

## Panel suspends lawyer's license

By MADDIE HANNA Monitor staff  
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A Concord lawyer's license to practice has been suspended for three months following a disciplinary committee's finding of misconduct.

The lawyer, **Allyn Bridge**, failed to act with promptness and diligence while representing a client in a lawsuit, according to a finding reached in May by the Professional Conduct Committee, publicized in a notice earlier this week.

That client alleged **Bridge** didn't return repeated phone calls, and records kept by the Attorney Discipline Office show other clients had voiced similar concerns on two previous occasions.

The client came to **Bridge** in fall 2006 through a referral service, seeking to sue her son for \$10,500 she had loaned him. He wasn't making payments as promised, and she needed the money, she said.

She paid **Bridge** a retainer and filing fees, according to records. But a judge dismissed the lawsuit **Bridge** filed in district court because it was an equity action. **Bridge** told the client he would refile it at the superior court level.

She paid **Bridge** another filing fee in October 2007. She made repeated phone calls over the next few months but never heard back from him, she said, and in January 2008, she filed a grievance with the Attorney Discipline Office.

**Bridge** said Wednesday that he did not wish to comment. At a hearing in January, he did not contest any of the facts presented by the disciplinary counsel, attributing his conduct to personal issues.

He told panel members he had given up his family law practice in February 2008 and did not expect to return to family law in the future, and he agreed to the proposed sanctions and restitution.

Lawyers whose licenses are suspended must seek reinstatement through the state Supreme Court, but for suspensions of six months or less, "it's an abbreviated process," said Jim DeHart, general counsel in the Attorney Discipline Office.

If the attorney has met all requirements accompanying the sanction, "it pretty much happens automatically," DeHart said.

The Attorney Discipline Office receives grievances and forwards them to a screening committee, which decides whether the complaints have merit.

If that answer is yes, then the disciplinary counsel reviews the complaint, determining whether a case could be developed.

A hearing panel is appointed, and following the hearing, the panel submits a report to the Professional Conduct Committee for a decision.

In 2008, the committee acted on 80 cases and found misconduct in 22. In four cases, it issued six-month suspensions stayed for one to two years.