



The State Bar *of California*

# **California**

# **Rules of Professional Conduct**

2023

## RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

### Rule 3.8 Special Responsibilities of a Prosecutor

The prosecutor in a criminal case shall:

(a) not institute or continue to prosecute a charge that the prosecutor knows\* is not supported by probable cause;

(b) make reasonable\* efforts to assure that the accused has been advised of the right to, and the procedure for obtaining, counsel and has been given reasonable\* opportunity to obtain counsel;

(c) not seek to obtain from an unrepresented accused a waiver of important pretrial rights unless the tribunal\* has approved the appearance of the accused in propria persona;

(d) make timely disclosure to the defense of all evidence or information known\* to the prosecutor that the prosecutor knows\* or reasonably should know\* tends to negate the guilt of the accused, mitigate the offense, or mitigate the sentence, except when the prosecutor is relieved of this responsibility by a protective order of the tribunal;\* and

(e) exercise reasonable\* care to prevent persons\* under the supervision or direction of the prosecutor, including investigators, law enforcement personnel, employees or other persons\* assisting or associated with the prosecutor in a criminal case from making an extrajudicial statement that the prosecutor would be prohibited from making under rule 3.6.

(f) When a prosecutor knows\* of new, credible and material evidence creating a reasonable\* likelihood that a convicted defendant did not commit an offense of which the defendant was convicted, the prosecutor shall:

(1) promptly disclose that evidence to an appropriate court or authority, and

(2) if the conviction was obtained in the prosecutor's jurisdiction,

(i) promptly disclose that evidence to the defendant unless a court authorizes delay, and

(ii) undertake further investigation, or make reasonable\* efforts to cause an investigation, to determine whether the

defendant was convicted of an offense that the defendant did not commit.

(g) When a prosecutor knows\* of clear and convincing evidence establishing that a defendant in the prosecutor's jurisdiction was convicted of an offense that the defendant did not commit, the prosecutor shall seek to remedy the conviction.

#### Comment

[1] A prosecutor has the responsibility of a minister of justice and not simply that of an advocate. This responsibility carries with it specific obligations to see that the defendant is accorded procedural justice, that guilt is decided upon the basis of sufficient evidence, and that special precautions are taken to prevent and to rectify the conviction of innocent persons.\* This rule is intended to achieve those results. All lawyers in government service remain bound by rules 3.1 and 3.4.

[2] Paragraph (c) does not forbid the lawful questioning of an uncharged suspect who has knowingly\* waived the right to counsel and the right to remain silent. Paragraph (c) also does not forbid prosecutors from seeking from an unrepresented accused a reasonable\* waiver of time for initial appearance or preliminary hearing as a means of facilitating the accused's voluntary cooperation in an ongoing law enforcement investigation.

[3] The disclosure obligations in paragraph (d) are not limited to evidence or information that is material as defined by *Brady v. Maryland* (1963) 373 U.S. 83 [83 S.Ct. 1194] and its progeny. For example, these obligations include, at a minimum, the duty to disclose impeachment evidence or information that a prosecutor knows\* or reasonably should know\* casts significant doubt on the accuracy or admissibility of witness testimony on which the prosecution intends to rely. Paragraph (d) does not require disclosure of information protected from disclosure by federal or California laws and rules, as interpreted by case law or court orders. Nothing in this rule is intended to be applied in a manner inconsistent with statutory and constitutional provisions governing discovery in California courts. A disclosure's timeliness will vary with the circumstances, and paragraph (d) is not intended to impose timing requirements different from those established by statutes, procedural rules, court orders, and case law interpreting those authorities and the California and federal constitutions.



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[4] The exception in paragraph (d) recognizes that a prosecutor may seek an appropriate protective order from the tribunal\* if disclosure of information to the defense could result in substantial\* harm to an individual or to the public interest.

[5] Paragraph (e) supplements rule 3.6, which prohibits extrajudicial statements that have a substantial\* likelihood of prejudicing an adjudicatory proceeding. Paragraph (e) is not intended to restrict the statements which a prosecutor may make which comply with rule 3.6(b) or 3.6(c).

[6] Prosecutors have a duty to supervise the work of subordinate lawyers and nonlawyer employees or agents. (See rules 5.1 and 5.3.) Ordinarily, the reasonable\* care standard of paragraph (e) will be satisfied if the prosecutor issues the appropriate cautions to law enforcement personnel and other relevant individuals.

