

ATTORNEY SERVICES FUND 2019 ANNUAL REPORT



THE SUPREME COURT *of* OHIO



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ATTORNEY SERVICES FUND ANNUAL REPORT

Summary of Activity for Fiscal Year 2019
And Report on Allocations for Fiscal Year 2020

OCTOBER 2019



PRESENTED TO

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CHIEF JUSTICE

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THE SUPREME COURT *of* OHIO

To: Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor and Justices
Members of the Ohio Bar
Members of the Public

This Annual Report on the Attorney Services Fund provides a summary of the activity of the Attorney Services Fund for Fiscal Year 2019 (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019), and sets out budget allocations from the fund as approved by the Supreme Court for Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020).

The report includes a review of the fund's balance and projections, audit information, and investment policy. This information is provided for informational purposes only and is not to be considered a final or complete audit or financial statement of fund activity during the period covered in the report. The Auditor of State conducts an audit of the fund as part of the regular biennial audit of the Supreme Court of Ohio.

Respectfully submitted,



Jeffrey C. Hagler, Esq.
Administrative Director



Gina White Palmer, Esq.
Director of Attorney Services



I. Attorney Services Fund; Registration Requirements and Fees

Biennial Registration Requirements and Fees

Article IV of the Ohio Constitution vests plenary authority with the Supreme Court of Ohio to regulate all aspects of the practice of law in Ohio, including admission to the practice of law, the discipline of persons admitted to the practice of law, and all other matters relating to the practice of law. In furtherance of this responsibility and in order to maintain an independent and self-funded regulatory system, the Supreme Court assesses and collects various fees and other moneys pursuant to the Supreme Court Rules for the Government of the Bar of Ohio (Gov.Bar R.). All moneys collected pursuant to the rules, other than those related to the bar admissions process, are deposited in the Attorney Services Fund.

Gov.Bar R. VI imposes a biennial registration requirement on each attorney practicing law in the state of Ohio. Each attorney licensed to practice law in the state, except for attorneys who are on inactive or retired status, and each non-Ohio attorney registered for corporate counsel status, must register with the Court on or before the first day of September in each odd-numbered year and pay a \$350 registration fee for active status. Emeritus pro bono status is available as a registration status for attorneys who wish to provide legal services solely on a pro bono basis with a qualified organization. The registration fee for emeritus pro bono status is \$75. In addition, attorney spouses of active duty members of the U.S. military stationed in Ohio may seek temporary admission to the practice of law in Ohio under certain conditions. The registration fee for military-spouse attorneys is \$350.

Registration fees are reduced or waived for attorneys who are admitted to practice in the second year of the registration biennium. During the biennial attorney registration, attorneys may participate in a \$50 voluntary “add-on” fee to fund civil legal aid services for low-income populations in Ohio. Revenues from attorney registration fees are significantly lower in odd-numbered fiscal years because attorneys are required to register with the Supreme Court during even-numbered fiscal years.

The Supreme Court imposes monetary sanctions on attorneys who fail to register on time. Gov.Bar R. VI imposes a late registration fee of \$50 on any attorney who fails to register by the due date. An attorney who remains unregistered more than 60 days after

the due date is summarily suspended from the practice of law and must register, pay all outstanding registration fees, and pay a \$300 reinstatement fee in order to be reinstated to the practice of law.

Attorney Services Fund

Gov.Bar R. VI registration, late registration, and reinstatement fees are paid into the fund. The fund also receives revenue from other sources pursuant to Gov.Bar R., including cost reimbursements from disciplined attorneys and civil penalties, as well as costs assessed against persons who are found to have engaged in the unauthorized practice of law.

Pursuant to Gov.Bar R. VI, Section 14, the moneys in the fund are used to (1) investigate complaints alleging misconduct pursuant to Gov.Bar R. V or Gov.Jud.R. II and alleging unauthorized practice of law pursuant to Gov.Bar R. VII; (2) support the activities of the Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection, the Commission on Continuing Legal Education, and the Board on the Unauthorized Practice of Law; (3) fund any activity considered necessary by the Supreme Court for the government of the bar and the judiciary of Ohio; and (4) support any activities related to the administration of justice considered necessary by the Supreme Court.

Schedule 1 of this report contains a summary of fund expenditures for fiscal years 2018 and 2019 and allocations for fiscal year 2020.

II. Summary of Fund Activity in Fiscal Year 2019

In fiscal year 2019, \$9,619,374 was expended from the Attorney Services Fund.

Disciplinary-Related Expenses

In fiscal year 2019, \$5,775,266 was used to fund the disciplinary process established by the Court in Gov.Bar R. V and Gov.Jud.R. II, "Disciplinary Procedure." This accounted for more than 60 percent of total fund expenditures in FY 2019. Of this amount, \$3,220,725 were expended by the Office of Disciplinary Counsel, which accounts for the entire operational budget of that office.

