



This presentation is for students beginning the study of law in August or September.

The Board of Bar Examiners is an administrative agency of the Supreme Court of Florida. Board members are volunteer lawyers and members of the public appointed by the Supreme Court of Florida for three or five years. It is a big commitment, as board members volunteer their services for 350 to 400 hours per year.

The board's mission is to protect the public and safeguard the judicial system through the fair and professional evaluation of all applicants. To do this, our agency performs two specific functions:

- Conduct a background investigation to determine character and fitness; and,
- Administer the bar examination to gauge professional competence.

As a new law student, you may think that bar admission is something to deal with down the road, toward the end of your legal education. While this is true regarding the bar examination, which you cannot take until after graduation, you can take action now to get started on the background investigation, with the goal of having it completed by graduation. This presentation aims to inform you of the steps involved in filing a student registration application and the benefits you can achieve by filing your application early.

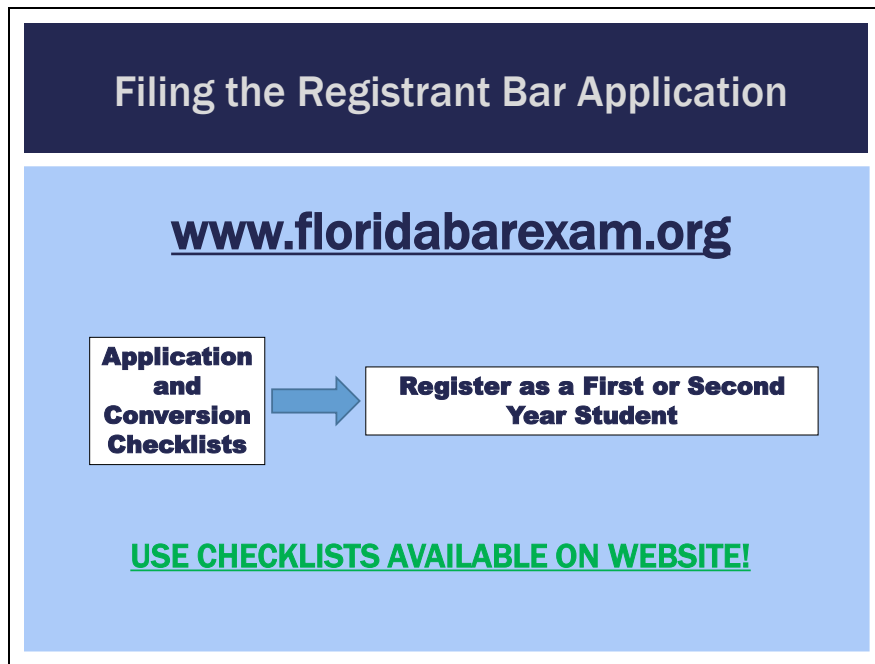


Filing your student registration now has several advantages. Like anything with a deadline, many people will wait until the last minute. Registering early avoids the bottleneck of late filers and you get ahead of the crowd. For the July 2023 bar exam, the filing deadline was May 1st. In May 2023, we receive about 1,000 applications.

Filing early also helps you get cleared to participate in the Certified Legal Internship program, allowing you to practice under a supervising lawyer while you're still in law school. Under the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar, you have to pass the board's background check before you can be a certified legal intern. Filing now can open that door to you.

Another incentive for early student registration – you will save money! The discounted registrant application fee is \$100. When you convert your registration to an application for admission in your 3rd year of law school, you will pay an additional fee, currently \$600. If you file by the earliest deadline, your total fees will be \$700. If you wait, you could pay a total of \$1000 in fees. Early filing can save you up to \$300.

Most important of all, filing early helps you get your license to practice as soon as you pass the bar exam. To get your license, you have to pass the bar and take the oath of attorney. But you can't take the oath until you clear the background check.



By filing early you save time and money, and position yourself to be sworn in when you are notified you passed the bar examination. To file a student registration, visit the board's website and get started in four easy steps. From the Homepage, click on "Application and Conversion Checklists," and then click on "Register as a First or Second Year Student." While second year students will also click here to register with the board, understand they will not get the benefits outlined earlier, and they will pay the full \$400 registrant fee.

Be sure to make use of the checklists available on the board's website. One of the most avoidable ways to delay your background investigation is to submit an application with incomplete information.

If you use the checklist, you will see how much research you need to do to answer the questions. For example, you might need time to research addresses for former employers, wait for military records, immigration documents, or get a certified copy of your birth certificate. Make sure you take the time necessary to gather the required information.

The checklist will also guide you through the online application process, and set you up to use the Applicant Portal, beginning with installation of a Two Factor Authenticator security app on your smart device.

Filing the Registrant Bar Application

Step 1 – Print and use the Checklist.

Step 2 – Install 2-step Verification on Smart Device.

Step 3 – Create an account.

Step 4 – Finish within 6 months.



After printing the appropriate checklist, step 2 is to install an app on your smart device that will allow you to use a 2-step verification process when you log in to the applicant portal to work on your application.

There are many authentication apps available - the board recommends that you install the Twilio Authy app because you can enable a backup which will allow you to continue to use the app should you lose your phone. Write down and save the scratch codes Authy provides in case you lose access to the Authy app.

