

**Rule 1.13 [3-600] Organization as Client**  
**(Commission's Proposed Rule Adopted on February 19 – 20, 2016 – Clean Version)**

- (a) A lawyer employed or retained by an organization shall conform his or her representation to the concept that the client is the organization itself, acting through its duly authorized directors, officers, employees, members, shareholders, or other constituents overseeing the particular engagement.
- (b) If a lawyer representing an organization knows\* that a constituent is acting, intends to act or refuses to act in a matter related to the representation in a manner that the lawyer knows\* or reasonably should know\* is (i) a violation of a legal obligation to the organization or a violation of law reasonably\* imputable to the organization, and (ii) likely to result in substantial\* injury to the organization, the lawyer shall proceed as is reasonably\* necessary in the best lawful interest of the organization. Unless the lawyer reasonably believes\* that it is not necessary in the best lawful interest of the organization to do so, the lawyer shall refer the matter to higher authority in the organization, including, if warranted by the circumstances, to the highest authority that can act on behalf of the organization as determined by applicable law.
- (c) In taking any action pursuant to paragraph (b), the lawyer shall not violate his or her duty of protecting all information protected by Business and Professions Code § 6068(e)(1).
- (d) If, despite the lawyer's actions in accordance with paragraph (b), the highest authority that can act on behalf of the organization insists upon action, or fails to act, in a manner that is a violation of a legal obligation to the organization or a violation of law reasonably\* imputable to the organization, and is likely to result in substantial\* injury to the organization, the lawyer shall continue to proceed as is reasonably\* necessary in the best lawful interests of the organization. The lawyer's response may include the lawyer's right and, where appropriate, duty to resign or withdraw in accordance with Rule 1.16.
- (e) A lawyer who reasonably believes\* that he or she has been discharged because of the lawyer's actions taken pursuant to paragraph (b), or who resigns or withdraws under circumstances described in paragraph (d), shall proceed as the lawyer reasonably believes\* necessary to assure that the organization's highest authority is informed of the lawyer's discharge or withdrawal.
- (f) In dealing with an organization's constituents, a lawyer representing the organization shall explain the identity of the lawyer's client whenever the lawyer knows\* or reasonably should know\* that the organization's interests are adverse to those of the constituent(s) with whom the lawyer is dealing.
- (g) A lawyer representing an organization may also represent any of its constituents, subject to the provisions of Rules 1.7, 1.8.2, 1.8.6, and 1.8.7. If the organization's consent to the dual representation is required by any of these Rules, the consent

shall be given by an appropriate official or body of the organization other than the individual who is to be represented, or by the shareholders.

## **Comment**

### *The Entity as the Client*

[1] This Rule applies to all forms of private, public and governmental organizations. See Comment [6]. An organizational client can only act through individuals who are authorized to conduct its affairs. The identity of an organization's constituents will depend on its form, structure, and chosen terminology. For example, in the case of a corporation, constituents include officers, directors, employees and shareholders. In the case of other organizational forms, constituents include the equivalents of officers, directors, employees, and shareholders. Any agent or fiduciary authorized to act on behalf of an organization is a constituent of the organization for purposes of the authorized matter.

[2] A lawyer ordinarily must accept decisions an organization's constituents make on behalf of the organization, even if the lawyer questions their utility or prudence. It is not within the lawyer's province to make decisions on behalf of the organization concerning policy and operations, including ones entailing serious risk. A lawyer, however, has a duty to inform the client of significant developments related to the representation under Rule 1.4 and Business and Professions Code § 6068(m). Even when a lawyer is not obligated to proceed in accordance with paragraph (b), the lawyer may refer to higher authority, including the organization's highest authority, matters that the lawyer reasonably believes are sufficiently important to refer in the best interest of the organization subject to Rule 1.6 and Business and Professions Code § 6068(e).

