

Agency Purpose

The Minnesota Supreme Court exercising its inherent constitutional authority regulates the practice of law in Minnesota.

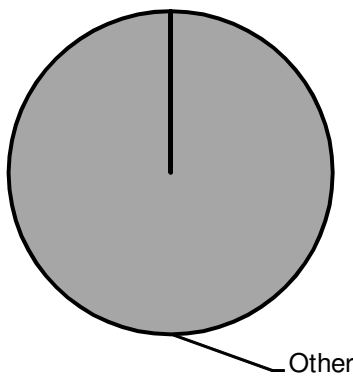
The Supreme Court exercises its regulatory authority so that within the state the public is well served by admitting to practice persons possessing competence and good character who, as licensed lawyers, continuously revitalize their knowledge of the law by attending continuing legal education programs, by appropriately disciplining after careful investigation those who have been found to have violated the Minnesota Rules of Professional Conduct, and by reimbursing clients under specified circumstances who have lost funds because of lawyer misfeasance. The court has implemented a statewide lawyer assistance program to direct lawyers to appropriate and necessary counseling.

At a Glance

Business Functions:

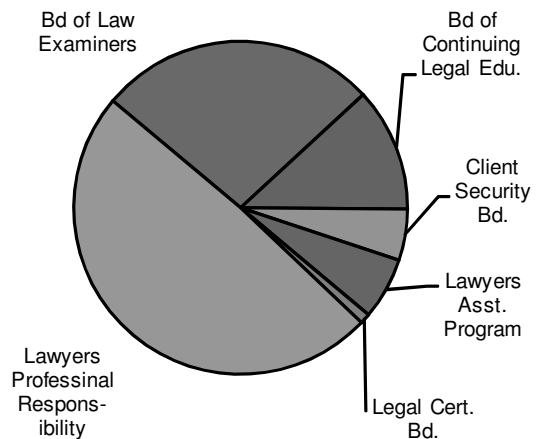
- The Board of Law Examiners receives approximately 1,300 applications for admission to the Minnesota Bar annually, and recommends for admission those persons who present good character and legal competence (either by achieving a passing score on the Minnesota Bar Examination or by proving a sufficient number of years of practice in another jurisdiction).
- The Board of Continuing Legal Education accredits more than 11,000 legal education courses annually and monitors approximately 26,000 active status Minnesota-licensed lawyers' completion of required continuing legal education.
- The Board of Legal Certification accredits legal organizations and authorizes the organizations to certify qualifying lawyers as specialists in defined specialty fields of law.
- The Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility investigates and prosecutes ethics complaints against Minnesota lawyers warranting professional discipline.
- The Client Security Board administers a fund to reimburse clients who suffer loss of money or other property from the dishonest conduct of their attorney.

Est. FY 2010-11 Expenditures by Fund



Source: Minnesota Accounting and Procurement System (MAPS) as of 08/26/10

Est. FY 2010-11 Expenditures by Board or Program



Source: Minnesota Accounting and Procurement System (MAPS) as of 08/26/10

Strategies

The Supreme Court has established regulatory boards to assist in key areas of the regulation of the practices of law.

- The Board of Continuing Legal Education certifies more than 11,000 programs annually in a wide variety of legal subjects to promote professional growth for the state's 26,000 attorneys and monitors each attorney's compliance with continuing legal education regulations.
- The Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility, working in conjunction with district ethics committees throughout the state, investigates complaints of unprofessional conduct against lawyers, and recommends discipline where appropriate.
- The Legal Certification Board certifies agencies, which certify lawyers having specified experience and training as specialists.
- The Client Security Board reviews claims from clients who have experienced monetary loss because of attorney dishonesty and, where the claim meets criteria established by the board, reimburses the client for the loss up to \$150,000.
- The Board of Law Examiners establishes the good character and legal competence of applicants for admission to the practice of law in Minnesota by conducting a background investigation of each applicant to the bar and by administering the Minnesota bar examination. Each year, the Board continues to monitor a few lawyers who are admitted subject to a written agreement authorizing the Board to monitor their continued recovery, usually from substance abuse problems.
- The Lawyer Assistance Program directs lawyers who are suffering from chemical and substance abuse or emotional distress to appropriate treatment.