Step 3 is to create an account on the board's website. Once you have the two-factor authentication app, you can create your user name and password. The user name is your e-mail address. The program will send an e-mail to your user name address with a link to activate your account.

Step 4 is to track your progress and complete filing your student registration application within six months of starting the process. You **MUST** complete the application within six months. The program is designed to delete any accounts over six months old and not finalized. If this happens, you will have to start over.

CHECK YOUR APPLICANT PORTAL WEEKLY

You will see this blue bar when you have new correspondence.

Click this link to file an amendment to your application.

Unread correspondence is highlighted here in red ink.

Check this section of portal for a list of outstanding items needed to complete your background investigation.

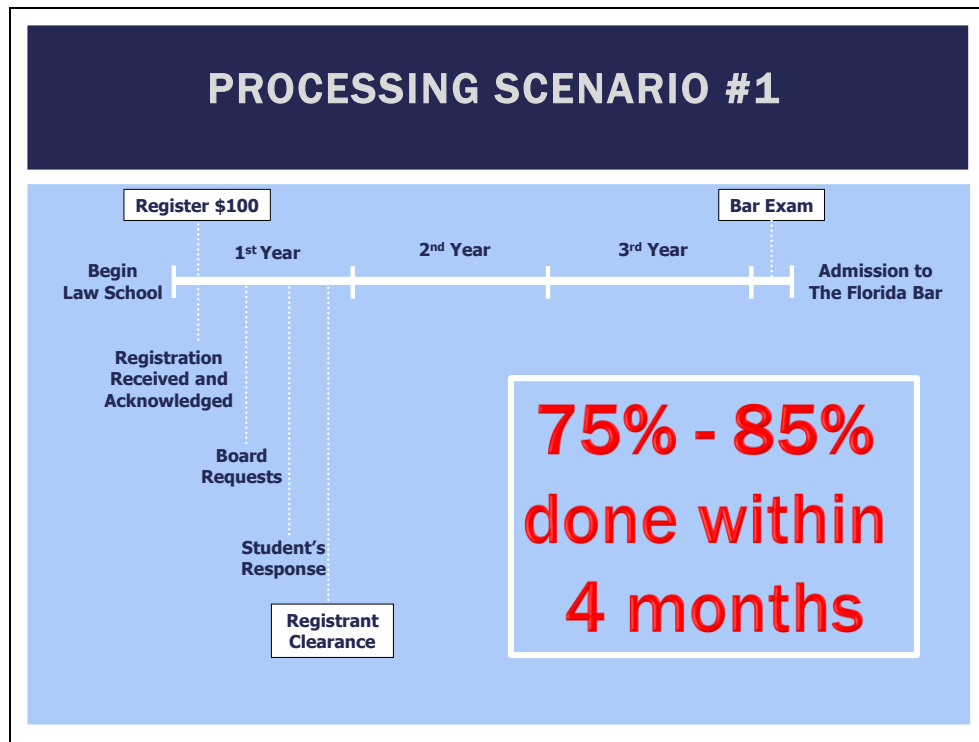
Make it a weekly habit to check for correspondence from the board. We will communicate with you exclusively through your applicant portal. When a letter from the board is posted to your portal, you will receive an alert email at the email address you provided in your bar application. The email will tell you something has been posted to your portal. You must then log into your portal to read the correspondence.

If you tend to get a lot of emails and think you may not always see the alert email, find some way to remind yourself to regularly check the portal. You can set a reminder on your phone, set a google alert, etc. Also, make sure the board's email address is added to your whitelist to avoid emails we send being directed to spam.

The background investigation takes 4-5 months on average, and the board will post several letters to you during the investigation, such as requests for information or to advise you of what is missing from your examination application. Our letters may advise you of important deadlines, such as a response deadline to avoid inactivation or termination of your application or the deadline by which you must submit all examination application materials in order to sit for an exam.

As shown in the middle section of the sample portal landing page, you can also find the present status of your character & fitness investigation and examination application on your portal. It updates automatically as staff moves your file through the stages of the application and investigation process.

Again, this is the ONLY method by which the board will communicate with you. Take advantage of the benefits you gain from the portal, such as near immediate receipt of board correspondence, posted to the portal within 24 hours, no worries about the post office delaying or not delivering your mail, and an accessible, automatically maintained data base of your correspondence. Your swift response to board requests is critical to timely processing of your file, and that begins with regularly checking your applicant portal.

