



# Virginia State Bar

10-2 DISTRICT COMMITTEE

August 1, 2008

PLEASE REPLY TO:

Barbara S. Lanier, C

707 E Main St., Ste.

Richmond, VA 23219

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

CERTIFIED MAIL  
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED  
Receipt No. 7160 3901 9849 5362 1356

Wade Trent Compton, Esquire  
Compton & Compton, P. C.  
PO Box 1000  
Lebanon, VA 24266

Re: In the Matter of Wade Trent Compton  
VSB Docket No. 06-102-3595

Dear Mr. Compton:

Enclosed is a copy of the Subcommittee Determination (Certification) in the referenced matter.

Pursuant to Section Six, Part IV, Paragraph 13.I.1.a. of the Rules of the Virginia Supreme Court, you have 21 days from the date of the Certificate of Service on the enclosed determination to either:

- a. file an answer to the Certification with the Clerk of the Disciplinary System, or
- b. file an answer to the Certification with the Clerk of the Disciplinary System, demand that further proceedings be conducted before a three-judge panel in accordance with Virginia Code Section 54.1-3935 and simultaneously provide available dates for the hearing to be scheduled not less than 30 nor more than 120 days from your demand.

Failure to file an answer or an answer and a demand with available dates within 21 days constitutes consent to the Disciplinary Board's jurisdiction. In that event, the board will set a

**VIRGINIA:**

**BEFORE THE TENTH DISTRICT, SECTION II SUBCOMMITTEE  
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR**

**IN THE MATTER OF  
WADE TRENT COMPTON**

**VS B Docket No. 06-102-3595**

**SUBCOMMITTEE DETERMINATION  
(CERTIFICATION)**

On June 16, 2008, a meeting in this matter was held before a duly convened Tenth District, Section II Subcommittee consisting of Elsey A. Harris, III, Esq., Chair, Scott W. Mullins, Esq., Member, and Patricia R. Robbins, Lay Member. A subsequent meeting to consider additional information was held on July 21, 2008, before the same duly convened Tenth District, Section II Subcommittee consisting of Elsey A. Harris, III, Esq., Chair, Scott W. Mullins, Esq., Member, and Patricia R. Robbins, Lay Member.

Pursuant to Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13.G.1.c. of the Rules of the Virginia Supreme Court, the Tenth District, Section II Subcommittee of the Virginia State Bar hereby serves upon the Respondent the following Certification:

**I. FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. At all times material to this Certification, the Respondent, Wade Trent Compton, was an attorney licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
2. From October 1, 2002 until March 2006, Mr. Compton was employed as a full-time staff attorney by the Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society, Inc. (SVLAS). During his tenure at SVLAS, Mr. Compton primarily represented low-income clients. The majority of his cases were family law related, including divorce, custody, and family violence protective order cases.

3. Complainant Larry T. Harley, Esquire, is the Executive Director of the SVLAS. Mr. Harley terminated Mr. Compton in March 2006, after he learned of and inquired into allegations that Mr. Compton had attempted to have sex with SVLAS clients and domestic violence victims.
4. Upon learning of these allegations, Mr. Harley interviewed Mr. Compton. In the first interview, Mr. Compton admitted he engaged in sexual conduct with two clients. Mr. Compton later stated he engaged in sexual relations with one of the two clients before he was employed by SVLAS. However, as set forth below, Mr. Compton was not truthful with Mr. Harley. During the course of the Bar's investigation, Mr. Compton admitted to engaging in sexual relations with at least three SVLAS clients while he represented them.
5. While employed at SVLAS, Mr. Compton represented [REDACTED] before the Tazewell Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. Mr. Compton admitted that while Mr. Compton represented Ms. [REDACTED], he engaged in inappropriate sexual contact with her. Namely, Mr. Compton admitted that in a vehicle not far from her home, Mr. Compton put his hands inside Ms. [REDACTED]'s pants and fondled her above and below the waist.
6. Ms. [REDACTED] felt she had to submit to Mr. Compton or she would lose custody of her child. Mr. Compton told Ms. [REDACTED] that if she did not have sex with him, he would stop representing her.
7. While employed at SVLAS, Mr. Compton represented Charissa [REDACTED] in divorce and child custody proceedings. Mr. Compton admitted he had sexual intercourse with Ms. [REDACTED] while he represented her.

8. Ms. [REDACTED] stated that Mr. Compton came to her home unexpectedly in the summer of 2004, and he attacked her as she exited the kitchen. Ms. [REDACTED] asked Mr. Compton to stop. Mr. Compton began to give Ms. [REDACTED] oral sex in her pelvic area, during which she was able to escape and run upstairs. Mr. Compton followed Ms. [REDACTED], forced himself on her, and had unwanted sexual intercourse with her. Ms. [REDACTED] states Mr. Compton continued to assault her sexually at subsequent meetings regarding her case. Ms. [REDACTED] did not report the incidents because she felt Mr. Compton controlled her life as he represented her in her divorce and custody proceedings.
9. While employed at SVLAS, Mr. Compton represented [REDACTED] in child custody proceedings before the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court of Scott County, Gate City, Virginia. Mr. Compton admitted that if Ms. [REDACTED] is who he believes she is, while he represented Ms. [REDACTED], he had sexual intercourse with her twice at her home. Ms. [REDACTED] stated Mr. Compton engaged in sexual intercourse and oral sex with her two or three times and that she was coerced by Mr. Compton, who stated to her "How bad do you want your kids?" Because of these and like statements, Ms. [REDACTED] felt she had to submit to Mr. Compton sexually.
10. While employed at SVLAS, Mr. Compton represented Emily Crabtree in child custody proceedings before the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court of Russell County, Lebanon, Virginia. Immediately before a hearing in her case, Mr. Compton suggested to Ms. Crabtree they go into a witness room, during which time she and he engaged in oral sex. Ms. Crabtree engaged in relations with Mr. Compton because she was afraid he would not represent her if she did not do so.

11. While employed at SVLAS, Mr. Compton represented ██████████ in a family law case, involving multiple court appearances. Ms. ██████████ alleged that while Mr. Compton represented her he grabbed and touched her inappropriately. All such contacts were unwanted. Mr. Compton twice went to Ms. ██████████'s home, and during both times Ms. ██████████ hid from Mr. Compton because she was afraid.

## II. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT

Such conduct by Wade Trent Compton constitutes misconduct in violation of the following provisions of the Rules of Professional Conduct:

### RULE 1.7 Conflict of Interest: General Rule

- (a) Except as provided in paragraph (b), a lawyer shall not represent a client if the representation involves a concurrent conflict of interest. A concurrent conflict of interest exists if:
  - (2) there is significant risk that the representation of one or more clients will be materially limited by the lawyers' responsibilities to another client, a former client or a third person or by a personal interest of the lawyer.

### RULE 1.14 Client With Impairment

- (a) When a client's capacity to make adequately considered decisions in connection with a representation is diminished, whether because of minority, mental impairment or some other reason, the lawyer shall, as far as reasonably possible, maintain a normal client-lawyer relationship with the client.

### RULE 8.4 Misconduct

It is professional misconduct for a lawyer to:

- (b) commit a criminal or deliberately wrongful act that reflects adversely on the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as a lawyer; and
- (c) engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation which reflects adversely on the fitness to practice law;