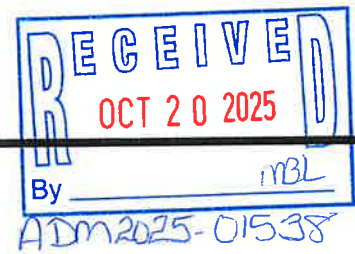


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From: Zachary Jones <zjones@martinjoneslaw.com>
Sent: Monday, October 20, 2025 6:27 PM
To: appellatecourtclerk
Subject: Comment on Proposed Amendment to Rule 21 (ADM2025-01538)



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Comment on Proposed Amendment to Rule 21 (ADM2025-01538)

Respectfully, the proposed amendment—though unimpeachable in intent—moves us further down a slippery slope within an already dense and expanding compliance regime. Once we carve out a mandatory hour for mental-health or substance-abuse content, why not also require stand-alone hours for technology competence, cybersecurity, financial literacy, civility, diversity and inclusion, physical wellness, domestic abuse, artificial-intelligence risk, speeding (and other traffic violations that cause injuries and fatalities on Tennessee highways), honesty, attorney advertising, and so on? Each is important. But compelled slices of curriculum for all of them would crowd out an attorney's professional judgment as to which CLE programs best serve their practice and would further—and unnecessarily—complicate Tennessee's CLE framework, especially for small firms and lawyers admitted in multiple jurisdictions.

Tennessee lawyers already have abundant access to ethics and professionalism CLE—including mental-health and substance-use programming—through the TBA and many other providers. The current framework empowers attorneys to select the ethics content most responsive to their practices and clients. Before adding a new mandate, the Court should ask: Is there credible evidence that compulsory attendance in these topics reduces impairment or improves outcomes? If the answer is uncertain, the wiser course is to preserve flexibility.

Tennessee attorneys' CLE resources are best devoted to programming that fits their individual needs, practices, and clients—not to navigating ever-more granular compliance dictates. Encourage these courses, spotlight them, even incentivize them; but do not make them compulsory.

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