

The Ethics of Working Remotely During the COVID-19 crisis: 4 relevant RPCs

Many attorneys are working remotely pursuant to the Governor's orders. Your ethics obligations remain the same. Here's a rundown of the basics:

1. Communicate With Your Client

RPC 1.4 requires attorneys and LLLTs to keep clients reasonably informed about the status of the matter. Let your client know how you are handling their matter and how their case may be impacted by the current situation. Keep them apprised of any COVID-19 related court orders that may have an impact on the progress of their case.

2. Maintain Technical Competence

RPC 1.1 requires attorneys to provide competent representation, including understanding the benefits and risks of relevant technology. If you haven't already, this is the time to get up to speed on running a virtual office, including understanding different platforms available and how to maintain security and confidentiality.

3. Ensure Confidentiality

In managing your remote office, RPC 1.6 requires legal professionals to take reasonable precautions to safeguard client information, including reasonable precautions to prevent the unauthorized disclosure of or unauthorized access to client information. In working from home, there are many new variables to consider, including: Do you have a dedicated workspace where your conversations will not be overheard? Are you using a shared device that others in your home can access? Is your Wi-Fi password protected? Is it time to set up a private network? Are you using best data-security practices when videoconferencing using systems such as Zoom? See [WSBA Ethics Advisory Opinion 201601](#) on ethical practices of a virtual law office.

4. Act Diligently

RPC 1.3 requires an attorney to act with reasonable diligence and promptness. While we adjust to myriad changes in our personal and professional lives, our obligation to provide attentive representation remains the same.

