



DAY OF CIVILITY GUIDE

Conduct Your Own Local Bar Association
Day Of Civility Celebration

Suggested steps to bring your bench and
bar together with **one mind on civility!**

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What Is a Day of Civility and Why Hold One?

Members of the bench and bar talk frequently about how the conduct of lawyers must be improved, but is talk enough? Many judges and lawyers believe concerted action is necessary. To that end, judges and lawyers in some local bars held a true celebration of the importance of civility by setting aside a day where the practice of law focuses upon civility as the most powerful conduct lawyers can engage in for the effective functioning of our legal system. That day was declared a Day of Civility.

To kick off the Day of Civility, the Dallas Bar Association sent a letter to the entire bar that was signed by all of the presiding judges in that county that said in part: “ We... strongly encourage you to participate in reaffirming the Texas Lawyer’s Creed...by conducting yourself with the utmost courtesy and professionalism toward judges, adversaries, peers, workplace colleagues and in performing your duties to your clients, and with the highest degree of civility toward other counsel and their clients.” That same letter invited the bar to attend a Day of Civility luncheon and seminar addressing the importance of civility, while it instructed those new to the profession about the conduct expected of them.

Where did this spirit of professionalism come from? It was the Texas Supreme Court and Court of Criminal Appeals that renewed the spirit of professionalism and impressed upon the bar that proper lawyer conduct is much more than avoiding the violation of the disciplinary rules. Those courts decided it was time to stand up for professionalism and notably civility when they promulgated the Texas Lawyer’s Creed. It makes as much sense now as it did in 1989.

The preamble to the Creed makes it clear why the Creed was announced and what we are charged to do where it says in part:

“The conduct of a lawyer should be characterized at all times by honesty, candor, and fairness. In fulfilling his or her primary duty to a client, a lawyer must be ever mindful of the profession’s broader duty to the legal system. The Supreme Court of Texas and the Court of Criminal Appeals are committed to eliminating a practice in our State by a minority of lawyers of abusive tactics which have surfaced in many parts of our country. We believe such tactics are a disservice to our citizens, harmful to clients, and demeaning to our profession. The abusive tactics range from lack of civility to outright hostility and obstructionism. Such behavior does not serve justice but tends to delay and often deny justice. The lawyers who use abusive tactics instead of being part of the solution have become part of the problem. The desire for respect and confidence by lawyers from the public should provide the members of our profession with the necessary incentive to attain the highest degree of ethical and professional conduct...”

The State Bar of Texas urges all local bar associations to celebrate a Day of Civility. This guide will provide your bar with a straightforward road map to organizing and conducting your celebration. Good luck with your Day of Civility. It will make a difference.

Program Overview

The program for the Day of Civility should plan to both celebrate civility and educate all members of the bar. It should be a teaching tool for our beginning lawyers and a reminder to the experienced lawyers of their obligations. There are many speakers (judges and lawyers) in all communities who can present on professionalism, practice in the courts, trends across the country in lawyer discipline, effective control of litigation by the courts, and what the public may think of the legal system.

Calendar/Planning

The first and most important step is for the local bar leadership to appoint a Day of Civility committee chair and members of that committee. It is recommended that the committee be composed of judges and lawyers to organize and direct the activities. The event they plan and conduct can be elaborate or a dignified smaller event. Several key decisions must be made early in the process, such as (see Attachment 1, Sample Timeline, all tasks identified and time for implementing suggested):

- a) **Select a date.** You should begin the organization 10-12 months before your target date. Be sure to allow sufficient time to set up all the key activities such as secure signatures of judges on the invitation letter (See Attachment 3, Sample Judges' Letter), publicize the Day of Civility in the bar newsletter, through emails, fliers (See Attachment 5, Sample Flier), press releases, and with posters (See Attachment 4, Sample Poster) to be placed at the local courthouses.
- b) **Register for CLE credit.**
- c) **Select and reserve a place for the event** that can accommodate a large segment of your bar for parking, a luncheon, if applicable, and any refreshments.
- d) **Select a caterer and menu** for the luncheon, if applicable, and any refreshments.
- e) **Assign tasks** drafting (also completion and dissemination dates) of articles for the newsletter, emails to be sent to bar members, fliers, the posters to be placed at area courthouses and bar offices, and the letter to be signed by the judges.
- f) Very early in the process, **select seminar topics, assign responsibility** for panel or solo presentations, and **select and confirm speakers/panel members.** (See Attachment 2, Sample Seminar Agenda). The program could be a luncheon meeting with a speaker or two, or it could be a series of panel presentations that last a full afternoon or evening.