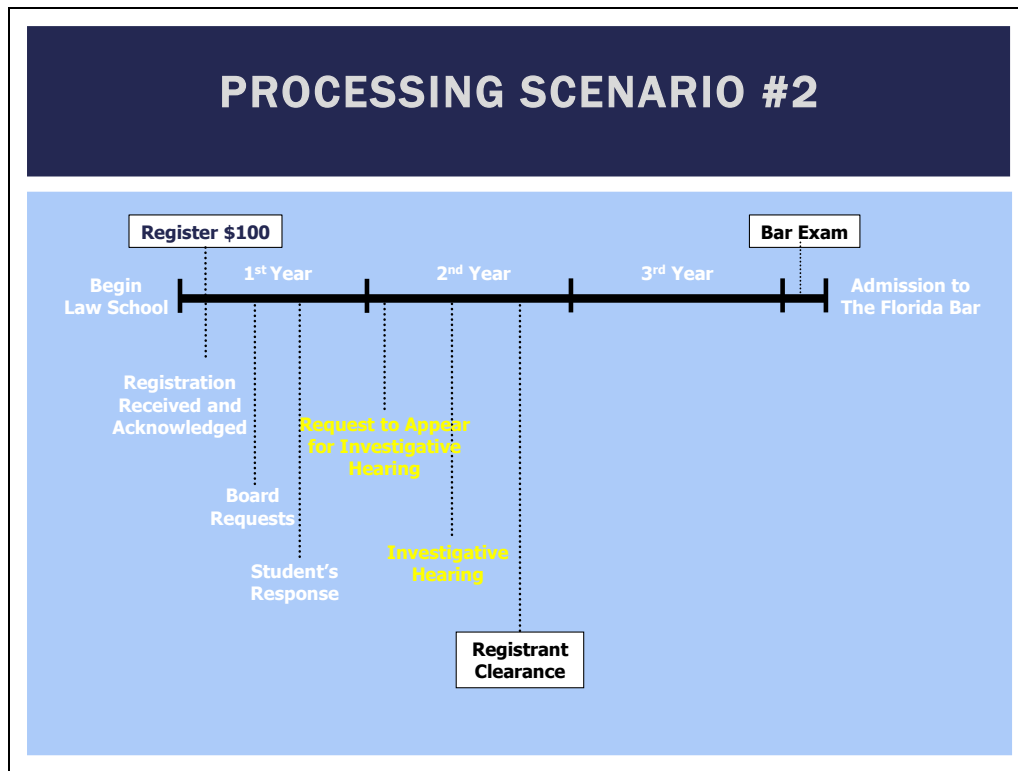


Here are several examples of how registering now can make a real difference in the timing of beginning your career in law.

In the chart above, we have a student who registered by January 15th, and responded promptly to the board's follow up requests. This person received his registrant clearance before the start of his second year. He is eligible for certified legal internships.

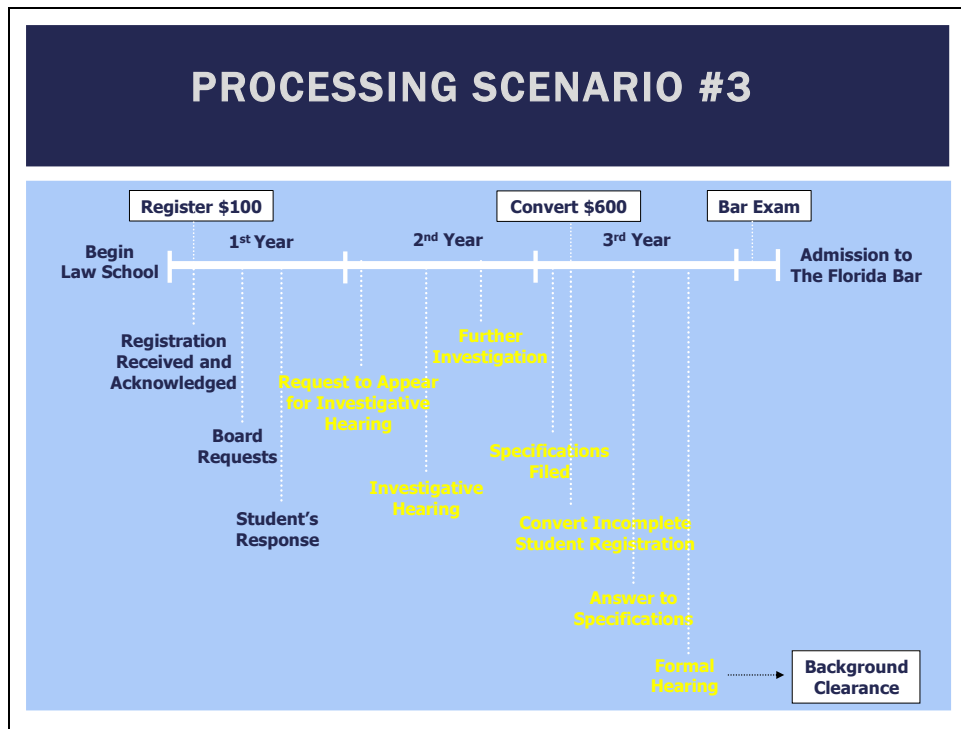
Note: Clearance from the board clears you to apply for certified legal internships. You are still responsible for any other application requirements through your school to get the certification issued by the Supreme Court of Florida.

For 75-85% of our registrants, the background investigation is completed within four months.



In scenario #2, we have another student who filed by the January 15th early filing deadline.

This student had some issues in her past or with her application that required her to appear for an investigative hearing before the board. As it is a more complicated file, it takes more than the usual four months to complete the background investigation. But, because this student filed in January of her first year, she still received her registrant clearance before the end of her second year and is eligible for the certified legal internship in her third year. Also, she knows that if she has no other serious issues between now and when she passes the bar exam, she can be sworn in to practice as soon as she passes the exam.



Scenario #3 is another student who registered early, and because of more serious issues in his background, has to go through the full character and fitness process. This person appeared for an investigative hearing, and then was served with a formal complaint, known as specifications, requiring him to also appear for a formal hearing. In this case, he was cleared after the formal hearing. And, because he filed early, he received his clearance before taking the bar exam.

