

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Association of Forensic Document Examiners

PREFACE

The statements in this Code of Professional Responsibility generally express the standards of professional conduct expected of forensic document examiners who are members of the Association of Forensic Document Examiners. It is our responsibility as professionals to maintain the highest standards of integrity in our relationships with clients and in the opinions expressed concerning evidence examined.

1. SCOPE OF EMPLOYMENT

- 1.1 A document examiner may act as a consultant in situations that require examination of physical evidence for the purpose of putting forth an objective opinion with regard to that evidence.
- 1.2 A document examiner may act as an expert witness and provide sworn testimony with respect to an opinion that results from an examination of the evidence.

2. OBLIGATIONS TO CLIENT

- 2.1 A document examiner shall:
 - 2.1.1 Be diligent in completing the assignments undertaken in a timely manner.
 - 2.1.2 Render an honest opinion that is supportable by the evidence.
 - 2.1.3. Be available to support a verbal or written opinion with testimony before a court of law, a government body, an arbitration panel, or any other mediating body selected to preside over the issue.
 - 2.1.4 Preserve the evidence in his/her trust.
 - 2.1.5 Protect the confidentiality of information provided by his/her client or agency.
 - 2.1.6 Protect the confidences of the client or agency from being used to their disadvantage.
 - 2.1.7 Prevent the confidences of the client or agency from being used to one's own advantage.
 - 2.1.8. Refuse to communicate with individuals of adverse interest unless granted permission by the client or agency.
 - 2.1.9 Refuse to accept such assignments that exceed one's expertise.

3. MAINTAINING INTEGRITY

- 3.1 A document examiner shall:
 - 3.1.1 Conduct business practices in a professional manner and avoid even the appearance of professional impropriety.
 - 3.1.2 Withdraw from an assignment when asked to represent any opinion contrary to his/her honest opinion, misrepresent the documents provided for examination, or become involved in an illegal course of conduct.
 - 3.1.3. Withdraw from an assignment if s/he becomes involved in a conflict of interest regarding any issues concerning the case.
 - 3.1.4. Withdraw from an assignment if undesirable conduct on the part of the client or the attorney of the client, makes it difficult, if not impossible, to complete the assignment.

AFDE Code of Professional Responsibility (continued)

3.1.4.1 Immediately report to a supervisor (or higher authority as necessary) any conduct on the part of an individual within the agency, or attorney for the agency, which renders it difficult, if not impossible, to carry on with the assignment to be consistent with the AFDE Code of Professional Responsibility.

3.1.5. Always seek and report the truth as represented in the evidence examined.

4. BUSINESS PRACTICES

- 4.1 The examination of documents shall be conducted using scientific and forensic procedures generally recognized by the profession as an acceptable means to evaluate evidence.
- 4.2 A document examiner who is engaged in the practice of forensic document examination and another profession or business shall not so indicate on his letterhead, business cards, office sign, or public advertising notwithstanding the following exceptions:
 - 4.2.1 The existence of a corporation or a partnership in which the additional services offered are directly related to other forensic services, such as evidence investigation, evidence photography, or similar services.
- 4.3 Letterheads, business cards, announcements, office signs and similar professional necessities, shall be dignified in form.
- 4.4 Advertisements shall not contain statements which may mislead the reader concerning the abilities or services of the document examiner.
- 4.5 A resume or curriculum vitae shall accurately represent the examiner's credentials, number of years in the professional practice of document examination, the educational and specialized training received, diversity of clients and any other information put forth pertaining to his/her expertise.
- 4.6 The document examiner shall not represent him/herself to the public as a corporation or a partnership, if in fact a legal entity does not exist.

5. FEES

- 5.1 A document examiner shall not accept an assignment on a contingency basis.
- 5.2 A document examiner shall be just in establishing his/her fees and they shall be commensurate with the services requested.
- 5.3 Reasonable fees may incorporate any or all of the following considerations:
 - 5.3.1 The complexity of the assignment and the time necessary to render an opinion.
 - 5.3.2 The likelihood that acceptance of an assignment will preclude assignments from other sources.
 - 5.3.3 The time limitations imposed by the client or the circumstances.
 - 5.3.4 The nature and length of the professional relationship with the client.
 - 5.3.5 The experience, reputation and ability of the examiner to perform the examination(s).
- 5.4 An examiner who withdraws from an assignment shall refund promptly any unearned part of a fee paid in advance.

Pledged to this _____ day of _____, 20_____.

Signature: _____