

State Board of Civil Legal Aid

Bylaws

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Part 1. General Provisions

Section A. Creation of Board and Purpose of Bylaws

1. The Minnesota legislature created the State Board of Civil Legal Aid (“the Board”) effective July 1, 2025. The requirements for the composition, administration, and responsibilities of the Board are governed by [Minn. Stat. 480.2415 \(2025\)](#), as it may be amended from time to time.
2. Pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 480.2415](#), the Board is a part of but is not subject to the administrative control of the judicial branch of government.
3. Additional Minnesota statutes may apply to the operations and governance of the Board.
4. These Bylaws are adopted to establish the governing rules of the Board. To the extent there is a conflict between these Bylaws and applicable statutes, the applicable statute controls.
5. The Board’s conduct in implementing these Bylaws and in all other activities is guided by its mission, identity statement, values, and related policies. The Board is committed to advancing equitable access to justice, fostering inclusion, and promoting transparency and accountability in its governance and grantmaking. The Board will in all its activities seek to reflect diversity of all kinds, including in lived experiences, race, ethnicity, geography, disability status, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, military service, and professional background.

Section B. Statutory Duties of the Board

Pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 480.2415](#):

1. The Board shall work to ensure access to high-quality civil legal services in every Minnesota county.
2. The Board shall:
 - a. Approve and recommend to the legislature a budget for the Board and the civil legal services grants distributed subject to [Minn. Stat. 480.242](#).
 - b. Establish procedures for distributing funding under [Minn. Stat. 480.242](#).
 - c. Establish civil program standards, administrative policies, or procedures necessary to ensure quality advocacy for low-income people.
3. The Board may propose statutory changes to the legislature and rule changes to the supreme court that are in the best interest of persons unable to afford private counsel.
4. The Board shall not interfere with the discretion or judgment of civil legal services programs in their advocacy.

Part 2. Membership

Section A. Statutory Board Membership and Qualifications

1. **Membership.** Pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 480.2415](#), the Board shall consist of 11 members, as follows:
 - a. Six members appointed by the supreme court; and
 - b. Five members appointed by the governor.

2. **Qualifications.** Pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 480.2415](#):
 - a. Members shall have demonstrated a commitment in maintaining high-quality legal services to people of low or moderate means.
 - b. The appointing authorities may appoint a retired judge, but not an active judge, to be a member of the Board.
 - c. The appointing authorities may not appoint members who are closely affiliated with an entity awarded or seeking funding pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 480.242](#).
 - d. The appointing authorities shall seek board members who reflect the diverse populations served by civil legal aid through attorney and nonattorney members.
 - e. Pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 15.0575](#), board members generally are appointed to four-year terms with the terms ending on the first Monday in January.

3. **Term Limits.**
 - a. **Authority to Set Term Limits.** Pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 480.2415, Subd.1\(d\)](#), the Board may set term limits. The following term limits will apply.
 - b. **Term Limits—General Members.** Subject to the other provisions of this Section, Board members may serve no more than two consecutive full terms.
 - c. **Partial Terms.** A partial term of three years or less will not count toward the term limits listed above. A partial term longer than three years will be considered a full term.
 - d. **Consecutive Service.** Term limits in this Section apply to consecutive service unless otherwise specified. A member who leaves the Board after reaching the applicable limit may be eligible for future service after two years have passed since the conclusion of service on the Board.
 - e. **Ex officio/non-voting.** Any ex-officio or non-voting service on the Board does not count toward term limits, but is considered service on the Board when determining eligibility for reappointment.

In implementing term limits, the Board will balance continuity of institutional knowledge with opportunities for new leadership and broader community representation and will encourage appointing authorities to do the same regarding reappointments.

Section B. Statutory Removal

1. Pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 15.0575](#), a member may be removed by the appointing authority at any time:
 - a. For cause, after notice and hearing, or
 - b. After missing three consecutive full Board meetings. The Chair will inform the appointing authority of a member missing the three consecutive meetings. After the second consecutive missed meeting and before the next meeting, the Secretary will notify the member in writing

that the member may be removed for missing the next meeting.

2. In the case of potential removal, the Board may invite the member to share any relevant circumstances or request reasonable accommodations as appropriate.
3. In the case of a pending removal for cause, the Board member who is the subject of the removal notice cannot vote or make or second any motions on any Board or committee business pending the conclusion of the removal hearing.
4. If the Chair has missed three meetings or is the subject of a notice of removal, the Vice Chair will assume the duties noted in this section.

