



Information accurate as of June 2, 2026

Executive Summary

This memorandum provides a brief overview of how CSG South member states structure judicial conduct commissions and enforce judicial codes of conduct, with a focus on commission membership, disciplinary authority, and public access to proceedings. Judicial conduct systems follow a similar framework across all states: an independent commission investigates complaints against judges, while the state supreme court typically retains final authority to impose serious discipline such as suspension, removal, or public censure. Most commissions include a combination of judges, attorneys, and public members appointed by multiple entities within state government. These structures are generally intended to incorporate judicial expertise, legal experience, and public representation.

Research Methods

Statutes and relevant rules were reviewed via states' judicial review webpages.

Findings and Analysis

Alabama

Alabama's Judicial Inquiry Commission is a nine-member body constitutionally created to investigate allegations of judicial misconduct. The Commission's membership is made up of the following: a judge of an intermediate appellate court, appointed by the Alabama Supreme Court; three persons who are not lawyers or judges and a district judge, appointed by the Governor and subject to confirmation by the Alabama Senate; two circuit judges, appointed by the Alabama Circuit Judges' Association; and two members of the Alabama State Bar, appointed by the Commissioners of the Alabama State Bar.ⁱ The Commission investigates complaints but cannot impose discipline directly; instead, it files formal charges with the Alabama Court of the Judiciary.ⁱⁱ Proceedings remain confidential unless formal charges are filed.ⁱⁱⁱ

Arkansas

The Judicial Discipline and Disability Commission of Arkansas is a nine-member commission. Its body is made up of three judicial members appointed by the Supreme Court, three lawyers (one by the Attorney General, one by the President of the Senate, and one by the Speaker of the House), and three public members, who are neither lawyers nor judges, appointed by the governor.^{iv} The Commission may issue public admonishments, reprimands, or censures directly, while more severe sanctions such as suspension or removal are imposed by the Arkansas Supreme Court upon recommendation.^v Formal disciplinary hearings are open to the public.^{vi}

Florida

Florida's Judicial Qualifications Commission conducts confidential investigations but opens proceedings to the public once formal charges are filed.^{vii} The Commission may recommend disciplinary action to the Florida Supreme Court, which ultimately determines sanctions, and also possesses subpoena and investigatory authority.^{viii} The Commission is made up of 15 members: two district court judges, two circuit court judges, four barred electors, and five citizens appointed by the governor.^{ix}



Georgia

Georgia's Judicial Qualifications Commission is comprised of 10 members – three judges, four attorneys, and three citizens. Investigative Panel (7 members) and a Hearing Panel (3 members) within its Judicial Qualifications Commission.^x Investigations remain confidential until formal charges are filed, after which proceedings become public. Final reprimands are issued by the Georgia Supreme Court.^{xi}

Kentucky

Among the states reviewed, Kentucky's Judicial Conduct Commission is authorized to impose discipline directly, including admonitions, reprimands, suspension, or removal. Investigations are confidential, but formal charges and hearings become public once filed.^{xii} Appeals; one member and one alternate appointed by the body of the Kentucky Bar Association; and two citizen members.^{xiii}

Louisiana

Louisiana's Judiciary Commission investigates misconduct and makes recommendations to the Louisiana Supreme Court, which retains final disciplinary authority. Once a notice of hearing is filed, records and proceedings become public.^{xiv} The commission has a larger membership structure than many of the states reviewed, consisting of representatives from the judiciary, legal profession, public, executive branch, and legislature. The members are one court of appeals judge, two district judges, three attorneys, three citizens, two appointees from the Speaker of the Louisiana House of Representatives, two appointees from the President of the ^{xv}Senate, and one appointee from the Governor.^{xvi}

Mississippi

Mississippi's Commission on Judicial Performance may issue informal actions or private admonishments directly, but more severe sanctions are recommended to the Mississippi Supreme Court.^{xvii} Proceedings before the Commission remain confidential, while Supreme Court proceedings are public. The Commission is comprised of one circuit court judge, one chancellor, one county court judge, one justice court judge, one practicing attorney, two lay persons, and an alternate for each member.^{xviii}

Missouri

Missouri's Commission on Retirement, Removal, and Discipline of Judges (CRRD) is comprised of two citizens who are not members of the bar, appointed by the governor, two lawyers appointed by the board of governors of The Missouri Bar, one judge of the court of appeals to be selected by a majority of the judges of the court of appeals, and one judge of the circuit courts to be selected by a majority of the circuit judges of this state. CRRD investigates complaints and formal concerns about judges before making a recommendation to the Supreme Court of Missouri.^{xix} Following the recommendation, the Supreme Court may order disciplinary action. All proceedings prior to filing a recommendation are kept confidential.^{xx}