A total of \$739,263 was expended by the Board on Professional Conduct to fund the operations of the Board. An additional \$1,815,161 was expended by the Board to reimburse local bar association certified-grievance committees for disciplinary-related activities.

Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection

Since 1985, the Supreme Court has allocated moneys from the Attorney Services Fund to compensate clients who are victims of theft, embezzlement, or misappropriation by dishonest attorneys. The Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection is established in Gov.Bar R. VIII and is administered by an independent Board of Commissioners appointed by the Court. By rule, the Board may award a client up to \$75,000 to reimburse the client for financial losses incurred as a result of the misconduct of his or her attorney. In fiscal year 2019, \$440,115 was expended by the Board of Commissioners of the Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection for its operations. In addition, the Supreme Court allocated \$1 million to the Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection trust fund to replenish that fund. Together, these amounts represent nearly 15 percent of Attorney Services Fund expenditures.

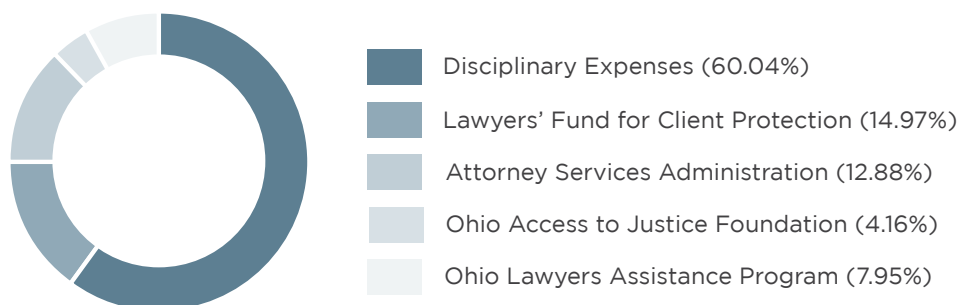
In fiscal year 2019, the Board awarded a total of \$503,894 from the trust fund to reimburse 56 eligible claimants. As of June 30, 2019, there were 79 claims pending, representing a potential liability to the fund of \$1,846,956. For more information regarding claims filed with the Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection, see the most recent annual report prepared by the Board of Commissioners of the Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection.

Attorney Services Administration

The Attorney Services Division of the Supreme Court is comprised of the Office of Attorney Services and the Office of Bar Admissions. These two offices are charged with supporting the Court in the exercise of its constitutional responsibility to regulate the practice of law in Ohio. The Office of Attorney Services has many responsibilities, including registering attorneys each biennium, verifying attorneys' statuses and issuing certificates of good standing, administering the Lawyer To Lawyer Mentoring Program, and maintaining attorney and judge attorney registration and continuing legal education records.

A total of \$1,238,994 was expended for the Attorney Services Division (excluding the Office of Bar Admissions, which is funded separately) in fiscal year 2019. These moneys, which represent nearly 13 percent of total fund expenditures, supported the Office of Attorney Services (\$1,054,929), the Commission on Certification of Attorneys as Specialists (\$3,222), the Commission on Professionalism (\$141,218), and the Board on the Unauthorized Practice of Law (\$7,140).

Figure 1 – Fiscal Year 2019 Expenditures



Further, \$32,485 was expended on reimbursement of expenses related to investigation and prosecution of unauthorized-practice-of-law matters.

Discretionary Grants

The remaining \$1,165,000 in expenditures from the fund represented grants to two nonprofit organizations that assist the Supreme Court in providing oversight of the Ohio bench and bar and in the administration of justice. In fiscal year 2019, the Court awarded grants of \$400,000 to the Ohio Access to Justice Foundation (formerly known as the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation) and \$765,000 to the Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program. The grant to the Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program represents an increase of \$80,000 from fiscal year 2018 due to an increase in need for services for attorneys, judges, and law students. These grants represent 4 percent and nearly 8 percent respectively, of the expenditures from the fund.

The Ohio Access to Justice Foundation is established pursuant to statutory authority and has, as its primary responsibility, the duty of administering and allocating various funds for Ohio's legal-aid programs. These programs provide direct civil legal assistance to low-income Ohioans who qualify for services. The moneys contributed from the fund to the foundation are used for pro bono development and enhancement, technology enhancement and support, and performance assessments of legal-aid programs.

The Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program provides intervention and monitoring assistance to Ohio lawyers, judges, and law students who are suffering from alcoholism, substance abuse, or mental illness. In addition to moneys allocated from the fund, the program receives contributions from the Ohio State Bar Association, the Ohio Bar Liability Insurance Company, and other entities.

