

Rule 708. Committee on Character and Fitness

(a) At the November term in each year, the Supreme Court shall appoint a Committee on Character and Fitness in each of the judicial districts of this state, comprised of Illinois lawyers. In the First Judicial District the committee shall consist of no fewer than 30 members of the bar, and in the Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Judicial Districts, each committee shall consist of no fewer than 15 members of the bar. Unless the Court specifies a shorter term, all members shall be appointed for staggered three-year terms and shall serve until their successors are duly appointed and qualified. No member may be appointed to more than three full consecutive terms. Vacancies for any cause shall be filled by appointment of the Court for the unexpired term. The Court shall appoint a chairperson and a vice-chairperson for each committee. The chairperson may serve only one three-year term. The members of the Board of Admissions to the Bar shall be *ex-officio* members of the committees and are authorized to serve as members of hearing panels of any committee.

(b) Pursuant to the Rules of Procedure for the Board of Admissions to the Bar and the Committees on Character and Fitness, the Committee shall determine whether each applicant presently possesses good moral character and general fitness for admission to the practice of law. An applicant may be so recommended if the committee determines that his or her record of conduct demonstrates that he or she meets the essential eligibility requirements for the practice of law and justifies the trust of clients, adversaries, courts and others with respect to the professional duties owed to them. A record manifesting a failure to meet the essential eligibility requirements, including a deficiency in the honesty, trustworthiness, diligence, or reliability of an applicant, may constitute a basis for denial of admission.

(c) The essential eligibility requirements for the practice of law include the following: (1) the ability to learn, to recall what has been learned, to reason, and to analyze; (2) the ability to communicate clearly and logically with clients, attorneys, courts, and others; (3) the ability to exercise good judgment in conducting one's professional business; (4) the ability to conduct oneself with a high degree of honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness in all professional relationships and with respect to all legal obligations; (5) the ability to conduct oneself with respect for and in accordance with the law and the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct; (6) the ability to avoid acts that exhibit disregard for the health, safety, and welfare of others; (7) the ability to conduct oneself diligently and reliably in fulfilling all obligations to clients, attorneys, courts, creditors, and others; (8) the ability to use honesty and good judgment in financial dealings on behalf of oneself, clients, and others; (9) the ability to comply with deadlines and time constraints; and (10) the ability to conduct oneself properly and in a manner that engenders respect for the law and the profession.

(d) If required by the Committee or its Rules of Procedure, each applicant shall appear before the committee of his or her district or some member thereof and shall furnish the committee such evidence of his or her good moral character and general fitness to practice law as in the opinion of the committee would justify his or her admission to the bar.

(e) At all times prior to his or her admission to the bar of this state, each applicant is under a continuing duty to supplement and continue to report fully and completely to the Board of Admissions to the Bar and to the Committee on Character and Fitness all information required to be disclosed pursuant to any and all application documents and such further inquiries prescribed

by the Board and the Committee.

(f) If the Committee is of the opinion that the applicant is of good moral character and general fitness to practice law, it shall so certify to the Board of Admissions to the Bar, and the Board shall transmit such certification to the Court together with any additional information or recommendation the Board deems appropriate when all other admission requirements have been met. If the Committee is not of that opinion, it shall file with the Board of Admissions to the Bar a statement that it cannot so certify, together with a report of its findings and conclusions.

(g) Character and Fitness certification is valid for nine months from the date of certification. An applicant who has been so certified and who has not been admitted to practice within nine months must be recertified after filing the requisite character and fitness registration and paying the fee therefor in accordance with Rule 706.

(h) An applicant who has availed himself or herself of his or her full hearing rights before the Committee on Character and Fitness and who deems himself or herself aggrieved by the determination of the committee may, on notice to the committee by service upon the Director of Administration for the Board of Admissions in Springfield, petition the Supreme Court for review within 35 days after service of the Committee's decision upon the applicant, and, unless extended for good cause shown, the Committee shall have 28 days to respond. The director shall file the record of the hearing with the Supreme Court at the time that the response of the Committee is filed.

Amended effective November 15, 1971, and October 2, 1972; amended April 10, 1987, effective August 1, 1987; amended June 12, 1992, effective July 1, 1992; amended April 4, 1995, effective immediately; amended November 22, 2000, effective December 1, 2000; amended December 6, 2001, effective immediately; amended October 2, 2006, effective July 1, 2007; amended Nov. 26, 2013, effective Jan. 1, 2014.