Life is made of two dates and a dash.
Make the most of the dash.
Introduction
The Kentucky Rules of Professional Conduct are the starting point for any legal ethics question. If the answer is not found within the rules then you may need to conduct a comprehensive search of your issue. This guide lays out the steps for conducting legal ethics research and highlights the key resources available.

Foundation
The Kentucky Constitution, Section 116, empowers the Kentucky Supreme Court to govern admission to the bar and discipline of members of the bar. According to KRS 21A.160, the Kentucky Supreme Court is authorized to adopt rules and regulations to govern the conduct and activity of the state bar and its members. The Kentucky Supreme Court delegated to the Kentucky Bar Association the authority to issue opinions on the ethical conduct of Kentucky’s lawyers.

Conducting Your Research
The three main sources for Kentucky ethics law are: the Kentucky Rules of Professional Conduct; the federal and state judicial decisions of Kentucky; and the ethics opinions of the Kentucky State Bar Association.

Kentucky Rules of Professional Conduct
The current version of the Kentucky Rules of Professional Conduct was adopted in 1989 and came into effect on January 1, 1990. These rules are found as part of the Kentucky Supreme Court Rules 3.130 et seq, and the rules can be located via the following resources:

- Rules of Professional Conduct. The Kentucky Bar Association Website provides the text of the rule and a history of each rule. The source does not include case annotations.

- Kentucky Rules of Professional Conduct, Casemaker. Select Kentucky > State Court Rules > Rules of the Supreme Court provides the text of the rule and a history of each rule. The source does not include case annotations.

Kentucky and Federal Cases or to the Legal Ethics & Professional Responsibility Cases Library.

Kentucky Formal Ethics Opinions
Formal advisory opinions are issued by the Kentucky Bar Association Ethics Committee. The formal opinions are considered a valuable source for interpreting the Rules of Professional Conduct. The opinions generally address whether a specific conduct violates ethical rules. All formal opinions initially appear in the Kentucky Bench & Bar and are posted on the Kentucky Bar Association Formal Ethics Opinions website. The following resources offer access to the Kentucky formal ethics opinions:

- Kentucky Formal Ethics Opinions, Kentucky Bar Association Website. The Kentucky Ethics opinions are organized by year and also by opinion number and the coverage is 1962 to 2014. The KBA website is an excellent tool if you know the opinion number or the year the opinion was issued. The search engine for the website can be unreliable so this website is not the best source for locating ethics opinions by topic.

- Kentucky Legal Ethics and Professional Responsibility Deskbook. The 5th edition (published in Jan. 2016) is available at the Chase Law Library. It provides an index to formal ethics opinions and reprints the ethics opinions. The deskbook offers the text of current and past professional ethics codes for Kentucky, judicial ethics opinions, and resources on the
Help Researching Multi-Jurisdictions
You may need to expand your research and review the ethics rules, judicial decisions, and ethics opinions from other states. Here are the best tools for conducting this multi-jurisdictional research:

  A comprehensive tool which includes the text of the Model Rules; summaries of state ethics rules which indicate how each state's ethic rules differ from the Model Rules; full text of ABA ethics opinions, digests of state and local bar association ethics opinions; and commentary discussing trends and key issues. The resource is located on the 2nd Floor of the Chase Law Library and available electronically via the Bloomberg BNA Database service while in the library.

  This handbook provides the text of the ABA Model Rules and lists selected cases interpreting a rule. The treatise provides an introduction to ethical issues and identifies cases and scholarly articles. The latest edition of the treatise is located in the Reference Collection of the Chase Law Library and it is also available on WestlawNext.

- **ABA Center Ethics Opinions**, WestlawNext ABA formal opinions since 1924 and informal opinions since 1961.

- The ABA Center for Professional Responsibility website [http://www.americanbar.org/groups/professional_responsibility/publications/ethics_opinions.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/professional_responsibility/publications/ethics_opinions.html)
  ABA members have free access to the online library of formal ethics opinion issued since 1984. The opinions are organized by issue date or by subject.

Final Recommendation
The Kentucky Legal Research Manual provides a chapter on "legal ethics research." A new edition of the guide is expected in 2016 and I highly recommend this manual to any attorney practicing in Kentucky. The manual is published by the University of Kentucky Office of Continuing Legal Education - phone (859) 257-2921.

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