Civil Justice Grant Program Fund

In response to recommendations of the Task Force on Access to Justice, the Supreme Court amended two Gov.Bar Rules, which became effective in July 2016: (1) increasing the annual pro hac vice registration fee for out-of-state attorneys from \$150 to \$300, and directing \$150 of each such registration to help fund civil legal services for indigent Ohioans; and (2) including a \$50 voluntary add-on fee as part of the biennial attorney registration required of Ohio attorneys. The funds generated from these amendments are deposited into the Civil Justice Grant Program Fund, which was established in fiscal year 2017.

In fiscal year 2019, \$2,150 was voluntarily donated by attorneys and judges as part of the biennial attorney registration process. The fund's purpose is to provide grants to non-profit organizations and agencies dedicated to providing civil legal services to Ohio's indigent population through innovative programs aimed at increasing access to justice. This fund held \$786,734 as of June 30, 2019, of which \$245,600 was reserved for the balance of encumbered grants. The available fund balance was \$541,134 on June 30, 2019.

During fiscal year 2019, the Supreme Court awarded grants totaling \$397,551 from the Civil Justice Grant Program to 13 non-profit organizations and agencies.

Fund Income and Balance

The fund realized income and revenue of \$1,403,647 in fiscal year 2019 from the following sources:

- **\$255,250:** Biennial registration fees, including late fees, reinstatement fees, and fees collected pursuant to Gov.Bar R. XIV (Certification of Attorneys as Specialists);
- **\$72,967:** Reimbursement of costs in Gov.Bar R. V (Disciplinary Procedure) and reimbursement of costs and payment of civil penalties in Gov.Bar R. VII (Unauthorized Practice of Law) cases;
- **\$39,490:** Investment income; however, there were also credit card processing fees and associated bank fees totaling \$28,313 for FY 2019. The result was net income of \$11,177 to the fund.
- **\$418,853:** Revenue collected pursuant to Gov.Bar R. X (Attorney Continuing Legal Education);



- **\$643,250:** Revenue collected pursuant to Gov. Bar R. XII, Sec. 2(A)(4) (Pro Hac Vice) of which \$321,200 was transferred to the Civil Justice Grant Program Fund and \$322,050 was transferred to the Bar Admissions Fund and are not part of Attorney Service's cash balance; and
- **\$2,150:** Voluntary donations to the Civil Justice Grant Program Fund by attorneys and judges as part of the biennial attorney registration process.

III. Report on Allocations for Fiscal Year 2020

The fund had an estimated average monthly cash and investment balance of \$7,758,676 in fiscal year 2019.

The Supreme Court allocated \$9,993,618 from the Attorney Services Fund for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2019. The allocations are made to nine entities representing 12 separate funds or activities.

Disciplinary-Related Expenses

The Court allocated \$6,171,875 (61.76 percent of total fund allocations) to support the operation of the disciplinary process. This figure includes separate allocations of \$3,390,875 to fund the Office of Disciplinary Counsel; \$831,000 to fund the operations of the Board on Professional Conduct; and \$1,950,000 to reimburse certified local grievance committees for their work in investigating and prosecuting disciplinary matters.

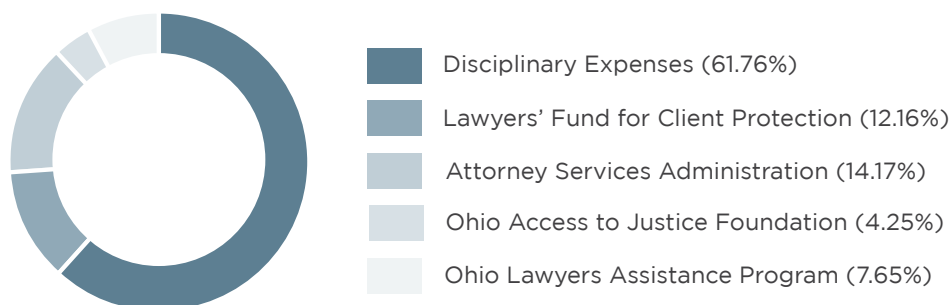
Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection

The operations of the Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection is funded by an allocation of \$465,256. An additional \$750,000 is allocated to replenish that entity's trust fund and ensure a sufficient fund balance. These allocations represent more than 12 percent of the total fund allocations.

Attorney Services Administration

A total of \$1,416,487 (14.17 percent of total fund allocations) is allocated to fund the activities of the Attorney Services Division of the Supreme Court. This allocation includes: (1) \$1,174,843 to the Office of Attorney Services; (2) \$10,000 to support the operation of the Board on the Unauthorized Practice of Law and an additional \$55,000 to reimburse bar associations for costs incurred in investigating and prosecuting allegations of the unauthorized practice of law; (3) \$171,044 to support the activities of Commission on Professionalism; and (4) \$5,600 to support the activities of the Commission on Certification of Attorneys as Specialists.

