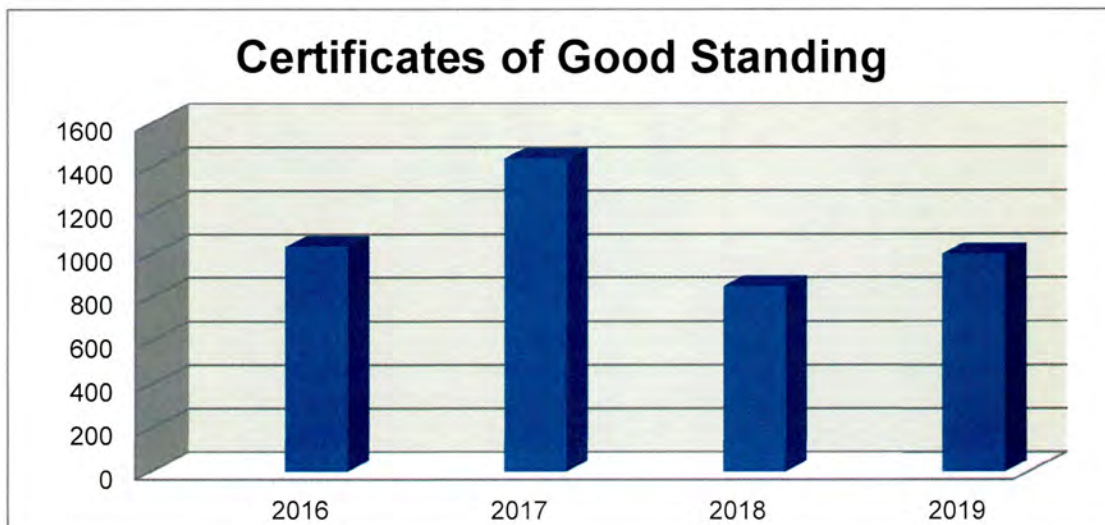
1. Out-of-State Attorney Registration.

In 2019, the Office of the General Counsel processed 670 new applications and 433 renewal applications submitted by out-of-state attorneys registering to participate in a proceeding before an Oklahoma Court or Tribunal. Out-of-State attorneys appearing pro bono to represent criminal indigent defendants, or on behalf of persons who otherwise would qualify for representation under the

guidelines of the Legal Services Corporation due to their incomes, may request a waiver of the application fee from the Oklahoma Bar Association. Certificates of Compliance are issued after confirmation of the application information, the applicant's good standing in his/her licensing jurisdiction and payment of applicable fees. All obtained and verified information is submitted to the Oklahoma Court or Tribunal as an exhibit to a "Motion to Admit."



2. **Certificates of Good Standing.** In 2019, the Office of the General Counsel prepared 999 Certificates of Good Standing/Disciplinary History at the request of Oklahoma Bar Association members.

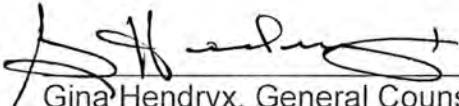


ETHICS AND EDUCATION:

During 2019, the General Counsel, Assistant General Counsels, and the Professional Responsibility Commission members presented more than 100 hours of continuing legal education programs to county bar association meetings, attorney practice groups, OBA programs, all three state law schools, and various legal organizations. In these sessions, disciplinary and investigative procedures, case law, and ethical standards within the profession were discussed. These efforts direct lawyers to a better understanding of their ethical requirements and the disciplinary process, and informs the public of the efforts of the Oklahoma Bar Association to regulate the conduct of its members. In addition, the General Counsel was a regular contributor to *The Oklahoma Bar Journal*.

The attorneys, investigators, and support staff for the General Counsel's office also attended continuing education programs in an effort to increase their own skills and training in attorney discipline. These included trainings by the Oklahoma Bar Association (OBA), National Organization of Bar Counsel (NOBC), and the Organization of Bar Investigators (OBI).

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED this 7th day of February, 2020, on behalf of the Professional Responsibility Commission and the Office of the General Counsel of the Oklahoma Bar Association.


Gina Hendryx, General Counsel
Oklahoma Bar Association