North Carolina

North Carolina's Judicial Standards Commission investigates complaints against judges and may recommend discipline to the Supreme Court of North Carolina after investigating and due process hearing. Proceedings before the Commission remain confidential unless the Supreme Court issues an order of public discipline. The Commission consists of judges appointed by the Chief Justice and General Assembly, as well as public members appointed by the Governor and legislative leaders.^{xxi}

Oklahoma

Oklahoma's Council on Judicial Complaints serves primarily as an investigatory body and cannot impose discipline on judges directly; disciplinary authority ultimately rests with other judicial entities.^{xxii} Proceedings are confidential and conducted in a manner similar to grand jury proceedings.^{xxiii} The Council has three members, one of whom must be a non-lawyer. The members are appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Oklahoma



Senate, the Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, and the President of the Oklahoma Bar Association.^{xxiv}

South Carolina

South Carolina's Commission on Judicial Conduct, operated within the Judicial Branch under the Office of Disciplinary Counsel, is a 26-member body consisting of 14 judges, 4 attorneys, and 8 citizens.^{xxv} Proceedings remain confidential until formal charges become public. The Commission makes recommendations to the South Carolina Supreme Court regarding disciplinary outcomes.^{xxvi}

Tennessee

Tennessee's Board of Judicial Conduct uses separate investigative and hearing panels. Hearing panels possess the authority to impose sanctions directly following formal proceedings. In total, there are 16 members: five appointed by the Tennessee judicial conferences, four by the Speaker of the Tennessee Senate, four by the Speaker of the Tennessee House of Representatives, two by the Governor, and one by the Tennessee Supreme Court. Eight members are current or former judges; two are attorneys, and six are neither.^{xxvii} Investigations are generally confidential unless disclosure is deemed necessary to preserve public confidence in the judiciary.^{xxviii}

Texas

Texas's State Commission on Judicial Conduct possesses authority to issue certain disciplinary sanctions directly, including private and public sanctions, orders for additional education, and suspensions. Proceedings are generally confidential.^{xxix} Its membership comprises the following members: 6 judges or justices of the courts (two of whom must be trial judges) ^{xxx}7 citizens appointed by the governor.^{xi}

Virginia

Virginia's Judicial Inquiry and Review Commission investigates judicial misconduct and may resolve minor matters informally through counseling or private reprimand. More serious charges are filed with the Supreme Court of Virginia, which may impose public discipline. Proceedings remain confidential unless formal charges are filed. Members are chosen by the Virginia General Assembly to serve in four-year terms. Membership must include 3 judges, 2 lawyers, and 2 citizens who are not lawyers.^{xxxi}

West Virginia

West Virginia's Judicial Investigation Commission may issue public written admonishments directly or file formal charges with the Judicial Hearing Board and Supreme Court of Appeals for more serious matters. Proceedings remain confidential until admonishment or formal charges are issued.^{xxxii} The Commission is comprised of 9 members: 5 members of the judiciary (3 circuit judges, 1 magistrate, and 1 family court judge), 3 members of the public, 1 mental hygiene commissioner, 1 juvenile referee, 1 special commissioner, and 1 special master or former state or federal judge or justice.

Common Trends

Several consistent themes emerge across the states reviewed:

- Most states use a mixed-member commission structure that includes judges, attorneys, and public members.
- Appointments are frequently distributed among the judiciary, governor, legislature, and bar associations.
- Confidentiality during the investigative stage is the norm in nearly every state reviewed.
- Public access begins once formal charges are filed.
- In most states, commissions investigate and recommend discipline, while the state's supreme court retains authority to impose the most serious sanctions.
- A smaller number of states, including Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas, and Arkansas, authorize commissions to impose certain disciplinary sanctions directly.



Conclusion

North Carolina’s judicial disciplinary framework aligns closely with the dominant national model. Like many states, North Carolina relies on an independent commission to investigate complaints and recommend discipline while reserving final authority for the state’s supreme court. The most significant differences among states concern whether commissions may impose sanctions independently and when, in the process, proceedings become public. Across the states reviewed, judicial disciplinary systems commonly include provisions related to judicial independence, public accountability, confidentiality during investigations, and transparency during formal disciplinary proceedings.

ⁱ “Members and Staff – Alabama Judicial Inquiry Commission.” 2026. Alabama.gov. 2026. <https://jic.alabama.gov/members-and-staff/>.

ⁱⁱ “About the Judicial Inquiry Commission – Alabama Judicial Inquiry Commission.” 2024. Alabama.gov. 2024. <https://jic.alabama.gov/about-us/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Confidentiality – Alabama Judicial Inquiry Commission.” 2026. Alabama.gov. 2026. <https://jic.alabama.gov/confidentiality/>.

^{iv} “Membership & Staff - Judicial Discipline & Disability Commission.” 2025. Judicial Discipline & Disability Commission. November 14, 2025. <https://jddc.arkansas.gov/personnel-committees/membership-staff/>.