Section C. Board Compensation & Expense Reimbursement

1. Board members will not receive compensation for their Board service except (1) a per diem as authorized by [Minn. Stat. 480.242](#) and Board policy; and (2) reimbursement of necessary expenses undertaken on behalf of the Board as authorized by [Minn. Stat. 15.0575](#) and Board policy.

Part 3. Board Officers

Section A. General

1. Pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 480.2415](#), the Board will elect a Chair for a two-year term. The Board will have three officers: Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. The same person may serve as Vice Chair and Secretary.
2. Officers will serve terms of two years until successors are elected or until they no longer meet membership criteria. Terms begin immediately after the meeting in which the election occurs or immediately upon the assumption by the Vice Chair of the Chair position. If a vacancy occurs for Chair more than 30 days before the next regular election, the Vice Chair will become Chair. If a vacancy occurs for Vice Chair or Secretary more than 30 days before the next regular election, a special election must be held within 30 days after the vacancy occurs.
3. A Board member who serves as an Officer may serve no more than three consecutive full terms in total service on the Board. Service as an Officer does not create additional term length; rather, it allows the member to serve a third full term on the Board.
4. A Board member may serve in a specific officer position for only three terms. When calculating terms for determining eligibility for service, a term serving in one officer position does not qualify as a term for service in any other. If a Board member serves a partial term due to a vacancy, the term served is counted as one term for the purposes of this section only if it begins less than 365 days after the most recent election.
5. A vacancy occurs when a Board member resigns from the officer position or no longer meets membership criteria to serve on the Board for any reason including removal.
6. An officer may resign by submitting a written resignation to the Chair or, in the case of the Chair, to the Vice Chair.

7. An officer may be removed by a majority vote of the Board members. Any vacancy will be filled as provided in these Bylaws.

Section B. Elections

1. The Board will have elections for officer positions biennially. All officers will be elected during the same meeting.
2. The Chair must announce the date for upcoming elections at least 30 days in advance and the election must occur between June 1 and July 31 of the year in which the two-year term is scheduled to end.
3. Special elections may be called to fill a vacancy for an officer position. Special elections are conducted in the same manner as regular elections but do not require 30 days' notice and may be scheduled as needed at any time.
4. The method of voting may be determined by the Board; however, each member has only one vote, and the tally of votes must be available for review if requested.

Section C. Duties of the Chair

The Chair will perform the following duties:

1. Preside at Board meetings.
2. Preside at Executive Committee meetings.
3. Serve as the principal spokesperson for the Board. The Chair is the only person authorized to represent the Board except for the Program Administrator and other Board members who are authorized by the Board to represent the Board on specific issues.
4. Appoint committees and committee chairs to perform duties of the Board, with the Board's approval.
5. Call special Board meetings as needed.
6. Call Executive Committee meetings as needed.
7. Take emergency action on behalf of the Board. Emergency action must be reported to the Board as soon as possible.
8. Inform the appointing authority of a Board member missing three consecutive meetings.
9. Work with the Program Administrator to ensure the Board is well-informed about key issues facing the agency and the agency is following Board direction.

Section D. Duties of the Vice Chair and Secretary

Duties of the Vice Chair and Secretary include but are not limited to:

1. Preside at Board meetings in the absence of the Chair.
2. Assist the Chair as requested.
3. Work with staff to prepare board meeting minutes.
4. Provide notice to a member subject to removal.
5. Serve on the Executive Committee.

Part 4. Meetings

Section A. Regular Board Meetings

1. The Board will hold regular meetings at least six times per year at such dates, times, and places (which may include remote means) as determined by the Chair in consultation with the Program Administrator, with consideration given to accessibility, geographic inclusion, and public participation. A schedule of regular meetings may be adopted and amended from time to time by the Board without further notice beyond the schedule itself.
2. The Chair may cancel any meeting that is not considered necessary given the business before the Board except if doing so would cause the Board to not meet the minimum number of meetings per year.

Section B. Special Board Meetings

Special meetings may be called by the Chair or the executive committee to conduct essential business.

Section C. Closed Board Meetings

The Board may close part or all of a meeting to conduct confidential business (for example, discussing allegations or charges against an individual subject to the authority of the Board, to evaluate the performance of an individual subject to the authority of the Board, or to seek or receive legal advice). Prior to closing part or all of any meeting, the Chair will state on the record the specific grounds permitting the meeting to be closed, consistent with the Board's commitment to transparency.

