1. Send your complaint in writing, either online or via mail. In addition to the complaint form, include a written statement and any documents that support your claim of attorney misconduct. There is no fee to file a complaint.

2. You will receive a notification in the mail in about a week confirming that your complaint was received. A State Bar Attorney will review your complaint to determine if it shows that the attorney may have acted unethically. As part of this step, the State Bar may contact the attorney, and the attorney will be advised that you filed a complaint. The State Bar may also contact you to request additional information. This review process takes 2 to 3 weeks or more.

3. The State Bar will assign your complaint for investigation, and send you a letter to tell you the names of the attorney and investigator assigned to investigate your complaint. The investigation may take 6 months or more.

4. The State Bar will send a notice to the attorney of its intent to file charges, and may try to settle the case.

5. If the discipline includes suspension or disbarment, it must be reviewed and approved by the California Supreme Court. If not, the discipline can be ordered by the State Bar Court. All public discipline is posted on the State Bar’s website.

6. If the attorney or the State Bar can request a review of the State Bar Court decision.

If criminal conduct is suspected, the State Bar may also refer the matter to a law enforcement agency for investigation and potential prosecution.

If you lost money due to a licensed attorney’s dishonest conduct, you should apply for reimbursement from the State Bar’s Client Security Fund.

Even if there are not grounds for discipline, the State Bar may send a resource letter to the attorney. The State Bar will send you a letter explaining why the complaint was closed. You may request a review of this decision, by writing to the Complaint Review Unit.

The State Bar Court will review the settlement agreement, which describes the discipline to be imposed. If the discipline includes suspension or disbarment, it must be reviewed and approved by the California Supreme Court. If not, the discipline can be ordered by the State Bar Court. All public discipline is posted on the State Bar’s website.

Either the attorney or the State Bar can request a review of the State Bar Court decision.

If you have questions about the complaint process, or want to know the status of a complaint you have filed, call the State Bar at 800-843-9053.