

West's Annotated California Codes  
Rules of the State Bar of California (Refs & Annos)  
California Rules of Professional Conduct (Refs & Annos)  
Chapter 3. Professional Relationship with Clients

Prof.Conduct, Rule 3-310

Rule 3-310. Avoiding the Representation of Adverse Interests

Currentness

(A) For purposes of this rule:

- (1) "Disclosure" means informing the client or former client of the relevant circumstances and of the actual and reasonably foreseeable adverse consequences to the client or former client;
- (2) "Informed written consent" means the client's or former client's written agreement to the representation following written disclosure;
- (3) "Written" means any writing as defined in [Evidence Code section 250](#).

(B) A member shall not accept or continue representation of a client without providing written disclosure to the client where:

- (1) The member has a legal, business, financial, professional, or personal relationship with a party or witness in the same matter; or
- (2) The member knows or reasonably should know that:
  - (a) the member previously had a legal, business, financial, professional, or personal relationship with a party or witness in the same matter; and
  - (b) the previous relationship would substantially affect the member's representation; or
- (3) The member has or had a legal, business, financial, professional, or personal relationship with another person or entity the member knows or reasonably should know would be affected substantially by resolution of the matter; or
- (4) The member has or had a legal, business, financial, or professional interest in the subject matter of the representation.

(C) A member shall not, without the informed written consent of each client:

- (1) Accept representation of more than one client in a matter in which the interests of the clients potentially conflict; or
  - (2) Accept or continue representation of more than one client in a matter in which the interests of the clients actually conflict;  
or
  - (3) Represent a client in a matter and at the same time in a separate matter accept as a client a person or entity whose interest in the first matter is adverse to the client in the first matter.
- (D)** A member who represents two or more clients shall not enter into an aggregate settlement of the claims of or against the clients without the informed written consent of each client.
- (E)** A member shall not, without the informed written consent of the client or former client, accept employment adverse to the client or former client where, by reason of the representation of the client or former client, the member has obtained confidential information material to the employment.
- (F)** A member shall not accept compensation for representing a client from one other than the client unless:
- (1) There is no interference with the member's independence of professional judgment or with the client-lawyer relationship;  
and
  - (2) Information relating to representation of the client is protected as required by [Business and Professions Code section 6068, subdivision \(e\)](#); and
  - (3) The member obtains the client's informed written consent, provided that no disclosure or consent is required if:
    - (a) such nondisclosure is otherwise authorized by law; or
    - (b) the member is rendering legal services on behalf of any public agency which provides legal services to other public agencies or the public.

## DISCUSSION

Rule 3-310 is not intended to prohibit a member from representing parties having antagonistic positions on the same legal question that has arisen in different cases, unless representation of either client would be adversely affected.

Other rules and laws may preclude making adequate disclosure under this rule. If such disclosure is precluded, informed written consent is likewise precluded. (See, e.g., [Business and Professions Code section 6068, subdivision \(e\)](#).)

Paragraph (B) is not intended to apply to the relationship of a member to another party's lawyer. Such relationships are governed by [rule 3-320](#).

Paragraph (B) is not intended to require either the disclosure of the new engagement to a former client or the consent of the former client to the new engagement. However, both disclosure and consent are required if paragraph (E) applies.

While paragraph (B) deals with the issues of adequate disclosure to the present client or clients of the member's present or past relationships to other parties or witnesses or present interest in the subject matter of the representation, paragraph (E) is intended to protect the confidences of another present or former client. These two paragraphs are to apply as complementary provisions.

Paragraph (B) is intended to apply only to a member's own relationships or interests, unless the member knows that a partner or associate in the same firm as the member has or had a relationship with another party or witness or has or had an interest in the subject matter of the representation.

Subparagraphs (C)(1) and (C)(2) are intended to apply to all types of legal employment, including the concurrent representation of multiple parties in litigation or in a single transaction or in some other common enterprise or legal relationship. Examples of the latter include the formation of a partnership for several partners or a corporation for several shareholders, the preparation of an ante-nuptial agreement, or joint or reciprocal wills for a husband and wife, or the resolution of an "uncontested" marital dissolution. In such situations, for the sake of convenience or economy, the parties may well prefer to employ a single counsel, but a member must disclose the potential adverse aspects of such multiple representation (e.g., [Evid. Code, § 962](#)) and must obtain the informed written consent of the clients thereto pursuant to subparagraph (C)(1). Moreover, if the potential adversity should become actual, the member must obtain the further informed written consent of the clients pursuant to subparagraph (C)(2).

Subparagraph (C)(3) is intended to apply to representations of clients in both litigation and transactional matters.

In [State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company v. Federal Insurance Company](#) (1999) 72 Cal.App.4th 1422 [86 Cal.Rptr.2d 20], the court held that subparagraph (C)(3) was violated when a member, retained by an insurer to defend one suit, and while that suit was still pending, filed a direct action against the same insurer in an unrelated action without securing the insurer's consent. Notwithstanding [State Farm](#), subparagraph (C)(3) is not intended to apply with respect to the relationship between an insurer and a member when, in each matter, the insurer's interest is only as an indemnity provider and not as a direct party to the action.

There are some matters in which the conflicts are such that written consent may not suffice for non-disciplinary purposes. (See [Woods v. Superior Court](#) (1983) 149 Cal.App.3d 931 [197 Cal.Rptr. 185]; [Klemm v. Superior Court](#) (1977) 75 Cal.App.3d 893 [142 Cal.Rptr. 509]; [Ishmael v. Millington](#) (1966) 241 Cal.App.2d 520 [50 Cal.Rptr. 592].)

Paragraph (D) is not intended to apply to class action settlements subject to court approval.

Paragraph (F) is not intended to abrogate existing relationships between insurers and insureds whereby the insurer has the contractual right to unilaterally select counsel for the insured, where there is no conflict of interest. (See [San Diego Navy Federal Credit Union v. Cumis Insurance Society](#) (1984) 162 Cal.App.3d 358 [208 Cal.Rptr. 494].)

### Credits

(Adopted Nov. 28, 1988, eff. May 27, 1989. As amended, eff. Sept. 14, 1992; March 3, 2003.)

### [Notes of Decisions \(800\)](#)

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