

**Appellate Division  
Supreme Court of the State of New York**

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NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10010

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ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14604

Dear Student:

It is never too early to begin familiarizing yourself with the Bar admission process. As the Presiding Justices of the Appellate Division Departments, we are reaching out to those of you who intend to practice in New York State in an effort to assist you in gaining admission as seamlessly as possible. **At this time, we urge you to carefully review the character and fitness application for admission to the Bar** to understand the requirements you will need to satisfy and to start compiling necessary materials as they become available during your time in law school.

Admission to the New York State Bar is a multi-step process. Two major components are: (a) demonstrating your legal knowledge and training, principally through the passage of the bar examinations; and (b) demonstrating that you have the character and fitness for admission. The character and fitness component, and the actual admission to practice, are administered by each of the four Departments of the Appellate Division. In addition to sitting for the bar examination and fulfilling all other requirements for certification by the Board of Law Examiners, you will be required to submit a thorough and detailed application for admission, including a character and fitness questionnaire and related materials. Once the application is complete, a personal interview will be conducted and, assuming bar passage and approval by the Court, you will be included in a class for a swearing-in ceremony.

While the process moves expeditiously once an application is deemed complete, it is our collective experience that many applicants encounter difficulty in submitting a complete application, including failure to have gathered all the required documents for the character and fitness component. As a result, admission may be delayed. Some students may be under the erroneous impression that they cannot start working on their applications until after they receive notification of their bar passage. This is not the case. The forms are readily available online and there is nothing preventing you from starting to assemble your questionnaire answers and materials while you are still in law school. For example, you can obtain affirmations from law-related employers as you complete your tenure as an employee or intern. By being proactive, you will be well positioned to submit a properly completed application and, if all is in order, gain prompt admission to the Bar.

An explanatory guide accompanies this letter to provide information about the character and

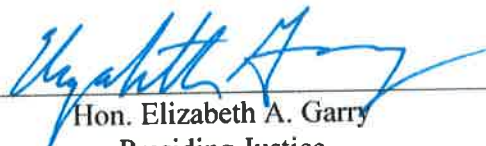
fitness component of the admission process. This letter and the guide are also posted on the Courts' websites.

We are committed to making the application process as efficient as possible, and look forward to assisting you in achieving your goal of joining our noble profession.

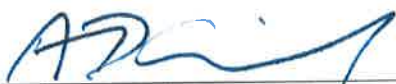
Very truly yours,



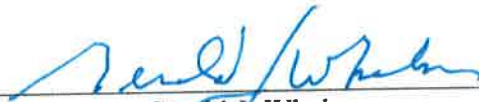
Hon. Rolando T. Acosta  
Presiding Justice  
Appellate Division, First Department



Hon. Elizabeth A. Garry  
Presiding Justice  
Appellate Division, Third Department



Hon. Alan D. Scheinkman  
Presiding Justice  
Appellate Division, Second Department



Hon. Gerald J. Whalen  
Presiding Justice  
Appellate Division, Fourth Department

## APPLYING FOR ADMISSION TO PRACTICE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW WHILE STILL IN LAW SCHOOL

### A Short Guide for Law Students About the Character and Fitness Process

Here are some important tips designed to help you navigate the admission process as efficiently as possible and avoid delays that may be incurred because of a failure to timely obtain and provide required and accurate information. This information is generally applicable in all four Departments of the Appellate Division.

#### During law school:

- **Carefully review the application for admission to the New York Bar.** Read the application questionnaire and the instructions on how to fill out the application and familiarize yourself with the forms and the various documents that you will need to gather and submit.
  - This information is available on the New York Board of Law Examiners (BOLE) web site (<http://www.nybarexam.org/Admission/Admission.htm>).
  - You may also find it helpful to review the other requirements for bar admission, including the New York Law Course, New York Law Examination, Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination, the pro bono service requirement and the skills competency requirement (More information is available at <https://www.nybarexam.org/UBE/UBE.html>).
- Continue to **update your law school application as needed** (you have a continuing obligation to do so). This means making prompt changes to any information previously on file and/or disclosing new information that you would have been required to disclose when you applied to law school. Be sure to memorialize your disclosures and retain copies with all related documentation, including any responses from your law school so that you may attach them to your application for admission.
- On your application for admission to the NY Bar, you will be required to disclose any **criminal offenses and interactions with law enforcement**, including all tickets for moving violations for the past 10 years. Traffic infractions that are alcohol- or drug-related must be disclosed even if they occurred more than 10 years prior to the date of your application.
  - If you do not remember details or dates, obtain a lifetime driving history (not an abstract) from each state where you have been licensed to drive and/or where you have received tickets, and submit a copy with your application. If the lifetime history discloses matters that you should have disclosed to your law school, but failed to, be sure to take steps to amend your law school application.
- In reviewing the application for admission, pay particular attention to the instructions and forms related to **law-related employment** and your **required pro bono service**. The

best practice is to begin compiling affirmations and/or affidavits related to your law-related employment and pro bono service requirement as you complete them.

- You will be required to submit affirmations associated with any law-related employment since you turned 21 or in the 10 years prior to your application for admission, whichever is the lesser period of time.
- Note that law-related employment is defined broadly and includes internships, externships, teaching assistant or research assistant positions, law school clinics and private employment, whether or not you received pay or law school credit.
- As you complete each law-related employment position during law school, ask the supervising lawyer/professor to fill out the required **Form Affirmation of Law Related Employment**. Be sure the dates of your employment are stated accurately on the form.
- For any law-related employment that you undertook prior to law school, request that each employer send you the Form Affirmation of Law-Related Employment. If you fail to receive a timely response, send the employer follow-up requests in writing and retain copies so that you can submit, if necessary, proof of your unsuccessful efforts to obtain the affirmation.
- As you complete your required pro bono service, ask the supervising attorney to fill out the required **Form Affidavit as to Applicant's Compliance with the Pro Bono Requirements**.

**As you prepare to submit your application:**

- After you have taken the bar examination, each Judicial Department's respective Admissions Office will send you helpful and important information. Retain and review all correspondence, whether received in hard copy or electronically, from the Department where you intend to apply for admission. You can find information about each Department's geographic jurisdiction at <https://www.nycourts.gov/courts/appellatedivisions.shtml>.
- Before starting to compile your application for admission, be sure to carefully read all application instructions, including any supplemental instructions specific to the Judicial Department in which you will submit your application.
- Re-read your law school application. All of the information you provide on your application for admission should be consistent with information contained in your law school application.
- Mail the Form Law School Certificate to your law school.