On the chance you are not yet convinced of the benefit in filing early with the board, we see the very real impact of those who wait until the 3rd year to file in many ways. Those applicants often find themselves forced to choose between investing time in studying for the bar exam or in preparing and gathering information to file the bar application, and responding to board requests. Fairly often an applicant will ask for an extension of time in which to respond to requests because they are studying for the exam. While they are likely to get the extension, that just means the background investigation process is being prolonged and may not be finished by grade release. File early and you will not place yourself in that position.

INVESTIGATE YOURSELF FIRST

- Address history
- Academic history
- Employment history
- Credit history
- Criminal history
- Civil lawsuit history



SAMPLE REASONS TO AMEND YOUR APPLICATION WITHIN 30 DAYS OF EVENT:

- Changed your residence
- Began or left a job or internship (paid or not)
- Accused of violation of student conduct code
- Traffic citation
- Arrested
- Someone sues you

GATHER DOCUMENTS NOW

- Birth certificate/valid immigration status
- Request transcripts be sent to board
- Litigation documents
- Financial Declaration
- Credit reports
- Driving history

[REVIEW YOUR LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION RESPONSES](#)

Besides filing early, what can you do to help speed things along? Be proactive - treat the admissions process as if it were your first case. When the board receives your application, staff reviews the application to make sure everything is complete. After that initial review, the board sends you a letter that acknowledges receipt of your materials, and advises you of anything that is outstanding. As your background investigation moves forward, you may receive requests asking for follow-up information. You can greatly reduce the time consumed in these stages of the investigation by being proactive.

Investigate yourself to make sure you are reporting thorough and accurate information. You can check your own credit report, your own driving record, and, if you have a criminal history to report, review police reports and court records.

Get a copy of your law school application and confirm you disclosed all required information accurately and candidly. If you find any problems, take action to amend the application now. If you need to review it and make amendments, contact your law school dean's office.

It is your responsibility to file timely amendments to your bar application within 30 days of any change that would result in a different answer to a question on the application, for example if you were to move or gain new employment.

Respond as soon as possible to requests from the board. Check your portal weekly for board correspondence. If you take more than 90 days to respond, your application can be terminated.

As you report events to the board, do so as a researcher, not as an advocate. Attempts to persuade, minimize, or place your history in a better light can be more harmful than helpful. An honest, factual explanation is always the best path to take.

Get a copy of your law school application and REVIEW IT NOW

Have you ever been arrested?

Ever been convicted?

Even if expunged...



Ever been disciplined by a school?

Ever received a warning?

...Been sanctioned?

IF NEEDED, AMEND YOUR LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION NOW

As you will see later in this presentation, candor is a matter of serious concern. Be sure to review your law school application. For a variety of reasons, an event that should have been disclosed in the law school application might not have been reported.

We will check. Before we do, take it upon yourself to obtain a copy of your law school application, and determine whether you should file an amendment. Do not guess. Different law schools ask different questions. Get a copy of **your** application and be sure.

TO-DO LIST

Submit your registration application no later than **January 15th**.

In 30 days – Install Twilio Authy app and create bar account.

In 60 days, gather information and complete your student registration application.

By January 15th, make sure fingerprinting is scheduled before deadline, request required transcripts, and complete supplemental required forms.

KEEP
CALM
AND
TAKE ONE STEP
AT A TIME

The 1L to-do list can seem overwhelming, so here is a very simple timetable of how you might approach filing your student registration:

- In the next 30 days, install the Twilio Authy app and create your bar application account. Set 30 minutes aside to do these tasks and then go through the application and complete as many of the questions as you can. You will be surprised at how much you will complete in this session. You'll also have an idea of the records you need to obtain.
- In the next 60 days, gather information and complete your student registration application – your address history, employment history, references, education history, and if applicable, delinquent account, criminal history, and lawsuit information. You have until January 15th to file with the board at the largest discount, but do not wait until the last minute. The application is lengthy and detailed. The more you provide upfront, the less questions we will ask, resulting in less delay.
- Remember that to qualify for the discounted fee, you must submit your student registration application **no later than January 15th**.

As you look ahead to the hard work you will do over the next three years, take things one step at a time. We are here to help.

Character isn't
something you were
born with and can't
change, like your
fingerprints. It's
something you weren't
born with and must
take responsibility for
forming.

Jim Rohn

WWW.STOREMYPIC.COM

The remainder of this presentation focuses on the work of the appointed board members. The board, composed of 12 lawyers and three non-lawyer public members, was created by the Supreme Court of Florida to assist with the admissions process through the evaluation of character and fitness of applicants to The Florida Bar.

The Supreme Court has exclusive jurisdiction over the conduct of those who practice law and those who seek to practice law in this state. The board recommends to the Court those who are qualified to practice and, unfortunately, also must inform the Court of those who are not.

ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Knowledge of the Law
- Reason and Analysis
- Character of Practice:
 - Meet deadlines.
 - Exercise candor and civility.
 - Maintain integrity in financial matters.
 - Show regard for rights, safety, and welfare of others.
 - Avoid unethical acts.
 - Abide by the law.

