



The State Bar of California

About the State Bar of California

Created by the Legislature in 1927, the State Bar is an arm of the California Supreme Court that licenses and regulates the state's 270,000-plus attorneys. The nation's largest state bar, it is regulatory body structured as a public corporation under the California Constitution and the State Bar Act.

Mission

The State Bar's mission is to protect the public and includes the primary functions of licensing, regulation and discipline of attorneys; the advancement of the ethical and competent practice of law; and support of efforts for greater access to, and inclusion in, the legal system.

Strategic Goals and Values

The State Bar's [strategic plan for 2022–2027](#) encompasses four goals:

- Protect the public by strengthening the attorney discipline system
- Protect the public by enhancing access to and inclusion in the legal system
- Protect the public by regulating the legal profession
- Protect the public by engaging partners

Five [key values](#) finalized in 2023 guide the State Bar as we pursue our mission: Clarity, Investing in Our People, Excellence, Respect, and Growth Mindset.

Governance

The Board of Trustees is the State Bar's governing body. It establishes the agency's strategic direction and ensures that the organization is fulfilling its statutory mission. The [13-member Board](#)—7 attorneys and 6 nonattorneys—is appointed by the California Supreme Court, the Governor, the Assembly, and the Senate.

The Board appoints attorneys and public members to serve on a variety of [committees](#) that support the agency's work. The State Bar's top leadership positions—the Executive Director, Chief Trial Counsel, and General Counsel—report directly to the Board.

Attorney Discipline System

In fiscal year 2022, the State Bar:

- Opened over 16,000 cases against California attorneys and nonattorneys holding themselves out fraudulently as licensees.
- Met case processing timeliness goals on 86 percent of all cases, a five-year high.
- Filed notices of disciplinary charges in State Bar Court against 156 attorneys.
- Recommended disbarment for 84 attorneys and suspension for another 112.
 - Recommendations are sent to the California Supreme Court for final approval.
- Opened more than 600 cases of the unauthorized practice of law (UPL).
- Referred 345 UPL cases to law enforcement.
- Reimbursed nearly \$6 million to 261 victims of attorney misconduct.

Admissions

California offers multiple pathways to licensure and is unique in offering its own accreditation for [law schools](#), an effort overseen by the Committee of Bar Examiners. In calendar year 2022, the State Bar:

- Administered the California Bar Exam to 11,023 applicants.
- Reviewed 8,041 moral character applications.
- Granted 960 testing accommodation requests.
- Admitted 5,757 new attorneys.
- Extended a [provisional licensure program](#) launched during the pandemic. To date, 651 lawyers have been provisionally licensed.
- Accredited 18 California-Accredited Law Schools and registered 15 Registered Unaccredited Law Schools
- Supported work of the joint Supreme Court-State Bar Blue Ribbon Commission on the Future of the Bar Exam, which recommended a new California-specific bar exam in its [final report](#).

Access to Legal Services

The state's largest single legal aid funder, the State Bar distributes grants to organizations that provide free civil legal services to low-income Californians. Some 11 million Californians qualify for legal aid; the need far outstrips available resources. The agency works to increase legal services access by maximizing funding, informing policy with actionable data, and combating fraud targeting the most vulnerable in our state.

In calendar year 2022, the State Bar:

- Distributed a record-breaking total of \$142.5 million in legal aid funds.
- Supported 102 legal aid organizations statewide.
- Partnered with the Governor's Office to establish the model of distribution for legal services funding related to the [CARE Court initiative](#).

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The State Bar's mission includes advancing diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. The Board has defined the ultimate goal as a statewide attorney population that reflects the richly diverse demographics of California. In calendar year 2022, the State Bar:

- Published its second [Report Card on the Diversity of California's Legal Profession](#), based on its ongoing attorney census.
- Launched [calls to action](#): steps that attorneys, law firms, government agencies, nonprofits, and other organizations can take to increase diversity in their organizations.
- Laid the foundation for the innovative [DEI Leadership Seal Program](#), which launched in early 2023 to recognize legal employers taking steps to further DEI in their workplaces.
- Continued [efforts underway since 2019 to reduce disparities in the discipline system](#). The Board's [Ad Hoc Committee on the Discipline System](#), charged with recommending ways to improve the fairness and effectiveness in the discipline system, issued its [final report](#) in January 2023.