

## COVID-19 FAQs

### BOARD OF BAR OVERSEERS, OFFICE OF BAR COUNSEL AND REGISTRATION

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic the Board of Bar Overseers, the Office of Bar Counsel and Attorney Registration are all currently closed to the public, but all entities remain open for business and are working remotely to accomplish their missions. For answers to the most common questions please read the following responses.

#### Is the Board of Bar Overseers holding hearings?

On March 16, 2020, the chair of the Board of Bar Overseers issued an order cancelling all evidentiary hearings that were scheduled between the date of the order and April 30, 2020. The board will consider hearings scheduled to take place after April 30 in due course. Updates will be posted on the board's web site.

In the same order, the board chair ordered that all in-person prehearing conferences between March 16-April 30, 2020 are cancelled. The hearing committee chair, in consultation with the parties and counsel, may convert in-person conferences to telephone or remote conferences. Prehearings that already are scheduled to take place telephonically or remotely will remain as scheduled.

#### What is the procedure for filing documents with the Board of Bar Overseers?

The filing deadlines for all motions, briefs, exhibit, witnesses and the like will remain in place. Requests for enlargements of time to file documents should be made to the hearing chair or board chair as appropriate. Reasonable requests will be liberally considered.

Consistent with SJC orders, the board will accept e-filed documents. It is not necessary to file both an electronic copy and a hard copy of the same document. Documents may be electronically signed.

The reader is advised to consult the BBO web site for updates and new information. The chair's March 16, 2020 order may be found on the web site.

#### Is the Office of Bar Counsel Open for Business?

The Office of Bar Counsel (OBC) is temporarily closed to the public, but OBC staff is working remotely to promote its mission.

#### Is the OBC answering its Ethics Hotline?

The OBC continues to provide guidance to attorneys who are confronted with ethical questions that attorneys are having difficulty answering. Massachusetts attorneys may contact the helpline on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between the hours of 2:00pm and 4:00pm by calling (617) 728-8750. The OBC does not provide formal ethics advice during these calls, and the guidance offered is not binding on either the caller or the OBC, but the OBC tries to identify the relevant ethics rules.

May I file a complaint about my attorney?

The OBC Attorney and Consumer Assistance Program (ACAP) is available as a source of assistance to people with questions or problems with their Massachusetts attorney. If a consumer has a grievance concerning an attorney you can call 617-728-8750 where you can leave a message for a member of the ACAP staff who will respond promptly and work to resolve your concerns or help you file a complaint.

Will my complaint be investigated while OBC works remotely?

OBC continues to work on pending investigations as permitted given the impact of COVID-19 on our efforts to conduct appropriate investigations. To determine the status of an investigation please contact OBC using the manner of communication previously provided or call 617-728-8750.

Will OBC continue work on matters being prosecuted?

OBC continues to work on cases that are pending before the Board of Bar overseers subject to the Board's Order related to the impact of COVID-19, dated March 16, 2020. See BBO FAQs above. If you need to contact an attorney or investigator working on a matter, please contact OBC using the manner of communication previously provided or call 617-728-8750.

Can I complete my annual attorney registration?

The annual attorney registration is ongoing and can be completed and submitted using the online registration system. The link to log in and register is:

<https://www.massbbo.org/CommunitiesLogin>.

Annual registration fees can be paid online in one of three ways: Check-by-Mail, Credit Card, or with a PayPal Account.

How may I contact the Attorney Registration Department with questions about my registration?

The Registration Department can be reached at (617) 728-8800 between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, or by email at [registrationdept@massbbo.org](mailto:registrationdept@massbbo.org). The registration staff is working remotely and visitors to the BBO offices are not being accepted at this time.