

People v. Charles John Vanstrom. 25PDJ45. July 3, 2025.

The Presiding Disciplinary Judge approved the parties' stipulation to discipline and suspended Charles John Vanstrom (attorney registration number 20479) for six months, with the requirement that Vanstrom petition for reinstatement, if at all, under C.R.C.P. 242.39. Vanstrom's suspension took effect on July 3, 2025.

On an hourly basis, a client hired a firm for which Vanstrom worked as an independent contractor. The firm paid Vanstrom an hourly rate, and Vanstrom submitted his work to the firm for payment. In 2021, the firm filed a lawsuit on behalf of the client. The opposing party filed an amended answer with several counterclaims, seeking significant economic and noneconomic damages.

In late autumn 2022, Vanstrom began to work on the case more. In January 2023, the court lifted a stay on discovery, answers to which came due soon thereafter. Beginning around that time, the firm's lawyer had little involvement in the case aside from checking in with Vanstrom, who entered in the case under his own firm. Vanstrom received an extension to respond to discovery requests. But he did not timely send his client's discovery responses to the opposing party. Opposing counsel moved to compel, and the court held a hearing, during which Vanstrom appeared without his client. Vanstrom explained that the discovery responses were delinquent due to difficulties in communicating with his client. The court granted the motion to compel, giving Vanstrom additional time to provide discovery, but also ordered the client to appear at the next conference to explain his lack of participation.

Vanstrom sent the client the discovery requests and template responses in early March 2023. The client responded promptly, but Vanstrom never provided any discovery responses to the opposing party. At a court conference in late March 2023, the client did not appear, and the court noted the client's absence in its order imposing sanctions for failing to respond to discovery. In that order, the court also dismissed the client's claims with prejudice and granted the counterclaims against the client. The opposing party requested economic and noneconomic damages of almost \$2,000,000.00. No one discussed the order or the February 2023 order compelling discovery with the client until the firm's lawyer communicated with the client in May 2023. Vanstrom did not keep contemporaneous records of his communications with the client.

Through this misconduct, Vanstrom violated Colo. RPC 1.3 (a lawyer must act with reasonable diligence and promptness when representing a client) and Colo. RPC 1.4 (a lawyer must reasonably communicate with the client).

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