[3] Paragraph (b) distinguishes between knowledge of the conduct and knowledge of the consequences of that conduct. When a lawyer knows\* of the conduct, the lawyer's obligations under paragraph (b) are triggered when the lawyer knows\* or reasonably should know\* that the conduct is (i) a violation of a legal obligation to the organization, or a violation of law reasonably\* imputable to the organization, and (ii) likely to result in substantial\* injury to the organization.

[4] In determining how to proceed under paragraph (b), the lawyer should consider the seriousness of the violation and its potential consequences, the responsibility in the organization and the apparent motivation of the person\* involved, the policies of the organization concerning such matters, and any other relevant considerations. Ordinarily, referral to a higher authority would be necessary. In some circumstances, however, the lawyer may ask the constituent to reconsider the matter. For example, if the circumstances involve a constituent's innocent misunderstanding of law and subsequent acceptance of the lawyer's advice, the lawyer may reasonably\* conclude that the best interest of the organization does not require that the matter be referred to higher authority. If a constituent persists in conduct contrary to the lawyer's advice, it will be necessary for the lawyer to take steps to have the matter reviewed by a higher authority in the organization. If the matter is of sufficient seriousness and importance or urgency to the organization, referral to higher authority in the organization may be necessary even if the

lawyer has not communicated with the constituent. For the responsibility of a subordinate lawyer in representing an organization, see Rule 5.2.

[5] This Rule does not authorize a lawyer to substitute the lawyer's judgment for that of the organization or to take action on behalf of the organization independently of the direction the lawyer receives from the highest authorized constituent overseeing the particular engagement. In determining how to proceed in the best lawful interests of the organization, a lawyer should consider the extent to which the organization should be informed of the circumstances, the actions taken by the organization with respect to the matter and the direction the lawyer has received from the organizational client.

### *Governmental Organizations*

[6] It is beyond the scope of this Rule to define precisely the identity of the client and the lawyer's obligations when representing a governmental agency. Although in some circumstances the client may be a specific agency, it may also be a branch of government or the government as a whole. In a matter involving the conduct of government officials, a government lawyer may have authority under applicable law to question such conduct more extensively than that of a lawyer for a private organization in similar circumstances. Duties of lawyers employed by the government or lawyers in military service may be defined by statutes and regulations. In addition, a governmental organization may establish internal organizational rules and procedures that identify an official, agency, organization, or other person\* to serve as the designated recipient of whistle-blower reports from the organization's lawyers, consistent with Rule 1.6 and Business and Professions Code § 6068(e). This Rule is not intended to limit that authority.

**PROPOSED RULE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT 1.13**  
**(Current Rule 3-600)**  
**Organization as Client**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Commission for the Revision of the Rules of Professional Conduct (“Commission”) has evaluated current rule 3-600 (Organization as Client) in accordance with the Commission Charter, with a focus on the function of the rules as disciplinary standards, and with the understanding that the rule comments should be included only when necessary to explain a rule and not for providing aspirational guidance. In addition, the Commission considered the national standard of the American Bar Association (“ABA”) counterpart, Model Rule 1.13 (Organization as Client). The Commission also reviewed relevant California statutes, rules, and case law relating to the issues addressed by the proposed rule. The result of this evaluation is proposed rule 1.13 (Organization as Client). This proposed rule has been adopted by the Commission for submission to the Board of Trustees for public comment authorization. A final recommended rule will follow the public comment process.

Proposed rule 1.13 carries forward the basic concept of current rule 3-600 but with four specific changes. First, proposed rule 1.13 now mandates “reporting up” in certain circumstances. Second, a two-part test with different scienter requirements is applied to determine whether a constituent’s action amounts to an enumerated violation and whether the violation is likely to result in harm to the organization. Third, a lawyer’s “reporting up” requirement is triggered only when both parts of the test have been satisfied. Finally, a lawyer is now required to notify the highest authority in the organization if the lawyer has been discharged or forced to withdraw as a result of his or her “reporting up” requirements.

Paragraph (a) carries forward the concept in current rule 3-600 which provides that when a lawyer represents an organization, the organization is the client acting through its constituents. By substituting the clause, “A lawyer employed or retained by an organization,” for “in representing an organization” in current rule 3-600, paragraph (a) clarifies that the rule applies to both in-house and outside counsel.

