



MARYLAND VOLUNTEER LAWYERS SERVICE

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Adopted by the MVLS Board on 9/22/21

Program Participant Complaints Against MVLS Staff

1. A participant who does not agree with MVLS's decision about whether to accept a case or MVLS's handling of a case may register a complaint. The paralegal should advise the client that if they are not satisfied with the resolution of the issue, they may submit a complaint in writing, by mail or email, to the Director of Program Management.

2. The Director of Program Management will determine if the client's complaint merits further action and inform the client of her decision in writing. If the complaint merits further action, the Director of Program Management will submit a proposal to the Executive Director for approval.

3. If a participant is dissatisfied with the Director of Program Management's handling of their complaint or decision, they may submit a complaint in writing to the Executive Director, who will investigate the complaint and provide a response within 15 days.

4. If the participant continues to be dissatisfied with the decision, they may file a complaint with the MVLS Board President. The complaint must be in writing and sent in care of MVLS Board President, 201 N. Charles Street, Suite 1400, Baltimore, MD 21201.

Program Participant Complaints Against a Volunteer Attorney

1. A participant that contacts MVLS with a complaint regarding a volunteer lawyer's handling of a case is referred to the MVLS paralegal that originally placed the case. The paralegal will inquire about and take down the relevant information regarding the problem. The paralegal will then contact the lawyer and attempt to mediate a resolution.

2. If the MVLS paralegal is unsuccessful in facilitating a resolution, or if the participant is still dissatisfied, the client may submit a complaint in writing to the Director of Program Management, who will determine if the client's complaint merits further action and inform the client of her decision in writing. If the complaint merits further action, the Director of Program Management will submit a proposal to the Executive Director for approval.

3. If a participant is dissatisfied with the Director of Program Management's handling of their complaint or decision, they may submit a complaint in writing to the

Executive Director, who will investigate the complaint and provide a response within 15 days.

4. If the participant continues to be dissatisfied with the decision, they may file a complaint with the MVLS Board President. The complaint must be in writing and sent in care of MVLS Board President, 201 N. Charles Street, Suite 1400, Baltimore, MD 21201.

Attorney Grievance Commission Complaints

1. If a complaint is filed against an attorney in an MVLS matter, the Director of Program Management will immediately inform the Executive Director, review the case file, the complaint, and discuss next steps with the Executive Director, which may include suspension from the MVLS panel.

2. If an attorney on panel receives any disciplinary action, short of suspension or disbarment, MVLS will automatically place the attorney on a 90-day suspension. For any attorney disbarred or placed on suspension, MVLS will immediately match that action, with removal or suspension from the panel. Attorneys who were formerly on panel and have not handled an open MVLS case for five or more years are no longer considered to be active members of the MVLS panel. If MVLS learns that an attorney who has not handled an MVLS case for five or more years has been subject to disciplinary action, MVLS will ensure that the attorney is not listed as an active member of our panel in our database but will not take any further action.

3. When an MVLS staff member learns of client complaints about a volunteer attorney that suggest significant violations of the Maryland Rules of Professional Responsibility, MVLS staff will immediately notify the Executive Director and Director of Program Management who will conduct an internal inquiry to determine the underlying facts and likely merit of the complaint. Once the inquiry is complete, the Executive Director will consult with the board president and outside counsel to make a final determination on whether to report the matter to the Attorney Grievance Commission.