Figure 2 — Fiscal Year 2020 Allocations



Discretionary Grants

The Court approved a grant of \$425,000 to the Ohio Access to Justice Foundation for its work in supporting the delivery of civil legal services to indigent persons. The Court also awarded a grant of \$765,000 to the Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program for alcohol, substance abuse, and mental health intervention programs. Together, these grants represent more than 4 percent and 7 percent, respectively, of the fund allocations for fiscal year 2020.

IV. Fund Balance and Projections

On June 30, 2019, the fund had a balance of \$4,242,297. In fiscal year 2020, the fund is projected to realize income of \$1,664,094 (including fees, reimbursements, and interest income) and to expend an estimated \$9,993,618. On June 30, 2020, the fund will have an estimated balance of \$11,537,687.

V. Audit

The Auditor of State conducts a complete audit of the Attorney Services Fund on a regular basis. The audit occurs at the same time as the audit of other funds appropriated to or collected by the Supreme Court. The most recent audit was conducted in the summer of 2019 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019. At this point, the staff is not aware of any findings or instances of noncompliance or internal control weaknesses reported for the Attorney Services Fund. The audit report is not expected to be released by the Auditor of the State until December 2019.

Attorney registration fees are deposited into a bank lockbox maintained by U.S. Bank, where they are invested in financial instruments. U.S. Bank was selected to maintain the fund's lockbox through a competitive bid process for moneys deposited and collected in fiscal year 2019.

VI. Investment Policy

The fund's moneys are managed in a conservative, risk-averse manner through investments made in compliance with the Uniform Depository Act, as set forth in R.C. Chapter 135, and amended by the Investment Reform Act of 1996. These and other state and federal laws require the fund's moneys not be placed at risk in the marketplace through investments in derivatives, reverse purchase agreements, or any method of leveraging.

The fund's investments are primarily in federal money market accounts avoiding high bank-insurance charges. The fund continues to seek more optimal investment options, as permitted by statute.

VII. Summary

The Attorney Services Fund allows the Supreme Court to maintain an effective and efficient system for licensing attorneys and regulating post-admission aspects of the practice of law, consistent with its responsibility under the Ohio Constitution. The fund also provides important financial resources to organizations that aid in the provision of legal services to the poor and assist lawyers who are suffering from alcoholism, substance abuse, or mental illness. All activities supported by the fund are invaluable in ensuring the public's continued trust and confidence in Ohio's legal system.

The fund is in a solid financial position and it is expected that it will maintain that position throughout fiscal year 2020.

VIII. Comments and Inquiries

Any comments and inquiries regarding this report or the fund may be directed to:

Jeffrey C. Hagler

Administrative Director, or

Gina White Palmer

Director of Attorney Services

The Supreme Court of Ohio
65 South Front Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215-3431



Schedule 1

Fund Expenditures FY 2018 and 2019/Allocations FY 2020

Office, Board, Commission	FY 2018 Expenditures	FY 2019 Allocations	FY 2019 Expenditures	% of FY 2019 Allocations Expended	FY 2020 Allocations	% of Total FY 2019 Allocations
Office of Disciplinary Counsel						
Operations Budget	\$3,013,300	\$3,271,080	\$3,220,725	98.5%	\$3,390,875	34.0%
Board on Professional Conduct						
Operations Budget	\$699,445	\$864,787	\$739,263	85.5%	\$831,000	8.3%
Reimbursement of Expenses	\$1,849,671	\$1,950,000	\$1,815,161	93.1%	\$1,950,000	19.5%
Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection						
Operations Budget	\$428,150	\$451,208	\$440,115	97.5%	\$465,256	4.7%
Trust Fund	\$1,400,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	100.0%	\$750,000	7.5%
Office of Attorney Services						
Operations Budget	\$1,018,443	\$1,072,187	\$1,054,929	98.4%	\$1,174,843	11.8%
Board on the Unauthorized Practice of Law						
Operations Budget	\$6,468	\$8,500	\$7,140	84.0%	\$10,000	0.1%
Reimbursement of Expenses	\$25,502	\$80,000	\$32,485	40.6%	\$55,000	0.6%
Commission on Professionalism						
Operations Budget	\$104,704	\$172,071	\$141,218	82.1%	\$171,044	1.7%
Commission on Certification of Attorneys as Specialists						
Operations Budget	\$1,527	\$5,200	\$3,222	62.0%	\$5,600	0.1%
Ohio Access to Justice Foundation						
Grant	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	100.0%	\$425,000	4.3%
Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program						
Grant	\$685,000	\$765,000	\$765,000	100.0%	\$765,000	7.7%
General/Miscellaneous						
Gov.Jud.R.	\$0	\$0	\$117	N/A	\$0	0.0%
TOTAL	\$9,632,210	\$10,040,033	\$9,619,375	95.8%	\$9,993,618	100.0%



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