Paragraph (b) requires a lawyer to report certain enumerated conduct by a constituent “up the corporate ladder.” This mandate is consistent with the national trend but diverges from current rule 3-600 which permits, but does not require, a lawyer to take such action. A lawyer’s duty to report is triggered by two separate scienter standards: (1) a subjective standard that requires actual knowledge that a constituent is, has, or plans to act and; (2) an objective standard that asks whether a reasonable lawyer would conclude that the constituent’s course of action is a violation of law or a legal duty and likely to result in substantial injury to the organization. Unlike current rule 3-600 which permits a lawyer to take corrective action if there is either a violation of law or likely substantial injury to the organization, paragraph (b) requires that both be present before a lawyer’s duty to report up is triggered.

Paragraph (c) provides that a lawyer must maintain his or her duty of confidentiality when taking action pursuant to paragraph (b).

Paragraph (d) carries forward the concept in current rule 3-600 that if the highest authority in the organization insists on a course of conduct discussed in paragraph (b), the lawyer’s response may include discussion of the lawyer’s duties regarding terminating representation.

Paragraph (e) imposes a duty on a lawyer who is discharged or withdraws in accordance with paragraphs (b) or (d) to notify the organization's highest authority of the lawyer's discharge or withdrawal.

Paragraph (f) carries forward the duty imposed by current Rule 3-600(D) requiring a lawyer for the organization to explain who the client is when it is apparent that the organization's interests are or may become adverse to those of a constituent with whom the lawyer is dealing.

Paragraph (g) carries forward the concept in current Rule 3-600(E) which expressly recognizes that a lawyer may jointly represent the organization and a constituent so long as the requirements of the rules addressing actual or potential conflicts of interest are satisfied.

Comment [1] explains the scope of the rule's application to different organizations, including governmental organizations. The comment also clarifies that the identity of the constituents themselves will depend on the organization's form, structure, and chosen terminology.

Comment [2] discusses a lawyer's duty to defer to constituents' decisions on behalf of the organization. The comment likewise discusses a lawyer's duty to communicate significant developments. Finally, the comment provides that a lawyer may refer to an organization's highest authority even when not mandated by paragraph (b).

Comment [3] explains that paragraph (b) distinguishes between knowledge of the conduct and knowledge of the consequences of the conduct.

Comment [4] provides that it is appropriate, before taking action pursuant to paragraph (b), to urge reconsideration of a constituent's proposed course of action.

Comment [5] explains that a lawyer should not generally substitute the lawyer's judgment for that of the organization's highest authority.

Comment [6] expressly recognizes the difficulty inherent in attempts to generalize the duties of lawyers representing government organizations. This comment clarifies that each government lawyer's situation is different and needs to be assessed within its own structure.

