

*People v. Joseph Ryan Riegerix*, 23PDJ054, June 7, 2024.

The Presiding Disciplinary Judge approved the parties' stipulation to discipline and suspended Joseph Ryan Riegerix (attorney registration number 53633) for six months, with the added requirements that Riegerix submit to an independent medical examination and that he petition for reinstatement and prove by clear and convincing evidence that he has been rehabilitated, has complied with all disciplinary orders and rules, and is fit to practice law. Riegerix's suspension took effect on July 21, 2024.

Beginning in October 2020, Riegerix and another lawyer—Riegerix's employer—represented two clients in the clients' civil matter. In January 2021, the lawyer and opposing counsel set a five-day jury trial to begin November 15, 2021. In February 2021, the lawyer withdrew from the case on the eve of the effective date of his suspension from the practice of law. The lawyer's suspension prevented him from taking part in the trial until November 17, 2021. Though the clients requested information about the lawyer's participation in the case during the intervening time, Riegerix did not inform them the lawyer had withdrawn from the matter or that the lawyer was suspended. During the weekend before the trial, the lawyer joined Riegerix to prepare for the matter, including preparing the clients for their testimony. On the second day of trial, the clients learned from the court that the lawyer was suspended. The lawyer entered his appearance the next day upon being reinstated to the practice of law and represented the clients for the remainder of the trial.

In another matter, Riegerix filed a complaint against various defendants on his client's behalf in April 2021. Riegerix did not file proofs of service as to three of the defendants and did not pursue default as to a fourth, violating the court's initial procedure order and delay reduction order. In February 2022, the court dismissed without prejudice the client's claims as to those parties and ordered Riegerix's client to set the matter for trial within seven days. Riegerix did not do so, and the court dismissed the case without prejudice on April 5, 2022. Riegerix did not inform his client about the dismissals despite the client's requests for updates about the case. The client did not learn about the dismissals until early June 2022, when he looked up the docket himself.

Through this conduct, Riegerix violated Colo. RPC 1.3 (a lawyer must act with reasonable diligence and promptness when representing a client); Colo. RPC 1.4(a)(3) (a lawyer must keep a client reasonably informed about the status of the matter); Colo. RPC 1.4(b) (a lawyer must explain a matter so as to permit the client to make informed decisions regarding the representation); Colo. RPC 5.5(d)(1) (a lawyer must not allow a person the lawyer knows or reasonably should know is disbarred, suspended, or on disability inactive status to have any professional contact with the lawyer's clients without prior written notice to the client); and Colo. RPC 8.4(c) (it is professional misconduct for a lawyer to engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation).

The case file is public per C.R.C.P. 242.41(a).