Frequently Asked Questions

1.) **What does it cost?** It all depends on the size of the event and the size of your bar. If you have a bar newsletter, notices and articles published there should be of little expense. Posters and emails should be nominal cost. As for a luncheon or refreshments, the local bar could supplement its budget with contributions from local vendors, law firms, and legal departments. Make your budget and stick to it.

2.) **Do we need audio/visual equipment?** Not necessarily. Conduct your seminar in the same manner as you normally do for CLE presentations. However, most audiences probably expect audio/visual presentations.

Contact For Additional Information

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***A final thought:** Civility is the hallmark of a professional. That term was clearly described by Justice Anthony Kennedy in these words. “(Civility...) is not some bumper-sticker slogan, ‘Have you hugged your adversary today?’ Civility is the mark of an accomplished and superb professional, but it is even more than this. It is an end in itself. Civility has deep roots in the idea of respect for the individual.” Justice Anthony Kennedy, 1997 Speech, American Bar Association Annual Meeting.*

Appendix

1. Sample Timeline (Attachment 1)
2. Sample Seminar Agenda (Attachment 2)
3. Sample Judges' Letter (Attachment 3)
4. Sample Poster (Attachment 4)
5. Sample Flier (Attachment 5)

This guide was produced by the Professional Committee of the State Bar of Texas. Special thanks are due to the Dallas Bar Association, whose leadership in the Day of Civility initiative provided a template for the committee's work. For more information on the State Bar's professionalism resources, visit texasbar.com/professionalism.

Day of Civility Timeline

10-12 Months Out	<p>Establish planning committee. Planning committee to meet and discuss the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budget/Funding• Location• Date/Time• Topics and speakers• Outreach to judiciary• Support letter from judiciary
8-10 Months Out	<p>Finalize date/time, location, and funding. Secure judicial support for the program, including support letter. Get electronic signatures of judges for support letter. Discuss publicity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bar association publicity• Publicity at courthouse• Press release• Social media <p>Discuss agenda; outreach to speakers. Secure any additional funding needed.</p>
4-6 Months Out	<p>Agenda topics and speakers. Send save-the-date information. Finalize support letter, including electronic signatures. Draft publicity pieces.</p>
2-4 Months Out	<p>Publicity includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fliers and posters at courthouses, bar meetings, etc.• Electronic publicity (social media, e-mails).• Consider regular U.S. mail publicity (if budget permits).
2 Months Out	<p>Finalize any meeting location arrangements, food and beverage and AV needs. Begin taking RSVPs. Continue to publicize. Determine speaker AV needs. Remind speakers of deadline for submitting presentations or handouts.</p>
1 Month Out	<p>Reminders to speakers. Panel discussion panelists and moderators host planning meetings/ conference calls. Finalize outstanding arrangements. Continue publicizing and taking RSVPs. Collect any handouts or PowerPoint presentations from speakers.</p>
Day Before/ Day Of	<p>Check room set-up and AV Host check-in table.</p>
Day After	<p>Send thank you notes to speakers. Finalize actual budget.</p>

Day of Civility Agenda*

(Month, Day, Year)

(Time of Event)

Reception Following Program- (Time of Reception)

(Location-Street Address, City, TX)

Approved- (X) Hours CLE Ethics Credit

12:10 – 12:25 p.m. Welcome & Opening Remarks (Luncheon, if appropriate)
(Name), President, (Local Bar Association Name)

