



# Alabama Board of Examiners in Counseling

2777 Zelda Road • Montgomery, Alabama 36106

## **INSTRUCTIONS, REQUIREMENTS, AND PROCEDURES FOR FILING A COMPLAINT**

The Alabama Board of Examiners in Counseling (ABEC) is authorized to investigate complaints involving possible violations of the *Code of Alabama* 1975, §34-8A-1 et seq. or the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* governing licensed counselors. Investigations of complaints and possible disciplinary actions by the ABEC are limited to administrative options (i.e., fine, reprimand, remedial education, administrative costs, license suspension, or license revocation). The ABEC cannot represent clients in civil matters to recover fees paid or seek remedies for injuries. You should consult a private attorney regarding such matters.

### **LIMITATIONS ON COMPLAINT INVESTIGATIONS**

The ABEC does not have authority to investigate all complaints against applicants or licensees. Examples of such complaints include but are not limited to the following:

- ▶ Complaints by persons who do not have legal standing to act on behalf of clients (e.g., grand/parent of an adult client; friend of a client; step-parent of a minor child/client who holds no legal custodial authority on behalf of the minor child/client; an interested third party who has no direct knowledge or evidence concerning possible violations involving client care)
- ▶ Court-ordered duties enacted by licensees competent to perform those duties
- ▶ Court decisions involving licensees that are based on good-faith unbiased testimony or written conclusions by licensees
- ▶ Fee disputes with clients, supervisees, or others served by a licensee
- ▶ Interactions reflective of personality clashes or differences of opinion based on good-faith unbiased discretionary decisions
- ▶ Billing disputes involving professional agencies
- ▶ Missed appointments (unless chronic in nature and reflective of negligence)
- ▶ Matters involving only violations of employment/personnel policies in an organization

### **PROCEDURE FOR FILING A COMPLAINT**

Print the Complaint Form found on this website, fill it out completely, attach all requested documents, and mail

to: Alabama Board of Examiners in Counseling  
2777 Zelda Rd.  
Montgomery, AL 36106

If you are unable to print the form(s) contact the Board office by telephone (1-800-822-3307) or email Hope Childers ([hope@alstateboard.com](mailto:hope@alstateboard.com)) to request forms be sent to you.



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- ▶ **The complaint form must be signed by the complainant and notarized.** Incomplete or unsigned complaint forms will be returned to the Complainant. The Board will not investigate anonymous complaints.
- ▶ Complaints filed with the ABEC **must** feature two distinct types of information. These are:
  - An *explanation* concerning the nature of the complaint. This is your written account of the items or experiences that have led to your decision to file the complaint. Complaints should also include a timeline of events.
  - *Evidence* that supports your allegations such as copies of correspondence, contracts, forms, records or other types of factual information.
    - Complaint forms filed with the ABEC **must be accompanied by evidence** (e.g., correspondence, contracts, forms, records or other types of factual information that support the allegations in the complaint). Supporting documentation should be factual and detailed, including locations, dates, and contact information for witnesses (if available). The investigative process may be delayed or dismissed if the supporting evidence is not included.
- ▶ In addition to the complaint form and evidence, complaints **must include the printed, signed, and notarized *Authorization for Release of Confidential Information* form.** If the complaint involves a minor, you must use the form designated for release of information for a minor. Failure to supply the proper *Authorization for Release of Confidential Information* form with the complaint will result in the complaint being returned to the complainant without action.
- ▶ Any complaint that involves care to a minor child and a circumstance of divorce by the parents must include legal evidence from a court decision verifying that the complainant has rights of custody. Such documentation would be applicable to a parent or relative of the minor child who holds rights of custody. Any complaint that does not include legal evidence from a court decision verifying that the complainant has rights of custody will be returned to the complainant without action.
- ▶ The investigation of a complaint will not begin or proceed if legal action relevant to the allegations in the complaint is pending. All active legal matters must be resolved before the ABEC initiates an investigation of a complaint.
- ▶ Investigations are confidential. We are unable to provide updates concerning the status of a complaint. Once the investigative process is completed, you will be notified. The investigative process is designed to ensure due process and to protect the rights of the individuals involved. This process may take months to complete.

