

2025 Spring Public Defender Conference

Session Twelve:

ETHICS: The Power of Clear, Compassionate Client Communication

Friday, April 25, 2025

11:15am – 12:15pm

Demetrice Williams Wells

1

The Mississippi Bar's Lawyer's Creed

The Lawyer's Creed expresses ideals to which members of the legal profession should aspire in their actions with fellow professionals, clients and adverse parties.

To my clients, I offer faithfulness, competence, diligence, and good judgment. I will strive to represent you as I would want to be represented and to be worthy of your trust.



2

Mississippi Rule of Professional Responsibility


Rule 1.4

a) A lawyer shall keep a client reasonably informed about the status of a matter and promptly comply with reasonable requests for information.

(b) A lawyer shall explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions regarding the representation

► **COMMENT:** *The client should have sufficient information to participate intelligently in decisions concerning the objectives of the representation and the means by which they are to be pursued, to the extent the client is willing and able to do so.*

3



YOUR COMMUNICATION IS COVERED

What's Covered Under Attorney Client Privilege?

The attorney-client privilege in the United States is often defined by reference to the 5 Cs:

- (1) Communication
- (2) Made in Confidence
- (3) Between a Client
- (4) and Counsel
- (5) for the purpose of seeking or providing legal Counsel or advice

4

Initial CLIENT Communication

You NEVER get a second chance to make a first impression!

- ❖ Be Prepared
- ❖ Give your client your attention
- ❖ Review files, reports, questionnaires (whatever information) before going to meet your client
- ❖ Be Professional, Be Respectful, and Be Kind



Client Information Sheet

Name _____ Date _____ Age _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Work _____

Date of Birth _____ Ethnic Background _____

Occupation _____ Employer _____

Years of School Completed _____ Currently in school? _____

Single _____ Married _____ Divorced _____ Separated _____ Partnered _____

Spouse/Partner (s) _____

Name _____ Age _____

Occupation _____ Employer _____

Name and Age of Children _____

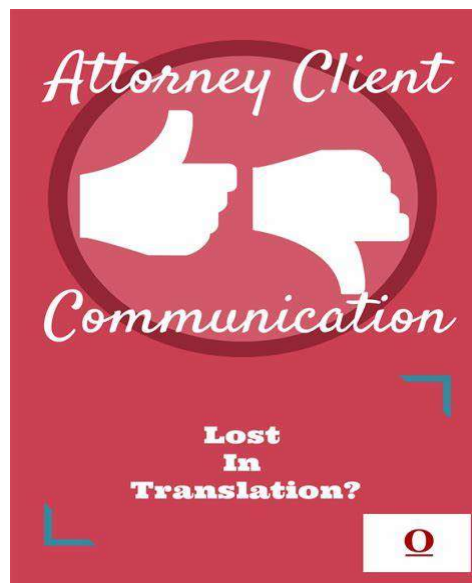
Who referred you? _____



5

Client #1:

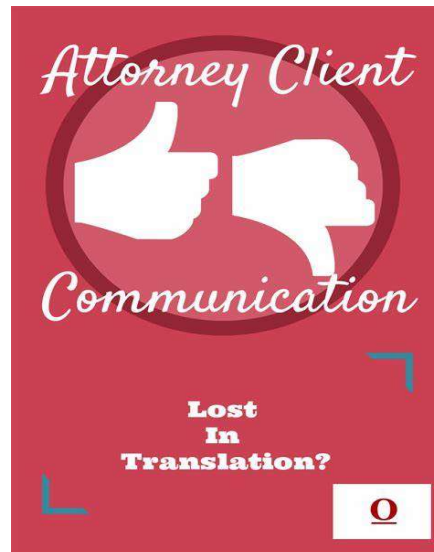
Client A is a 16 year old male charged with Murder. He lives with his grandmother who is disabled. He is in 11th grade and has never been arrested for anything.



6

Client #2

Client B is a 32 year old female charged with 7 counts of Auto Burglary. She has two prior convictions for burglary and has been indicted as a habitual. She also has a substance abuse problem.