[7] When a prosecutor knows\* of new, credible and material evidence creating a reasonable\* likelihood that a person\* outside the prosecutor's jurisdiction was convicted of a crime that the person\* did not commit, paragraph (f) requires prompt disclosure to the court or other appropriate authority, such as the chief prosecutor of the jurisdiction where the conviction occurred. If the conviction was obtained in the prosecutor's jurisdiction, paragraph (f) requires the prosecutor to examine the evidence and undertake further investigation to determine whether the defendant is in fact innocent or make reasonable\* efforts to cause another appropriate authority to undertake the necessary investigation, and to promptly disclose the evidence to the court and, absent court authorized delay, to the defendant. Disclosure to a represented defendant must be made through the defendant's counsel, and, in the case of an unrepresented defendant, would ordinarily be accompanied by a request to a court for the appointment of counsel to assist the defendant in taking such legal measures as may be appropriate. (See rule 4.2.) Statutes may require a prosecutor to preserve certain types of evidence in criminal matters. (See Pen. Code, §§ 1417.1-1417.9.) In addition, prosecutors must obey file preservation orders concerning rights of discovery guaranteed by the Constitution and statutory provisions. (See *People v. Superior Court (Morales)* (2017) 2 Cal.5th 523 [213 Cal.Rptr.3d 581]; *Shorts v. Superior Court* (2018) 24 Cal.App.5th 709 [234 Cal.Rptr.3d 392].)

[8] Under paragraph (g), once the prosecutor knows\* of clear and convincing evidence that the defendant was convicted of an offense that the defendant did not commit, the prosecutor must seek to remedy the conviction. Depending upon the circumstances, steps to remedy the conviction could include disclosure of the evidence to the defendant, requesting that the court appoint counsel for an unrepresented indigent defendant and, where appropriate, notifying the court that the prosecutor has knowledge that the defendant did not commit the offense of which the defendant was convicted.

[9] A prosecutor's independent judgment, made in good faith, that the new evidence is not of such nature as to trigger the obligations of paragraphs (f) and (g), though subsequently determined to have been erroneous, does not constitute a violation of this rule.

*[Publisher's Note: Comment [7] was amended by order of the Supreme Court, effective June 1, 2020.]*

### Rule 3.9 Advocate in Nonadjudicative Proceedings

A lawyer representing a client before a legislative body or administrative agency in connection with a pending nonadjudicative matter or proceeding shall disclose that the appearance is in a representative capacity, except when the lawyer seeks information from an agency that is available to the public.

#### Comment

This rule only applies when a lawyer represents a client in connection with an official hearing or meeting of a governmental agency or a legislative body to which the lawyer or the lawyer's client is presenting evidence or argument. It does not apply to representation of a client in a negotiation or other bilateral transaction with a governmental agency or in connection with an application for a license or other privilege or the client's compliance with generally applicable reporting requirements, such as the filing of income-tax returns. This rule also does not apply to the representation of a client in connection with an investigation or examination of the client's affairs conducted by government investigators or examiners. Representation in such matters is governed by rules 4.1 through 4.4. This rule does not require a lawyer to disclose a client's identity.



# The State Bar of California

## **Rule 5-110 Special Responsibilities of a Prosecutor**

### **Previous Rules**

*Rules of Professional Conduct*

### **Rule 5-110 Special Responsibilities of a Prosecutor**

(Rule approved by the Supreme Court, effective Nov. 2, 2017)

The prosecutor in a criminal case shall:

- (A) Not institute or continue to prosecute a charge that the prosecutor knows is not supported by probable cause;
- (B) Make reasonable efforts to assure that the accused has been advised of the right to, and the procedure for obtaining, counsel and has been given reasonable opportunity to obtain counsel;
- (C) Not seek to obtain from an unrepresented accused a waiver of important pretrial rights unless the tribunal has approved the appearance of the accused in propria persona;
- (D) Make timely disclosure to the defense of all evidence or information known to the prosecutor that the prosecutor knows or reasonably should know tends to negate the guilt of the accused, mitigate the offense, or mitigate the sentence, except when the prosecutor is relieved of this responsibility by a protective order of the tribunal; and
- (E) Exercise reasonable care to prevent persons under the supervision or direction of the prosecutor, including investigators, law enforcement personnel, employees or other persons assisting or associated with the prosecutor in a criminal case from making an extrajudicial statement that the prosecutor would be prohibited from making under rule 5-120.
- (F) When a prosecutor knows of new, credible and material evidence creating a reasonable likelihood that a convicted defendant did not commit an offense of which the defendant was convicted, the prosecutor shall:
  - (1) Promptly disclose that evidence to an appropriate court or authority, and
  - (2) If the conviction was obtained in the prosecutor's jurisdiction,
    - (a) Promptly disclose that evidence to the defendant unless a court authorizes delay, and
    - (b) Undertake further investigation, or make reasonable efforts to cause an investigation, to determine whether the defendant was convicted of an offense that the defendant did not commit.
- (G) When a prosecutor knows of clear and convincing evidence establishing that a defendant in the prosecutor's jurisdiction was convicted of an offense that the defendant did not commit, the prosecutor



shall seek to remedy the conviction.

