

**People v. H. Craig Skinner. 23PDJ074 (consolidated with 24PDJ058). November 19, 2024.**

The Presiding Disciplinary Judge approved the parties' stipulation to discipline and suspended H. Craig Skinner (attorney registration number 37950) for one year and one day, all to be stayed upon Skinner's successful completion of a two-year period of probation, which carries conditions. Skinner's probation took effect November 19, 2024.

In 2021, Skinner agreed to represent an incarcerated client in an action alleging that the Colorado Department of Corrections ("DOC") mismanaged the client's diabetes care. In May 2021, the client's family member paid Skinner \$3,000.00 in cash. Skinner did not retain a record of the fee agreement. Some of the funds were from a third party, but Skinner did not obtain his client's informed consent to the third party's contribution. When Skinner received the \$3,000.00, he had not earned the funds. Rather than deposit the money into his trust account, he credited to the client's case \$3,000.00 in earned fees that remained in his trust account from a different matter. The credit is not reflected in a ledger, however. At the time of the transaction, Skinner did not maintain a written recordkeeping system for his trust account documenting the funds received into and disbursed from the account.

Skinner did not communicate with his client before taking any steps in the case. In August 2021, Skinner learned from the client's case manager that the DOC had resolved the client's medical issue. Skinner concluded from that information that the representation had ended and his fees had been earned. But he neither confirmed with his client that the DOC had resolved the issue nor informed his client that the representation had concluded.

In a different matter, Skinner represented a client and the client's significant other in a civil case. Discovery responses in the case were due on May 22, 2023, but Skinner did not send the requests to or discuss them with his client before the response deadline. In addition, Skinner did not communicate with the client's significant other about the requests until June 2023. Skinner did not request an extension of time to respond to discovery before the due date. Instead, on June 14, 2023, he sent to opposing counsel unsigned discovery responses, which did not include his client's responses to interrogatories.

Through this conduct, Skinner 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 1.8(f) (a lawyer must not accept compensation for representing a client from someone other than the client unless, among other requirements, the client gives informed consent); Colo. RPC 1.15A(a) (a lawyer must hold client property separate from the lawyer's own property); Colo. RPC 1.15D(a)(1)(A) (a lawyer must maintain an appropriate recordkeeping system to track funds or other property held for others); and Colo. RPC 1.15D(a)(3) (a lawyer must keep copies of written communications setting forth the basis or rate for fees the lawyer charges clients).

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