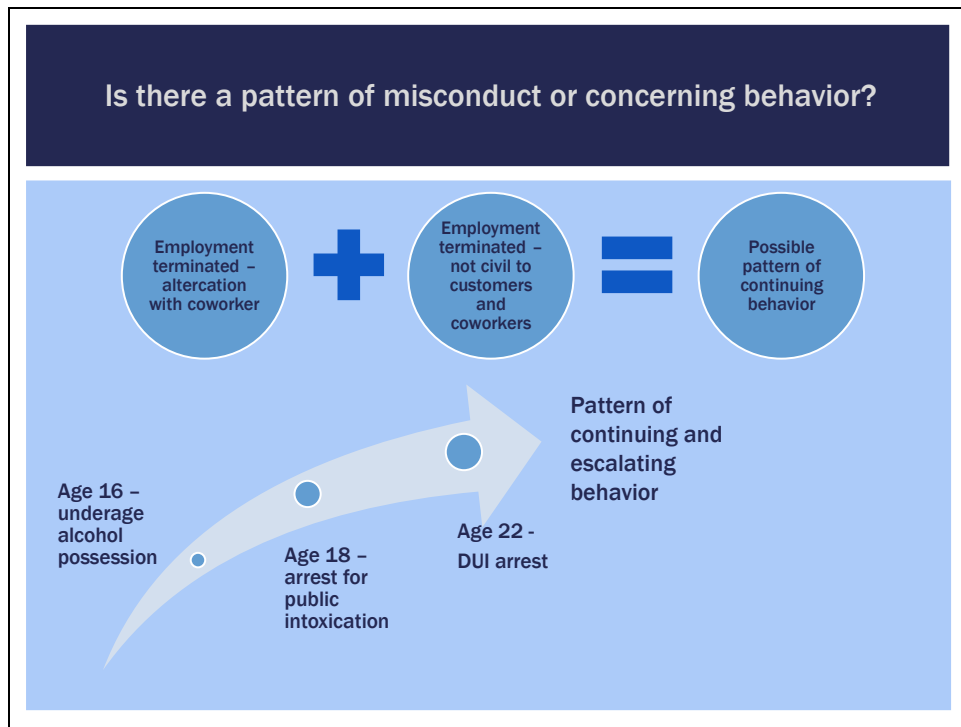
Supreme Court of Florida directs law students to study *The Florida Bar v. Norkin*, 132 So. 3d 77 (Fla. 2013): “Members of the Florida Bar, law professors, and law students should study the instant case as a glaring example of unprofessional behavior.”

Rule 3-10.1 of the Rules of the Supreme Court Relating to Admissions to The Bar sets out “Essential Eligibility Requirements” for admission to the practice of law. The board considers demonstration of the following attributes to be essential for all applicants and registrants seeking admission to The Florida Bar:

- Knowledge of the fundamental principles of law and their application.
- The ability to reason logically and accurately analyze legal problems.
- The ability to and the likelihood that, in the practice of law, one will:
 - Comply with deadlines.
 - Communicate candidly and civilly with clients, attorneys, courts, and others.
 - Conduct financial dealings in a responsible, honest, and trustworthy manner.
 - Avoid acts that exhibit disregard for the rights, safety, and welfare of others.
 - Avoid acts that are illegal, dishonest, fraudulent, or deceitful.
 - Conduct oneself in accordance with the requirements of applicable state, local, and federal laws, regulations, and statutes; any applicable order of a court or tribunal; and the Rules of Professional Conduct.

The first two requirements are measured by graduation from an ABA-approved law school and the bar examination. The rest are measured by the evaluation of character and fitness. Make special note of the requirement regarding civility. The Oath of Attorney includes a pledge specifically directed at the dealings attorneys have with one another and their respective clients, both in person and in written communications. The Court noted a desire that new members of the bar recognize “[t]he necessity for civility in the inherently contentious setting of the adversary process.” In re Snyder, 472 U.S. 634, 64. (SC11-1702, September 12, 2011).

In 2013, the Court issued a strongly-worded decision in the disciplinary case of an attorney who repeatedly engaged in unprofessional and antagonistic behavior. The Court noted it is “profoundly concerned with the lack of civility and professionalism demonstrated by some Bar members,” and included a footnote **specifically advising law students to study this case** “as a glaring example of unprofessional behavior.” The Florida Bar v. Norkin, 132 So. 3d 77 (Fla. 2013). Mr. Norkin’s conduct initially resulted in suspension, but continued lack of professionalism and incivility resulted in a permanent disbarment.