Operations

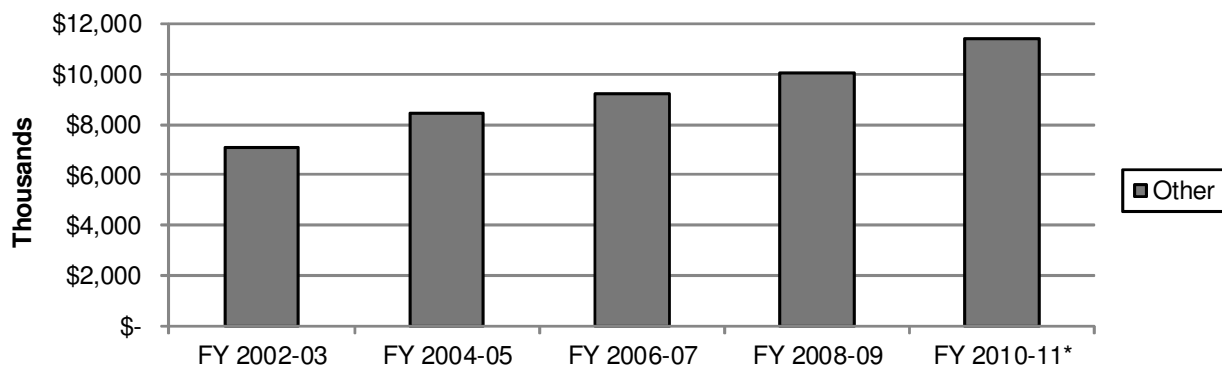
The boards, consisting of lawyers and lay members, are appointed by the Supreme Court to carry out the functions identified above within the rules for each board promulgated by the Supreme Court. Each board is authorized to hire staff. The Client Security Board contracts with the Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility for legal services to examine claims and pursue subrogation claims. The Board of Law Examiners, Continuing Legal Education, and Legal Certification have a single director and share staff.

Budget Trends

Dedicated revenue fully funds the activities of the boards. No General Fund monies support the operations of these boards. The Supreme Court assesses each lawyer admitted to practice law in Minnesota an annual registration fee which funds these activities. The registration fee is authorized by statute and held in trust for the regulation of the bar. The registration fee revenue is divided among each of the boards (with the exception of the Legal Certification Board which is funded entirely by user fees) as determined by Court's Rules for Registration of Lawyers, after public hearing. The Board of Law Examiners assesses a bar application fee to each applicant for admission to the bar. The Board of Continuing Legal Education assesses course application fees and various administrative fees. The fees for those boards are included in the Department Earnings Report.

The boards have 39.0 full-time equivalent employees.

Total Expenditures by Fund



* FY 2010-11 is estimated, not actual. Source data for the previous chart is the Minnesota Accounting and Procurement System (MAPS) as of 08/26/10.

Significant external factors impacting the boards operations include:

1. The Board of Law Examiners is impacted by the following: the number of law students entering and graduating from American Bar Association (ABA)-accredited law schools, which has remained strong despite the economic downturn; the number of ABA-accredited law schools, which has increased in the past 10 years; and the number of lawyers licensed in other states seeking admission in Minnesota (which make up a small part of the overall applicant pool) but has decreased by 20% in the past three years.
2. The Board of Continuing Legal Education is impacted by the fact that the numbers of licensed lawyers in Minnesota continues to increase annually by a net of approximately 350 to 400 lawyers and now totals approximately 26,000 actively practicing lawyers. The number of course accreditation applications has increased in every year since the Board's inception in 1975, and increased by approximately 2% in 2009. The Board anticipates that in the future, the number of programs for which accreditation is sought will either remain flat or increase slightly.
3. The Board of Legal Certification has increased the number of accredited agencies that certify lawyers as specialists. The total number of lawyers certified as specialists has not increased significantly in recent years, but that number may increase somewhat now that there are two new agencies.
4. The Office of Lawyer Professional Responsibility has experienced an increase in translation costs over the past several years. Trusteeship appointments are on the rise as more lawyers abandon their practices, placing a burden on staff and budget. Poor economic conditions have resulted in increased attorney misconduct.

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