



# COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

## *Lawyers Are Unethical and Greedy*

Many people view attorneys as fair game for the brunt of jokes and may actually believe they are greedy, misbehaving opportunists. The perceived misbehavior justifies the generalization that “all lawyers are shysters.” In reality, the majority of attorneys are members of a profession with high ethical standards.

In fact, the American Bar Association developed the Model Rules of Professional Responsibility as a guide to navigate the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by attorneys. The document is extensive and includes guidance to attorneys on topics such as preserving the confidences and secrets of a client, exercising independent

professional judgment on behalf of the client, and the requirement that the client be represented completely, zealously, fully, and within the bounds of the law.

Most prosecutors and public defenders acquire these positions to help people and improve the functioning of the legal system; rarely do the majority of lawyers make a lot of money. For example, Harvard Law School states that assistant district attorneys earn between \$35,000 and \$90,000 annually. Criminal defense attorneys earn an average salary of \$50,000 to \$130,000. Keep in mind that many of these same individuals are paying back extensive educational debt.