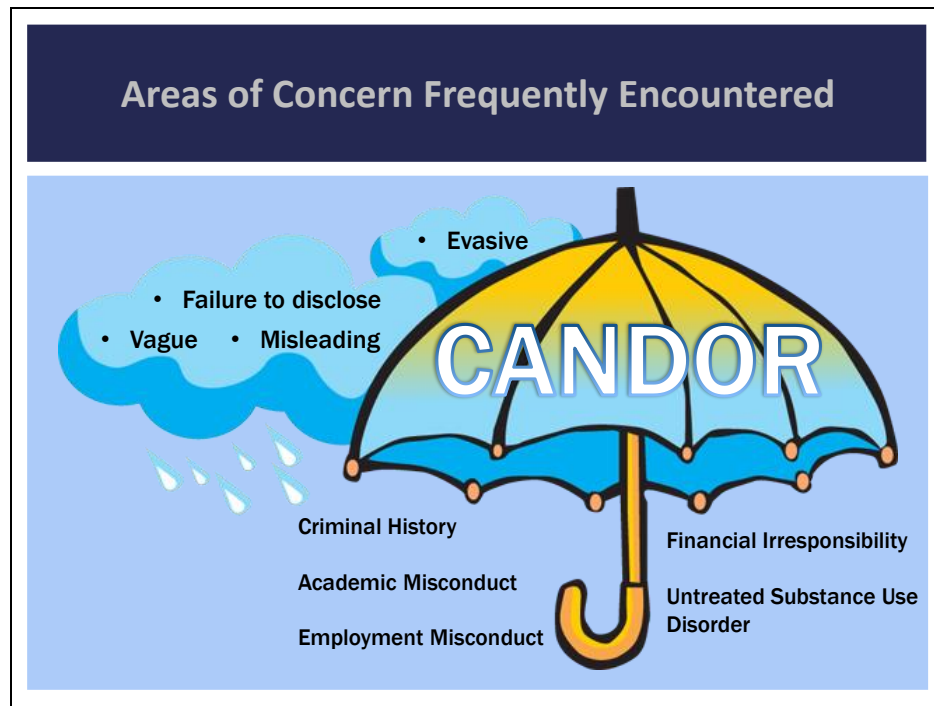


In general, one or two minor issues in your background will not raise any flags. During the background check, the board looks for patterns of behavior, including continuing or escalating misconduct.

A single employment termination after an altercation with a coworker may not in itself be a cause of concern as to overall character and fitness.

However, different issues are raised when it is combined with a second termination for not being civil to customers and coworkers.

Similarly, a single underage possession of alcohol citation would not in itself be considered disqualifying for admission to the bar. However, a single underage possession of alcohol, a subsequent arrest for public intoxication, followed by an arrest for DUI would cause the board to more closely inspect the pattern of behavior exhibited by the applicant.



Areas of concern can surface with any aspect of the applicant's background. While not all inclusive, there are six areas of concern most frequently encountered by the board in evaluating character and fitness: criminal history; academic misconduct; employment misconduct; financial irresponsibility; untreated substance disorder; and lack of candor.

Candor is a factor in every event you report in your bar application. Candor is defined as "the quality of being open and honest in expression, frankness, forthrightness." But it's not just being honest – candor means full and accurate disclosure of events even if those disclosures reflect negatively on you. Any issue that the board reviews is viewed under the umbrella of candor – did the applicant report the event or did the board discover it during the investigation? Was the applicant honest or is his or her explanation completely different than what we read in a police or school honor court report? Lack of candor is the most frequent issue the board encounters. We have seen many cases in which an applicant's lack of candor ultimately became THE disqualifying factor, over and above the events reported or discovered during the bar admissions process.

The Bar Application contains statements that require you to acknowledge your duty of candor. The first statement acknowledges your duty to provide truthful responses in the Bar Application. The second statement acknowledges that you understand the consequences of not being truthful, and that by submitting your application, you are declaring under penalty of perjury that your responses on the Bar Application are complete and truthful. You are swearing to the Supreme Court that the responses on your application are true and complete.

Lack of candor, whether through omission or evasive, vague or misleading responses, can cast a cloud over your character, turning what might have been seen as a folly of youth or momentary lapse of judgment into a present, material issue of credibility and trustworthiness. No matter how embarrassing or trivial an event may seem, report it and tell the truth.

Not detailed, results in delay:

"I was arrested for DUI."

Complete and detailed, no delay:

"I was heading home from a Christmas party where I had a couple of drinks and decided to stop to get something to eat. I stopped by a McDonald's drive thru. While waiting in the drive thru a police officer approached my vehicle and asked me to pull out of the line. It was late and this McDonald's was apparently a place that officers watched for impaired drivers. The officer said that my eyes looked glossy. I was arrested and convicted of the misdemeanor of driving under the influence. I plead no contest. I was given and completed probation and paid all fines due."



If you are asked for a detailed explanation on your bar application, such as a criminal history to report, it is important to provide a complete, detailed, and honest explanation of the events that led to your contact with police. This information is required by the bar application, and if you don't provide it, we will ask. Avoid the delay and provide a complete and detailed explanation in your original response.

What do we mean by complete and detailed?

For an arrest, as example, not just "I was arrested for DUI," or "I was in a bar and was charged with assault." Do not just recite that the police charged you with theft and the court dismissed the charge. The board wants to know the details of what occurred that led to your contact with police.

And do not minimize your role in the events that led to a criminal charge – again, the board is looking for your candid explanation. It is not easy to talk about things we have done that we regret. Don't let that get in the way of making full and accurate disclosure of what you did. This attention to detail is important as you respond to each item on the bar application.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY WHILE IN LAW SCHOOL

Median loan debt of 75% graduates surveyed: \$160,000

Median post-graduation income: \$86,000

Average law school loan payment: \$1,600/month

Leaves \$4,000/month for EVERYTHING ELSE



I BORROWED SO MUCH MONEY

IT'S GONNA HURT PAYING IT BACK

One of the greatest gifts you can give to yourself is to be financially responsible while you are in law school. The board's primary mission is to protect the public and safeguard the judicial system. One way we can fulfill our mission is by helping you understand how easy it is to unintentionally take on life-changing debt while in law school.

