

People v. Christopher Glen Skipp. 21PDJ064. September 16, 2021.

The Presiding Disciplinary Judge approved the parties' stipulation to discipline and suspended Christopher Glen Skipp (attorney registration number 26871) for three months, to take retroactive effect on July 28, 2021, and to run consecutive to his suspension of one year and one day in case number 20PDJ036.

In autumn 2018, Skipp was working at an office managed by a nonlawyer paralegal who had been enjoined from the unauthorized practice of law. A client charged with criminal felonies contacted the paralegal about possible representation, and Skipp agreed to represent the client. The client's mother signed a fee agreement as warrantor; the agreement called for a \$15,000.00 flat fee "for entirety of case/matter, exclusive of trials, appeals" and required a \$5,000.00 retainer. Under the agreement, the \$15,000.00 flat fee was to be earned at the matter's resolution. Skipp did not deposit the client's \$5,000.00 retainer, which was made payable to Skipp, in a COLTAF account.

Between September 2018 and July 2019, the client's mother submitted \$17,650.00 toward the representation, all payable to the law office. The paralegal may have placed these payments, other than the initial retainer, in a locked drawer in his office. Skipp does not recall being paid any money in connection with the representation. Nor does he recall if billing statements were sent to the client, as he does not have access to the records.

By March 2019, the client had become unhappy with Skipp's representation. Another lawyer took over the case, and Skipp left the office in July or August 2019. The paralegal also left the office at some point and took all of the client files with him. As such, Skipp has not returned the file to the client.

Through this conduct, Skipp violated Colo. RPC 1.5(f) (a lawyer does not earn fees until a benefit is conferred on the client or the lawyer performs a legal service); Colo. RPC 1.15A(a) (a lawyer shall hold client property separate from the lawyer's own property); and Colo. RPC 1.16A(a) (a lawyer in private practice shall retain a client's file unless the lawyer gives the file to the client, the client authorizes the destruction, or the lawyer has notified the client in writing of the intention to destroy the file).

The case file is public per C.R.C.P. 242.41(a)(2).