

NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION
Professional Ethics Committee Opinion

Opinion #174 - 12/11/70 (59-70)

Topic: Office Signs

Digest: Sign near street in front of building may be improper

Code: DR 2-102 (A)(3)

QUESTION

Where the building in which the lawyer has his office is set back from the street, if a dignified law office sign on the building on or near the office door is legible from the street, may a sign be placed near the street in front of the building?

OPINION

In N.Y. State 92 (1968), this committee laid down guidelines for signs. DR 2-102 (A)(3) provides that a lawyer shall not use office signs except a dignified sign on or near the door of the office and in the building directory identifying the law office. This committee affirms N.Y. State 92 as applicable under the Code of Professional Responsibility.

The only justified function of a sign is to make it possible for clients and prospective clients to locate easily a previously selected lawyer. The propriety of a sign and its location depend upon the circumstances of each case.

Where a lawyer's office is easily located through its street address, a dignified sign on the building is sufficient. If a sign near the street is not necessary for locating the lawyer, its only purpose is advertising. Under some limited circumstances, a dignified sign near the street is proper. See N.Y. State 92 (1968) relating to rural areas. In a proper case a lawyer's name could appear on an office directory sign which includes substantially all of the occupants of a multi-office building.

Where a sign is properly situated near the street, it would not be proper to have a second sign on the building. See N.Y. State 92.