**Discussion:**

[1] A prosecutor has the responsibility of a minister of justice and not simply that of an advocate. This responsibility carries with it specific obligations to see that the defendant is accorded procedural justice, that guilt is decided upon the basis of sufficient evidence, and that special precautions are taken to prevent and to rectify the conviction of innocent persons. Rule 5-110 is intended to achieve those results. All lawyers in government service remain bound by rules 3-200 and 5-220.

[2] Paragraph (C) does not forbid the lawful questioning of an uncharged suspect who has knowingly waived the right to counsel and the right to remain silent. Paragraph (C) also does not forbid prosecutors from seeking from an unrepresented accused a reasonable waiver of time for initial appearance or preliminary hearing as a means of facilitating the accused's voluntary cooperation in an ongoing law enforcement investigation.

[3] The disclosure obligations in paragraph (D) are not limited to evidence or information that is material as defined by *Brady v. Maryland* (1963) 373 U.S. 83 [83 S. Ct. 1194] and its progeny. For example, these obligations include, at a minimum, the duty to disclose impeachment evidence or information that a prosecutor knows or reasonably should know casts significant doubt on the accuracy or admissibility of witness testimony on which the prosecution intends to rely. Paragraph (D) does not require disclosure of information protected from disclosure by federal or California laws and rules, as interpreted by case law or court orders. Nothing in this rule is intended to be applied in a manner inconsistent with statutory and constitutional provisions governing discovery in California courts. A disclosure's timeliness will vary with the circumstances, and paragraph (D) is not intended to impose timing requirements different from those established by statutes, procedural rules, court orders, and case law interpreting those authorities and the California and federal constitutions.

[4] The exception in paragraph (D) recognizes that a prosecutor may seek an appropriate protective order from the tribunal if disclosure of information to the defense could result in substantial harm to an individual or to the public interest.

[5] Paragraph (E) supplements rule 5-120, which prohibits extrajudicial statements that have a substantial likelihood of prejudicing an adjudicatory proceeding. Paragraph (E) is not intended to restrict the statements which a prosecutor may make which comply with rule 5-120(B) or 5-120(C).

[6] Prosecutors have a duty to supervise the work of subordinate lawyers and nonlawyer employees or agents. (See rule 3-110, Discussion.) Ordinarily, the reasonable care standard of paragraph (E) will be satisfied if the prosecutor issues the appropriate cautions to law enforcement personnel and other relevant individuals.

[7] When a prosecutor knows of new, credible and material evidence creating a reasonable likelihood that a person outside the prosecutor's jurisdiction was convicted of a crime that the person did not commit, paragraph (F) requires prompt disclosure to the court or other appropriate authority, such as the chief

prosecutor of the jurisdiction where the conviction occurred. If the conviction was obtained in the prosecutor's jurisdiction, paragraph (F) requires the prosecutor to examine the evidence and undertake further investigation to determine whether the defendant is in fact innocent or make reasonable efforts to cause another appropriate authority to undertake the necessary investigation, and to promptly disclose the evidence to the court and, absent court authorized delay, to the defendant. Disclosure to a represented defendant must be made through the defendant's counsel, and, in the case of an unrepresented defendant, would ordinarily be accompanied by a request to a court for the appointment of counsel to assist the defendant in taking such legal measures as may be appropriate. (See rule 2-100.)

[8] Under paragraph (G), once the prosecutor knows of clear and convincing evidence that the defendant was convicted of an offense that the defendant did not commit, the prosecutor must seek to remedy the conviction. Depending upon the circumstances, steps to remedy the conviction could include disclosure of the evidence to the defendant, requesting that the court appoint counsel for an unrepresented indigent defendant and, where appropriate, notifying the court that the prosecutor has knowledge that the defendant did not commit the offense of which the defendant was convicted.

[9] A prosecutor's independent judgment, made in good faith, that the new evidence is not of such nature as to trigger the obligations of sections (F) and (G), though subsequently determined to have been erroneous, does not constitute a violation of rule 5-110. (Amended by order of Supreme Court, operative Nov. 2, 2017.)