According to a variety of sources, law school students graduate with an average of around \$160,000 in debt and will pay around \$1,600 a month once repayment begins. New lawyers have a median income of about \$86,000. After tax deductions, that nets about \$67,000, or about \$5,600 a month. With \$1,600 a month in student loan payments, you're left with \$4,000 to pay for EVERYTHING else – housing, food, cell phones, internet & cable, clothing, transportation, entertainment, you get the picture.



YOU DO NOT HAVE TO
BORROW THE ENTIRE
AMOUNT OFFERED

	+		=	
	+		=	

So what can you do to put yourself in the best possible position?

- **Remember this golden rule – you do not have to accept the entire amount of loans that are offered to you.** While it is tempting to take it all, take a good look at what you truly need to get through these three years and borrow only as much as you need.

- **THINK about what you truly need.** With all the money available to you, a daily stop at Starbucks may seem inexpensive, but it adds up. A daily stop could top \$1,500 in a year, which might be better spent on a bar study course when it is time to prepare for the bar exam, instead of taking a bar prep loan. Think about where you can save so you are borrowing less or saving for big items like bar prep and expenses between graduation and bar admission. There are many small ways you can temporarily trim your budget now so that you can borrow less and enjoy more of your income after graduation.

MAX by AccessLex (accesslex.org)



- Designed specifically for law students
- Student Loan Calculators/Loan Repayment Strategies
- 1L, 2L, 3L financial courses
- On-campus and online education programs and resources
- **\$400,000 in scholarship incentives for participation**

MAX by AccessLex is a financial education program created expressly for law students to help manage student loan debt, available to you at NO COST. Nearly all Florida law schools are members of the program, but even if your school is not participating and offering on-campus programs, you can still take advantage of the online program and resources.

The program offers tools you can personalize to fit your individual situation, such as student loan calculators and tools to help you determine which student loan repayment plan is right for you. It offers financial courses designed specifically for 1L, 2L and 3L students. The 1L course focuses on financial habits and strategy. The 2L and 3L courses build on those habits and strategies.

The program also offers incentives for participation by automatically entering you in random drawings for scholarships when you complete tasks such as creating your account and attending online webinars. The more you participate, the more entries you get. MaxAccess can be of HUGE benefit to you, and we urge you to take advantage of this valuable resource.

FINANCIAL IRRESPONSIBILITY



- J.A.F. failure to timely pay federal and state income taxes, and dealing with creditors in an irresponsible manner
- M.A.R. failure to pay child support, failure to pay taxes, and writing worthless checks
- J.A.B. failure to make court-ordered child support payments, failure to maintain court-ordered health insurance for the child, and several instances of financial irresponsibility

Financial irresponsibility is another potential area of concern. Gross irresponsibility or fraudulent conduct in financial matters can lead to denial of admission.

- Pay your taxes, and file your tax returns on time. (J.A.F. case)
- Do not write worthless checks, authorize electronic transactions that will be rejected or overdraft your account (M.A.R. case)
- Pay your child support (J.A.B. case)
- If you have outstanding debts, stay current in your payments. If you are behind, stay in contact with your creditors and try to find a way to establish a payment plan.

The board does not require applicants to be current with all creditors and does not serve as a collection agency. But it does require honesty in dealing with creditors, and does not look favorably on attempts to deceive or hide from them.

Keep in mind that the board is viewing the whole person, and the entirety of circumstances at hand. If your financial circumstances have been impacted by unavoidable job loss or medical issues, for instance, those factors are taken into consideration.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

- **Carefully review** broad disclosure requirements of bar application question
- **Err on side of disclosure**
- **Disclose even if told there is no record**



It is very important that you **carefully read** the questions on the bar application related to academic misconduct. The questions are very broad, requiring disclosure of just about any incident that may have occurred post high school, from housing violations to plagiarism investigations, whether or not there was a finding of guilt.

If you had a few wild and crazy years as an undergraduate, check your records – you may not recall that essay you had to write after a minor violation. On the other hand, do not fail to disclose something you know happened because the school tells you there is no record. If it occurred, err on the side of disclosure.

RÉSUMÉ/EMPLOYMENT APPLICATIONS/LINKED IN

Make sure your information is accurate



Issues of Concern:

- Inflated GPA
- Expanded dates of employment to cover problem areas
- Omitted employment (where required)
- Fabricated employment
- Inaccurate reason for leaving

Candor concerns can pop up in almost any area, such as the information in your résumé, employment applications, and law school application. This includes any professional online sites on which you may have provided this type of information, such as Linked In. Review these items, and make sure all information is accurate and candid.

You can see above a list of some of the issues with which the board has dealt over the years. Look over your résumé and make sure you include only accurate and truthful information. When you complete an employment application, be sure you disclose your true employment history as required by the application, and accurately report the reason you left each employer.