Section D. Quorum for Board Meetings

1. The presence of a majority of the serving Board members constitutes a quorum at Board meetings. No action may be taken without a quorum except to adjourn the meeting until a quorum is present.
2. A member is considered present during a meeting whenever they are able to communicate with all other members present, make motions, discuss items of business, and vote.

Section E. Board Decisions

Except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws, decisions of the Board will be by majority vote of those present and voting. Each member will have one vote. Members may vote only when present in the meeting; there will be no proxy voting.

Section F. Minutes of Board Meetings

The Secretary or their designee will keep minutes of all Board meetings and submit them to the Board for approval at the Board's next meeting. The minutes are effective after having been approved and will be posted to the Board's website.

Section G. Meeting Procedure

The Board will conduct its meetings in accordance with generally accepted parliamentary procedure, guided by Robert's Rules of Order, except where inconsistent with these Bylaws or applicable law, and in a manner that promotes respectful dialogue, inclusive participation, and shared decision-making.

Part 5. Committees

Section A. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee consists of the Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. The previous Chair may serve as an ex-officio member for one year in a non-voting capacity unless the previous Chair was removed by either the Board or the appointing authority. The Chair is the Chair of the executive committee. The duties of the Executive Committee include but are not limited to:

1. At the request of the Chair, meeting between meetings of the Board to address matters identified by the Chair. If appropriate, the Executive Committee will make recommendations to the Board.
2. Reviewing and making recommendations to the Board on amendments to the Bylaws.
3. Conducting annual performance reviews of the Program Administrator.

Section B. Committees

1. The Board may create ad hoc and standing committees to address issues or oversee topics specified by the Board upon a majority vote of the members present at the meeting. Upon creation, committee members are appointed by the Chair. The Chair will appoint one member to function as chair for the committee. Each committee will have a charter that specifies its purpose, general membership composition and anticipated length of existence. The committee will review the issue(s) specified and, when appropriate, make recommendations to the Board.
2. Committees may consist of Board members, employees, and members of the public, including representatives from grantee organizations, as appointed by the Chair. Unless required under law, public members of committees may not be compensated.
3. Appointments to chair a committee or serve on a committee will be in effect for one year and may be renewed by the Chair. In appointing committee members, the Chair will consider diversity of perspective, lived experience, professional expertise, and geographic representation. Individuals interested in serving on a committee must express their interest to the Chair and program administrator, and the Board will make reasonable efforts to provide transparent information about committee opportunities.
4. The Chair has the authority to appoint or remove members from committees for effective committee composition and will strive to ensure fairness and clarity in the appointment process.

Part 6. Program Administrator

1. Pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 480.2415](#), the Board shall appoint a Program Administrator who serves at the pleasure of the Board. The Program Administrator is not required to be licensed to practice law.
2. Pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 480.2415](#), the Program Administrator shall attend all meetings of the Board, unless excused by the Chair, but may not vote.
3. Pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 480.2415](#), the Program Administrator shall:
 - a. conduct all administrative functions necessary for the efficient and effective operation of the Board and the program, including, but not limited to hiring, supervising, and disciplining program staff; implement, as necessary, resolutions, standards, rules, regulations, and policies of the Board;
 - b. keep the Board fully advised as to its financial condition, and prepare and give to the Board the annual program and Board budget and other financial information as requested by the Board;
 - c. recommend to the Board the adoption of rules and regulations necessary for the efficient operation of the Board and the program; and
 - d. perform other duties prescribed by the Board.
4. The Program Administrator is authorized to make decisions, take actions, and develop activities consistent with the policies established by the Board, including policies that advance equitable access to justice and inclusive organizational practices.

5. No individual Board member, officer, or committee (except the Executive Committee) has authority over the Program Administrator.

Part 7. Adoption; Amendments

1. These Bylaws take effect upon approval by two-thirds of the members of the Board.
2. These Bylaws may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the members of the Board then in office.
3. If a statutory change is made that requires amendment of these Bylaws, the Executive Committee will amend the Bylaws as necessary as soon as practicable, with notification to the full Board.

Version History

Version	Description	Date
1.0	First Implementation	Date 3/13/2026
2.0	Technical Revisions: A.	