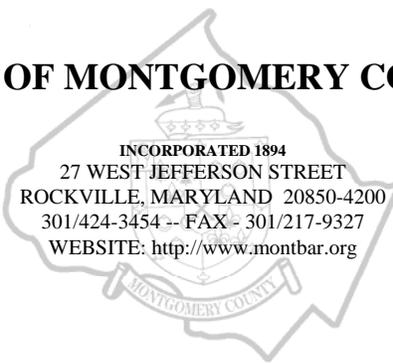


BAR ASSOCIATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND



RE: The Standing Committees on the
Resolution of Fee Dispute

Dear Complainant:

Thank you for your inquiry of the Montgomery County Bar Association regarding the Fee Dispute Resolution Committees. Over the past twenty (20) years, the Fee Dispute Resolution Committees have satisfactorily resolved more than 1,000 fee disputes between clients or former clients and their attorneys in Montgomery County.

The Committee is comprised of approximately fifty (50) attorneys, with a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences, who volunteer their time and experience in resolving complaints and disputes brought by clients or former clients regarding fees or costs paid or claimed for legal services rendered in Montgomery County. Complaints are investigated, and where disputes over which the Committee has jurisdiction are found to exist, they are negotiated to an amicable resolution, resolved through binding arbitration, or dismissed.

If you have a fee complaint or dispute involving an attorney who rendered services in Montgomery County, and you are unable to resolve it on your own with the attorney, you are encouraged to utilize the services of the Fee Dispute Resolution Committees.

In order for the Committees to have jurisdiction to resolve a fee complaint or dispute, the following circumstances must exist:

1. there must be a dispute between a client, or former client, and an attorney over a fee (or costs) claimed, charged or paid, which dispute is submitted in writing to the Committee by the client or former client; and
2. the attorney must be licensed in Maryland and must have rendered all or a substantial part of the services in question in Montgomery County.

It is very important, however, that before you submit a dispute to the Committee, you clearly understand the following:

1. The Committees do not have jurisdiction to determine if an attorney has committed a violation of the Rules of Professional Responsibility, nor are they the proper forum for determining whether a grievance has occurred. If you believe your attorney has violated the Rules of Professional Responsibility, you are encouraged to contact the Attorney Grievance Commission located in Annapolis, Maryland. If you file a grievance with the Attorney Grievance Commission, the Bar Association of Montgomery County, MD Standing Committee on the Resolution of Fee Disputes will be unable to address your fee dispute complaint until a decision has been rendered by the Commission.

2. If you believe or even suspect that your attorney has committed legal malpractice which has caused you damages, you should not submit a complaint to these Committees until you have consulted with an attorney of your own choosing who is experienced in legal malpractice who can advise you of the legal effect arbitration of a fee dispute might have on an underlying legal malpractice claim. A settlement of a fee dispute, either by negotiation or binding arbitration, might negate an underlying claim for legal malpractice. The Committees cannot arbitrate claims of legal malpractice, only fee disputes.

The fee dispute resolution services provided by the Committees are free to you. To initiate the service, the Committees must receive a complaint letter and Waiver and Acknowledgement form from you - the client or former client.

The complaint must be in writing, identifying the parties to the dispute, and stating with clarity and brevity the nature of the complaint.

The complaint must be mailed or delivered by you to the Fee Dispute Resolution Committees, c/o the Montgomery County Bar Association, 27 West Jefferson Street, Rockville, Maryland 20850.

Upon receipt, your complaint will be assigned to one of three (3) Committees working independently of each other, to assure that the attorney involved is not a member of the Committee to which the complaint is assigned.

The Committee Chair will assign the complaint to a member of the Committee who will contact you to gather further information and investigate your complaint. The investigating committee member will not contact the attorney involved until you authorize him or her to do so.

If a dispute is found to exist over which the Committee has jurisdiction, the Committee member assigned to investigate your complaint will then attempt, with your consent, to amicably resolve it with the attorney involved.

If an amicable resolution cannot be negotiated, you and the attorney involved will be asked to consent in writing to binding arbitration before a Committee member acting as a single arbitrator if the amount in dispute is \$5000.00 or more. The outcome of the arbitration will then be binding on both you and the attorney involved.

Enclosed is a copy of the Rules for the Standing Committees on the Resolution of Fee Disputes.

Once more, to initiate complaint, you must put your complaint in writing, identify yourself and the attorney or attorneys involved, and state with clarity and brevity the nature of your complaint. Also, you must review the enclosed Waiver and Acknowledgement. If its contents are acceptable to you, please sign and return it with your complaint letter.

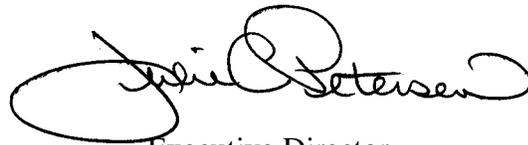
The complaint letter, along with the Wavier and Acknowledge form must be mailed or delivered to:

Fee Dispute Resolution Committee
c/o Bar Association of Montgomery County, MD
27 West Jefferson Street
Rockville, Maryland 20850

You will be contacted shortly after your complaint and Waiver and Acknowledgement are received and assigned for investigation.

Thank you again for your inquiry. We hope the service of the Committees may be of assistance to you.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julie Peterson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and end.

Executive Director

JP:cb