

# Chicago Daily Law Bulletin®

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## Got a question? Here's someone with the answers — and opinions

**W**elcome to the inaugural column of the Court of Common Sense, a question-and-answer advice column. Got a thorny ethics question that you are afraid to ask? Wondering about proper etiquette in certain business situations? Wonder no more! Send your burning questions to [kristencourtofcommonsense@gmail.com](mailto:kristencourtofcommonsense@gmail.com) to get them answered.

What makes me qualified to give advice? Well, for starters, I have lots of opinions, and I'm not shy about giving them. And, as principal and general counsel at Chuhak & Tecson P.C., I regularly provide legal advice on risk management, professional responsibility, insurance coverage and commercial litigation.

As for the etiquette piece, I grew up in the American South, which pretty much makes me qualified to speak on everything (or at least that is what we Southerners believe), but particularly on food, clothes and what you are supposed to do and when you are supposed to do it.

With summer in full swing and associates and law clerks buzzing about the office, I kick off this first column with questions from our young lawyers.

Although these answers are geared to the less experienced lawyers among us, we can all use reminders in these areas.

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**Q:** *What type of pro bono work can an associate perform?*

**A:** Great question! The short answer is any kind you want. Licensed lawyers can perform any type of pro bono work they are competent in under Illinois Professional Rule of Responsibility 1.1. The comments to this rule reveal that a lawyer "need not necessarily have special training or prior experience to handle legal problems of a type with which the lawyer is unfamiliar."

Indeed, Comment 2 to the rule

specifically states, "A newly admitted lawyer can be as competent as a practitioner with long experience." So, don't let your inexperience hold you back.

That said, engaging in a new practice area as a new lawyer (or an experienced one) can be scary, tricky and fraught with peril. The good news is that most legal aid organizations have staff to walk you through the intricacies of particular practice areas.

For example, Chicago Volunteer Legal Services, or CVLS, offers legal services to the Chicago area's working poor. With a vast array of training and support materials, CVLS' dedicated and knowledgeable staff can help you develop into a pro bono superstar. More information and details on the next orientation can be found at [cvls.org/volunteer](http://cvls.org/volunteer).

Another great option is Illinois Legal Aid Online, or ILAO. Associates can join ILAO's team of subject-matter experts. As one of these experts, associates volunteer their time and knowledge on

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different topics of Illinois law to keep the information on [IllinoisLegalAid.org](http://IllinoisLegalAid.org) accurate and current. To learn more, contact Natanya Pope at [npope@illinoislegalaid.org](mailto:npope@illinoislegalaid.org).

Not licensed? Not a problem. Law students may practice for legal aid organizations and other qualified organizations under Illinois Supreme Court Rule 711. Be sure to read this rule carefully to ensure that you and your organization qualify, and then simply apply for special admission to the bar under Section F of the rule.

Doing pro bono work is a lawyer's duty.

COURT OF  
COMMON SENSE

**KRISTEN E.  
HUDSON**



*Kristen E. Hudson is a principal and general counsel at Chuhak & Tecson, P.C. She manages high-stakes, complex commercial litigation in a variety of substantive legal areas. She concentrates her practice on business and corporate litigation, alternative dispute resolution, appellate, insurance coverage, intellectual property and director and officer liability. Kristen can be reached at [kristencourtofcommonsense@gmail.com](mailto:kristencourtofcommonsense@gmail.com).*

The preamble to the Illinois Rules of Professional Responsibility reiterates that it is our responsibility to provide services in the public interest for which compensation may not be available.

To monitor and increase delivery of pro bono legal services, the

throughout your career.

Do not pass go, do not collect \$200, proceed to the nearest and dearest legal aid organization and get to work!

**Q:** *Most offices are now business casual. What do you recommend young lawyers wear to conform to the dress code?*

**A:** Clothes, a topic near and dear to my Southern heart, and a topic on which I have many opinions.

First, some general advice: What you wear matters. Don't let anybody tell you differently. We are in a profession where we are expected to be trusted advisers; we need to look the part and our clothes should not detract from the legal advice we are giving.

Second, we are defenders of the Constitution and fierce advocates in a learned profession. Our profession, the courts and the institutions we protect deserve respect, and thus, appropriate dress (ahem, no flip-flops in court).

Third, always dress for the job you want, not the job you have. In sum, you want to look like you know what you are doing.

Now for specifics for the gents — you have it easy. A nice pair of dress pants and a (pressed) button-up shirt will always do fine if you are not in court or do not have a client meeting.

Please avoid shirts that are too tight. I'm sure you work out and are proud of those muscles, but I really don't care to see them at the office.

For the ladies, this is tougher question. Let's start with what not to wear (though some of these might seem obvious): no yoga pants, leggings or torn clothing; no disco outfits (yes, I'm showing my age).

If you would wear it out on a Saturday night, you should not be wearing it to the office. No flip-flops or athletic shoes (though it is fine to commute in these shoes); no crop tops, short skirts or tank tops; and no shirts that are low cut.

Look the part, take care of yourself and your career will take off.