7

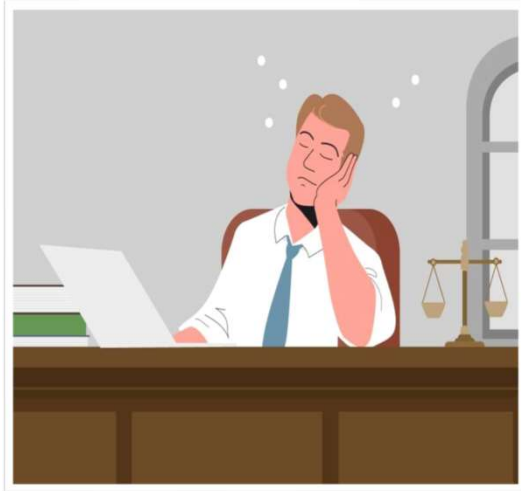
Client #3

Client C is a 25 year old male charged with Capital Murder. Trial is set and just learned that the State is going to seek the Death Penalty. Your client's wife just gave birth to their first son yesterday.



8

INEFFECTIVE CLIENT ATTORNEY COMMUNICATION



- ▶ Infrequent updates on case status
- ▶ Overuse of legal jargon
- ▶ Inconsistent communication methods
- ▶ Delayed responses
- ▶ Failure to set expectations
- ▶ Poor communication leading to misunderstandings and loss of trust.

9

Practical Steps for Better Communication

To exceed client expectations, attorneys should focus on two critical areas:

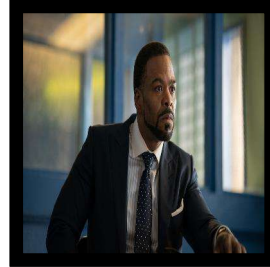
Listening and Regular Communication.

10

Listening

Anxious clients need to feel heard. Attorneys should:

- ❖ Listen carefully to their clients' goals and concerns without interrupting.
- ❖ Consider the emotions driving the conversation and respond empathetically.
- ❖ Validate the client by repeating back what they've heard before responding.
- ❖ Clients who feel their attorney is truly listening are more likely to trust and feel satisfied with the legal process.



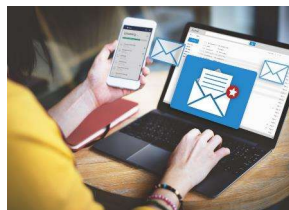
11

Communicate Regularly

The illusion of communication is a common pitfall. Attorneys may think they are communicating enough, but clients often feel differently. Regular communication should include:

- ❖ Updates on the case's progress.
- ❖ Explanations of any legal terms or processes the client may not understand.
- ❖ Regularly scheduled check-ins, even if there is nothing new to report.

This consistent communication helps clients feel informed, valued, and respected.



12



HAPPY CLIENT = HAPPY LAWYER

- ▶ Strong client communication directly builds trust and loyalty. When clients know they can count on clear, consistent updates and responses from you and your team, they're much more likely to assist you and help you get the best outcomes for them.
- ▶ Effective communication is not just a courtesy; it is a fundamental aspect of the attorney-client relationship that can significantly impact the outcome of a legal case.
- ▶ By listening carefully, managing expectations, and maintaining regular communication, attorneys can build stronger, more trusting relationships with their clients. In doing so, they not only enhance their professional reputation but prevent bar complaints and disciplinary actions.

dreamstime.com ID 132347027 © motortion

13



**SOMEBODY
GOTTA
DO IT**

That SOMEBODY IS YOU!!!

14

QUESTIONS



15

The WILLIAMS WELLS LAW FIRM, PLLC

Demetrice W. Wells, Esq.

4854 Main Street

Flora, MS 39071

Phone: 601-879-8118 or 601-502-3374

dwellsesquire@gmail.com

P.O. Box 951

Flora, MS 39071

Fax: (601)879-8298



“Noone is as bad as the worst thing they have ever done.”

16

2025 Spring Public
Defender Conference

Session Twelve:

ETHICS: The Power of
Clear, Compassionate
Client Communication

Friday, April 25, 2025
11:15am – 12:15pm
Demetrice Williams Wells