**Rule 1.13 [3-600] Organization as Client**  
**(Redline Comparison of the Proposed Rule to Current California Rule)**

- (Aa) ~~In representing~~ A lawyer employed or retained by an organization, ~~a member~~ shall conform his or her representation to the concept that the client is the organization itself, acting through its highest duty authorized ~~officer, employee, body, or constituent~~ directors, officers, employees, members, shareholders, or other constituents overseeing the particular engagement.
- (Bb) If a ~~member acting on behalf of~~ lawyer representing an organization knows\* that ~~an actual or apparent agent of the organization acts or~~ a constituent is acting, intends to act or refuses to act in a matter related to the representation in a manner that ~~is or may be~~ the lawyer knows\* or reasonably should know\* is (i) a violation of a legal obligation to the organization or a violation of law reasonably\* imputable to the organization, ~~or in a manner which is~~ and (ii) likely to result in substantial\* injury to the organization, ~~the member shall not violate his or her duty of protecting all confidential information as provided in Business and Professions Code section 6068, subdivision (e). Subject to Business and Professions Code section 6068, subdivision (e), the member may take such actions as appear to the member to be~~ lawyer shall proceed as is reasonably\* necessary in the best lawful interest of the organization. ~~Such actions may include among others:~~ Unless the lawyer reasonably believes\* that it is not necessary in the best lawful interest of the organization to do so, the lawyer shall refer (1) ~~Urging reconsideration of the matter while explaining its likely consequences to the organization; or~~
- (2) ~~Referring~~ the matter to ~~the next~~ higher authority in the organization, including, if warranted by the ~~seriousness of the matter, referral~~ circumstances, to the highest ~~internal~~ authority that can act on behalf of the organization as determined by applicable law.
- (c) In taking any action pursuant to paragraph (b), the lawyer shall not violate his or her duty of protecting all information protected by Business and Professions Code § 6068(e)(1).
- (Ed) If, despite the ~~member's~~ lawyer's actions in accordance with paragraph (Bb), the highest authority that can act on behalf of the organization insists upon action, ~~or a refusal~~ fails to act, in a manner that is a violation of ~~law~~ a legal obligation to the organization or a violation of law reasonably\* imputable to the organization, and is likely to result in substantial\* injury to the organization, ~~the member's response is limited to the member's~~ lawyer shall continue to proceed as is reasonably\* necessary in the best lawful interests of the organization. The lawyer's response may include the lawyer's right, and, where appropriate, duty to resign or withdraw in accordance with ~~rule 3-700~~ Rule 1.16.
- (e) A lawyer who reasonably believes\* that he or she has been discharged because of the lawyer's actions taken pursuant to paragraph (b), or who resigns or withdraws

under circumstances described in paragraph (d), shall proceed as the lawyer reasonably believes\* necessary to assure that the organization's highest authority is informed of the lawyer's discharge or withdrawal.

- (~~D~~f) In dealing with an organization's ~~directors, officers, employees, members, shareholders, or other~~ constituents, a ~~member~~ lawyer representing the organization shall explain the identity of the lawyer's client ~~for whom the member acts,~~ whenever ~~it is or becomes apparent~~ the lawyer knows\* or reasonably should know\* that the organization's interests are ~~or may become~~ adverse to those of the constituent(s) with whom the ~~member~~ lawyer is dealing. ~~The member shall not mislead such a constituent into believing that the constituent may communicate confidential information to the member in a way that will not be used in the organization's interest if that is or becomes adverse to the constituent.~~
- (Eg) A ~~member~~ lawyer representing an organization may also represent any of its ~~directors, officers, employees, members, shareholders, or other~~ constituents, subject to the provisions of ~~rule 3-310~~ Rules 1.7, 1.8.2, 1.8.6, and 1.8.7. If the organization's consent to the dual representation is required by ~~rule 3-310~~ any of these Rules, the consent shall be given by an appropriate ~~constituent~~ official or body of the organization other than the individual ~~or constituent~~ who is to be represented, or by the ~~shareholder(s) or organization members~~ shareholders.

## **Discussion** Comment

### The Entity as the Client

[1] This Rule applies to all forms of private, public and governmental organizations. See Comment [6]. An organizational client can only act through individuals who are authorized to conduct its affairs. The identity of an organization's constituents will depend on its form, structure, and chosen terminology. For example, in the case of a corporation, constituents include officers, directors, employees and shareholders. In the case of other organizational forms, constituents include the equivalents of officers, directors, employees, and shareholders. Any agent or fiduciary authorized to act on behalf of an organization is a constituent of the organization for purposes of the authorized matter.

[2] A lawyer ordinarily must accept decisions an organization's constituents make on behalf of the organization, even if the lawyer questions their utility or prudence. It is not within the lawyer's province to make decisions on behalf of the organization concerning policy and operations, including ones entailing serious risk. A lawyer, however, has a duty to inform the client of significant developments related to the representation under Rule 1.4 and Business and Professions Code § 6068(m). Even when a lawyer is not obligated to proceed in accordance with paragraph (b), the lawyer may refer to higher authority, including the organization's highest authority, matters that the lawyer reasonably believes are sufficiently important to refer in the best interest of the organization subject to Rule 1.6 and Business and Professions Code § 6068(e).

