

People v. Bernadette Teresa Gonzales. 24PDJ094. August 29, 2025.

The Presiding Disciplinary Judge approved the parties' amended stipulation to discipline and suspended Bernadette Teresa Gonzales (attorney registration number 31676) for nine months, with sixty days served and the remainder be stayed upon Gonzales's successful completion of a two-year period of probation, with conditions. If Gonzales's probation is revoked, she will have to prove by clear and convincing evidence that she should be reinstated. Gonzales's suspension is effective October 3, 2025.

In a personal matter, a contract paralegal sued Gonzales and her law firm. Gonzales failed to appear for trial, and default judgment entered against Gonzales and her firm. A process server served individual and business interrogatories on Gonzales. But Gonzales failed to answer the interrogatories by the due date and also failed to satisfy the judgment. The paralegal moved for a contempt citation, and the court issued to Gonzales a citation to show cause. Just before the contempt hearing, Gonzales responded to the motion for contempt. The court then held the scheduled hearing. The following day, Gonzales satisfied the outstanding judgment. She also filed a response to her business pattern interrogatories but did not answer the personal interrogatories. The court held Gonzales in both punitive and remedial contempt for her failure to answer the interrogatories. Through this conduct, Gonzales violated Colo. RPC 3.4(c) (a lawyer must not knowingly disobey an obligation under the rules of a tribunal).

In a client matter, a client hired Gonzales but does not believe Gonzales issued a fee agreement, and Gonzales did not maintain copies of any written communication about the representation's scope or the basis or rate of her fees. Gonzales thus violated Colo. RPC 1.15D(a)(3) (a lawyer must maintain copies of all written communications setting for the basis or rate for the fees charged).

In another client matter, Gonzales represented a client in a domestic relations matter. The court ordered the parties to set a permanent orders hearing. Though Gonzales corresponded with opposing counsel and her client, she did not set the hearing. A month later, the court issued a second order to set a permanent orders hearing, warning that failure to set the matter would result in dismissal without prejudice for failure to prosecute. Neither party set the matter for a hearing in the intervening twenty-four hours, and the court dismissed the case. The client learned of the dismissal from the court clerk. Through this conduct, Gonzales violated Colo. RPC 1.3 (a lawyer must act with reasonable diligence and promptness when representing a client).

Finally, in 2020, a former client posted a negative and disparaging review of Gonzales on her firm's Facebook page. Gonzales posted a public reply in which she assailed the client

as a terrible mother, described the client's child as "worthless" and "entitled," and implied that the client and her family were not truthful and lacked integrity. Through this conduct, Gonzales violated Colo. RPC 1.6(a) (a lawyer shall not reveal information relating to the representation of a client unless the client gives informed consent) and Colo. RPC 1.9(c) (a lawyer who has formerly represented a client in a matter shall not use information relating to the representation to the disadvantage of the former client).

The case file is public per C.R.C.P. 242.41(a).