12:25 – 1:10 p.m. Ethics & Professionalism- (Speaker Name)

1:10 – 2:00 p.m. State Court Panel Discussion
(List Speakers Here)

2:00 – 2:15 p.m. Remarks: (Name of Local Judge or Other Speaker)

2:15 – 3:00 p.m. Trial Lawyers of the Year Panel
(List Speakers Here)

3:00 – 3:10 p.m. Break

3:10 – 3:55 p.m. Federal Court Panel Discussion
(List Speakers Here)

3:55 – 4:35 p.m. Media Panel:
(List Speakers Here)

4:35 – 6:00 p.m. Reception

*The agenda can be compressed to meet a bar's needs.

Sample Judges' Letter

[Bar Association Logo/Seal]
[Name of Local Bar Association]

Co-Sponsors:

[List co-sponsors here]

[Day, Date, Year]

Dear [Your City Name] Attorney:

In continuation of our efforts and emphasis on professionalism, we are supporting [Day, Date, Year] as a Day of Civility and Professionalism for attorneys. We, [Your City Name] federal and state judges, with the support of the [Your Local Bar Association Name], and [List Any Other Partners], strongly encourage you to participate in reaffirming the Texas Lawyer's Creed on [Day, Date], by conducting yourself with the utmost courtesy and professionalism toward judges, adversaries, peers, workplace colleagues and in performing your duties to your clients, and with the highest degree of civility toward other counsel and their clients.

Civility is the hallmark of a professional. That term was clearly described by Justice Anthony Kennedy in these words. "Civility ... is not some bumper-sticker slogan, 'Have you hugged your adversary today?' Civility is the mark of an accomplished and superb professional, but it is even more than this. It is an end in itself. Civility has deep roots in the idea of respect for the individual." Justice Anthony Kennedy, 1997 Speech, ABA Annual Meeting.

While vigorously representing your clients, we urge you to embrace the principles espoused in the Dondi opinion, 121 F.R.D. 284 (N.D. Tex. 1988), and the Texas Lawyer's Creed. Always be mindful of your responsibility to act with civility to preserve our system of justice.

The [List Partner Groups] will be jointly presenting a free half-day seminar on this Day of Professionalism and Civility at [Time, Date, Place] for which [Number] hours of ethics credit is being sought. The program will be followed by a reception [Time]. Please participate and encourage your colleagues to participate as well.

Sincerely,

[List Names and Signatures of Local Judges]

Day of Civility

Sample Poster

Date

Time

Location

Reception - Time

Featured Speakers (Names)

Offering (X) Hours Ethics CLE

What Is the Day of Civility?

The Day of Civility is an opportunity for all attorneys in {insert city} to reaffirm the Texas Lawyer's Creed and conduct themselves with the utmost courtesy and professionalism toward judges, adversaries, peers, work-place colleagues, clients, and other counsel and their clients.

In observance of the Day of Civility, please join our sponsors in reaffirming the Texas Lawyer's Creed and participating in the Day of Civility CLE Program.



RSVP to {contact person}.

{Bar Association Logo/Seal}

{Name of Local Bar Association}

State Bar of Texas Professionalism Committee

Day of Civility

Sample Flier



Date

Time

Location

Reception - Time

Offering (X) Hours Ethics CLE

What Is the Day of Civility?

The Day of Civility is an opportunity for all attorneys in {insert city} to reaffirm the Texas Lawyer's Creed and conduct themselves with the utmost courtesy and professionalism toward judges, adversaries, peers, work-place colleagues, clients, and other counsel and their clients.

In observance of the Day of Civility, please join our sponsors in reaffirming the Texas Lawyer's Creed and participating in the Day of Civility CLE Program.

Featured Speakers (Names)

For more information, contact (contact person).



The mission of the State Bar of Texas is to support the administration of the legal system, assure all citizens equal access to justice, foster high standards of ethical conduct for lawyers, enable its members to better serve their clients and the public, educate the public about the rule of law, and promote diversity in the administration of justice and the practice of law.