[3] Paragraph (b) distinguishes between knowledge of the conduct and knowledge of the consequences of that conduct. When a lawyer knows\* of the conduct, the lawyer's obligations under paragraph (b) are triggered when the lawyer knows\* or reasonably should know\* that the conduct is (i) a violation of a legal obligation to the organization, or a violation of law reasonably\* imputable to the organization, and (ii) likely to result in substantial\* injury to the organization.

[4] In determining how to proceed under paragraph (b), the lawyer should consider the seriousness of the violation and its potential consequences, the responsibility in the organization and the apparent motivation of the person\* involved, the policies of the organization concerning such matters, and any other relevant considerations. Ordinarily, referral to a higher authority would be necessary. In some circumstances, however, the lawyer may ask the constituent to reconsider the matter. For example, if the circumstances involve a constituent's innocent misunderstanding of law and subsequent acceptance of the lawyer's advice, the lawyer may reasonably\* conclude that the best interest of the organization does not require that the matter be referred to higher authority. If a constituent persists in conduct contrary to the lawyer's advice, it will be necessary for the lawyer to take steps to have the matter reviewed by a higher authority in the organization. If the matter is of sufficient seriousness and importance or urgency to the organization, referral to higher authority in the organization may be necessary even if the lawyer has not communicated with the constituent. For the responsibility of a subordinate lawyer in representing an organization, see Rule 5.2.

[5] This Rule does not authorize a lawyer to substitute the lawyer's judgment for that of the organization or to take action on behalf of the organization independently of the direction the lawyer receives from the highest authorized constituent overseeing the particular engagement. In determining how to proceed in the best lawful interests of the organization, a lawyer should consider the extent to which the organization should be informed of the circumstances, the actions taken by the organization with respect to the matter and the direction the lawyer has received from the organizational client.

### *Governmental Organizations*

[6] It is beyond the scope of this Rule to define precisely the identity of the client and the lawyer's obligations when representing a governmental agency. Although in some circumstances the client may be a specific agency, it may also be a branch of government or the government as a whole. In a matter involving the conduct of government officials, a government lawyer may have authority under applicable law to question such conduct more extensively than that of a lawyer for a private organization in similar circumstances. Duties of lawyers employed by the government or lawyers in military service may be defined by statutes and regulations. In addition, a governmental organization may establish internal organizational rules and procedures that identify an official, agency, organization, or other person\* to serve as the designated recipient of whistle-blower reports from the organization's lawyers, consistent with Rule 1.6 and Business and Professions Code § 6068(e). This Rule is not intended to limit that authority.

~~Rule 3-600 is not intended to enmesh members in the intricacies of the entity and aggregate theories of partnership.~~

~~Rule 3-600 is not intended to prohibit members from representing both an organization and other parties connected with it, as for instance (as simply one example) in establishing employee benefit packages for closely held corporations or professional partnerships.~~

~~Rule 3-600 is not intended to create or to validate artificial distinctions between entities and their officers, employees, or members, nor is it the purpose of the rule to deny the existence or importance of such formal distinctions. In dealing with a close corporation or small association, members commonly perform professional engagements for both the organization and its major constituents. When a change in control occurs or is threatened, members are faced with complex decisions involving personal and institutional relationships and loyalties and have frequently had difficulty in perceiving their correct duty. (See *People ex rel Deukmejian v. Brown* (1981) 29 Cal.3d 150 [172 Cal.Rptr. 478]; *Goldstein v. Lees* (1975) 46 Cal.App.3d 614 [120 Cal.Rptr. 253]; *Woods v. Superior Court* (1983) 149 Cal.App.3d 931 [197 Cal.Rptr. 185]; *In re Banks* (1978) 283 Ore. 459 [584 P.2d 284]; 1 A.L.R.4th 1105.) In resolving such multiple relationships, members must rely on case law.~~