^v “About the Commission - Judicial Discipline & Disability Commission.” 2025. Judicial Discipline & Disability Commission. April 25, 2025. <https://jddc.arkansas.gov/about-the-commission/>.

^{vi} “Operating Procedure - Judicial Discipline & Disability Commission.” 2025. Judicial Discipline & Disability Commission. April 25, 2025. <https://jddc.arkansas.gov/operating-procedure/>.

^{vii} “Confidentiality.” 2021. FLORIDA JUDICIAL QUALIFICATIONS COMMISSION. January 15, 2021. <https://floridajqc.com/confidentiality/>.

^{viii} “Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission Rules.” 2021. FLORIDA JUDICIAL QUALIFICATIONS COMMISSION. January 15, 2021. <https://floridajqc.com/florida-judicial-qualifications-commission-rules/#1525896454813-d2dc44ba-81bc>.

^{ix} “Florida Constitution--1968 Revision Art. V, § 12 | FindLaw.” 2025. FindLaw. 2025. <https://codes.findlaw.com/fl/florida-constitution1968-revision/fl-const-art-5-sect-12/>.

^x “About the Commission.” 2025. GA Judicial Qualifications Commission. July 18, 2025. <https://gajqc.gov/about-the-commission/>.

^{xi} OCGA § 15-1-21 (k) (2)

^{xiii} “Judicial Conduct Commission - Kentucky Court of Justice.” 2019. Kycourts.gov. 2019. <https://www.kycourts.gov/Courts/Pages/Judicial-Conduct-Commission.aspx>.

^{xiv} “Public Access Policy - Judiciary Commission of Louisiana.” 2021. Judiciarycommissionla.org. 2021. <https://judiciarycommissionla.org/PublicAccessPolicy>.

^{xvi} “Home - Judiciary Commission of Louisiana.” 2021. Judiciarycommissionla.org. 2021. <https://judiciarycommissionla.org/>.

^{xvii} “Frequently Asked Questions | Mississippi Commission on Judicial Performance.” 2026. Ms.gov. 2026. <https://www.judicialperformance.ms.gov/frequently-asked-questions>.

^{xviii} MS Code § 9-19-1 (2024)

^{xix} “Boards and Commissions.” 2023. Mo.gov. 2023. <https://boards.mo.gov/userpages/Board.aspx?178>.

^{xx} Bar, The Missouri. 2026. “Ethics: Understanding the Role of the Commission on Retirement, Removal and Discipline.” Ethics: Understanding the Role of the Commission on Retirement, Removal and Discipline . The Missouri Bar. April 6, 2026. <https://news.mobar.org/ethics-understanding-the-role-of-the-commission-on-retirement-removal-and-discipline/>.

^{xxi} “About the Judicial Standards Commission | North Carolina Judicial Branch.” 2026. Nccourts.gov. 2026.

<https://www.nccourts.gov/commissions/judicial-standards-commission/about-the-judicial-standards-commission>.

^{xxii} “Oklahoma Council on Judicial Complaints.” 2026. Oklahoma Council on Judicial Complaints. 2026.

<https://oklahoma.gov/cojc.html>.

^{xxiii} O. S. §20-22-1658F



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- ^{xxiv} “Council on Judicial Complaints.” 2026. Oklahoma Council on Judicial Complaints. 2026.
<https://oklahoma.gov/cojc/about/council.html>.
- ^{xxv} “Commission on Judicial Conduct - South Carolina Judicial Branch.” 2019. Sccourts.org. 2019.
<https://www.sccourts.org/about/lawyer-judicial-discipline/commission-on-judicial-conduct/>.
- ^{xxvi} “The Disciplinary Process - South Carolina Judicial Branch.” 2019. Sccourts.org. 2019.
<https://www.sccourts.org/about/lawyer-judicial-discipline/the-disciplinary-process/>.
- ^{xxvii} “Board of Judicial Conduct (BJC) | Tennessee Administrative Office of the Courts.” 2025. Tncourts.gov. 2025.
<https://www.tncourts.gov/board-of-judicial-conduct>.
- ^{xxviii} T.C.A. § 17-5-303(f)
- ^{xxix} “Rule 12 | State Commission on Judicial Conduct.” 2026. State Commission on Judicial Conduct. 2026.
<https://www.scjc.texas.gov/public-information/rule-12/>.
- ^{xxx} Texas Constitution Article 5, Section 1-a
- ^{xxxi} “Judicial Inquiry and Review Commission | Virginia Court System.” 2026. Vacourts.gov. 2026.
<https://www.vacourts.gov/agencies/jirc/home>.
- ^{xxxii} “Judicial Investigation | West Virginia Judiciary.” 2026. Courtswv.gov. 2026. <https://www.courtswv.gov/legal-community/judicial-investigation>.