**UNTREATED SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS
AND
UNTREATED SEVERE MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS**

- Treatment for stress and anxiety **IS**:
 - Encouraged by the Florida Board of Bar Examiners
- Treatment for substance use and mental health **IS**:
 - Encouraged by the Florida Board of Bar Examiners
- Treatment for substance use or mental health **IS NOT**:
 - Cause For Delay in Bar Admission Process
 - Disqualifying
- Florida Lawyers Assistance offers confidential services for:
 - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Support
 - Stress and Anxiety Support
 - Health and Wellness Counseling



(954) 566-9040
www.fla-lap.org

The board is concerned if an applicant has an untreated substance use disorder or untreated severe mental health disorder that could impair the ability to practice law. Note the emphasis here on “untreated.” The Supreme Court, on the board’s recommendation, regularly admits applicants with a history of both mental health conditions and treatment by mental health professionals.

In cases involving severe mental health conditions that if untreated could impair or limit an applicant’s ability to practice law in a competent and independent manner, the board requires evidence that the applicant is undergoing treatment. Applicants with such conditions may be offered conditional admission by which they agree to regularly consult with their mental health providers and follow all instructions of that provider, who will regularly report to The Florida Bar about the applicant during a prescribed probationary period.

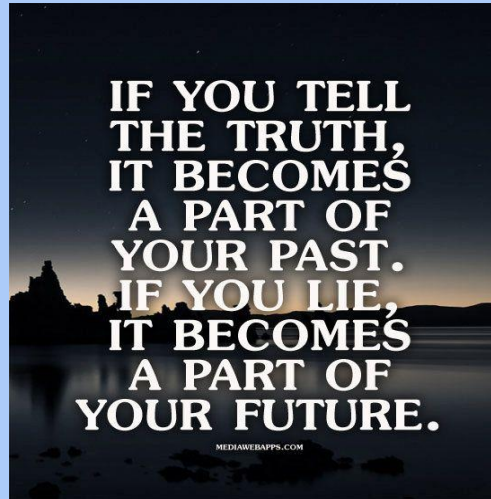
Untreated substance use disorders can lead to a delay in admission, so if you think you have a problem with alcohol or other substances, the board encourages you to address it now, including consultation with Florida Lawyers Assistance. You may also contact the agency confidentially and electronically. You will find a link on the board’s website.

UNTREATED SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS AND UNTREATED SEVERE MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS	
What <u>NOT</u> to disclose (<u>WILL NOT BE INVESTIGATED</u>): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adjustment disorders - Attention Deficit Disorder - General Anxiety and General Depression - Grief or marital counseling - Stress management or counseling 	What to disclose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Substance Use Disorders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dependency and Abuse - Severe Thought Disorders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schizophrenia - Psychotic Disorder - Severe Mood Disorders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bipolar Disorder - Major Depressive Mood Disorder <p>■ (that impair ability to practice law and occurred within the past 5 years)</p>

The Florida Bar Application requires disclosure of treatment for or recurrences of substance use disorders and severe mental health disorders that impaired or could impair your ability to practice law, and occurred within the past five years. Severe mental health disorders include, but are not limited to, schizophrenia, psychotic disorders, bipolar disorder and major depressive mood disorder. Read the bar application question carefully about what does and does not need to be disclosed.

The bar application does not require you to disclose treatment for adjustment disorders, general anxiety, general depression and attention deficit disorder. Nor does it require you to disclose stress, marital or grief counseling. It is important to emphasize that the board encourages applicants experiencing difficulty in coping with the stress of law school and daily life to seek counseling through Florida Lawyers Assistance, your school's counseling center or a private treatment provider. No matter what you may hear, you will not be penalized for seeking counseling. Be assured that you are not required to report such counseling and, if you do, the board will not investigate it.

“[N]o qualification for membership in The Florida Bar is more important than truthfulness and candor.” Florida Board of Bar Examiners re E.R.M., 630 So. 2d 1046, 1048 (Fla. 1994).



It bears repeating that candor during the bar admission process is considered by the Supreme Court of Florida as **THE** most important qualification for membership in the bar.

Undoubtedly, some of you have been involved in incidents that you regret. Be candid in your disclosure and explanation of such events, in all forums. You are putting great energy, time, and expense into a career that will impact the rest of your life – being truthful and candid about your past is critical to your ultimate success in the future.

BE RESOURCEFUL, STAY INFORMED

VISIT YOUR APPLICANT PORTAL WEEKLY

Visit Board's website: www.floridabarexam.org

Visit the NCBE website: www.ncbex.org

Visit MaxAccess website: www.accesslex.org

Visit FLA's website: www.fla-lap.org

Consult your law school dean.

Research published bar admission cases.

“CONGRATULATIONS!”

Finally, we fully appreciate the attention to detail and research time you will have to invest to complete the bar application. The board and staff of the Florida Board of Bar Examiners place great importance on being respectful and helpful to all applicants as you navigate the bar admission process.

Be resourceful and stay informed by visiting the board's website and making use of the other resources you see here. Many of your questions can be answered by using the resources you see above. Remember that your applicant portal is likely THE most important resource. Visit your applicant portal on a weekly basis to check for correspondence from the board.

It is our hope that this presentation has shown you that an early start with timely filing, preparedness, and candor will set you up for the most efficient processing of your background investigation. On behalf of the board, congratulations on all you have accomplished and best wishes to each of you as you begin your legal career!