

§ 84-32.1. Confidentiality of records.

(a) All documents, papers, letters, recordings, electronic records, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristic, in the possession of the State Bar or its staff, employees, legal counsel, councilors, and Grievance Committee advisory members concerning any investigation, inquiry, complaint, disability, or disciplinary matter in connection with the State Bar Grievance Committee, the grievance review panel, the State Bar's Trust Accounting Supervisory Program, or any audit of an attorney trust account shall not be considered public records within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes.

(b) All documents, papers, letters, recordings, electronic records, or other documentary materials containing or reflecting the deliberations of the Disciplinary Hearing Commission in disciplinary or disability matters shall not be considered public records within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes.

(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, any record, paper, or other document containing information collected and compiled by or on behalf of the State Bar that is admitted as evidence in any hearing before the Disciplinary Hearing Commission, or any court or tribunal, shall be a public record within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes unless it is admitted into evidence under seal by order of the Disciplinary Hearing Commission, or the court or tribunal in which the proceeding is held.

(d) All documents, papers, letters, recordings, electronic records, or other documentary materials in the possession of the State Bar or its staff, employees, legal counsel, and Lawyer Assistance Program volunteers, relating in any way to a member's participation or prospective participation in the Lawyer Assistance Program, including, but not limited to, any medical, counseling, substance abuse, or mental health records, shall not be considered public records within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes. Neither the State Bar nor any person acting under the authority of the State Bar or of the Lawyer Assistance Program shall be required to produce or testify regarding the contents or existence of such documents.

(e) All documents, papers, letters, recordings, electronic records, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristic, in possession of the State Bar or its staff, employees, legal counsel, councilors, or Ethics Committee advisory members concerning any request for ethics advice shall not be considered public records within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes unless the material, with the consent of the inquiring party, appears in a public agenda of the Ethics Committee of the North Carolina State Bar. (2011-267, s. 5; 2022-61, s. 2.)