

Federal Rule of Evidence 501 Privilege in General

The common law—as interpreted by the United States courts in the light of reason and experience—governs a claim of privilege unless any of the following provides otherwise:

- the United States Constitution;
- a federal statute; or
- rules prescribed by the Supreme Court.

But in a civil case, state law governs privilege regarding a claim or defense for which state law supplies the rule or decision.

Federal Rule of Evidence 502

Attorney-Client Privilege and Work Product; Limitations on Waiver

The following provisions apply, in the circumstances set out, to disclosure of a communication or information covered by the attorney-client privilege or work product protection.

(a) Disclosure Made in a Federal Proceeding or to a Federal Office or Agency;

Scope of a Waiver. When the disclosure is made in a federal proceeding or to a federal officer or agency and waives the attorney-client privilege or work-product protection, the waiver extends to an undisclosed communication or information in a federal or state proceeding only if:

- (1) the waiver is intentional;
- (2) the disclosed and undisclosed communications or information concern the same subject matter; and
- (3) they ought in fairness to be considered together.

(b) Inadvertent Disclosure. When made in a federal proceeding to a federal office or agency, the disclosure does not operate as a waiver in a federal or state proceeding if:

- (1) the disclosure is inadvertent;
- (2) the holder of the privilege or protection took reasonable steps to prevent disclosure; and
- (3) the holder promptly took reasonable steps to rectify the error, including (if applicable) following Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 26(b)(5)(B).

(c) Disclosure made in a State Proceeding. When the disclosure is made in a state proceeding and is not the subject of a state-court order concerning

the waiver, the disclosure does not operate as waiver in a federal proceeding if the disclosure:

(1) Would not be waiver under this rule if it had been made in a federal proceeding; or

(2) Is not a waiver under the law of the state where the disclosure occurred.

(d) Controlling Effect of a Court Order. A federal court may order that the privilege or protection is not waived by disclosure connected with the litigation pending before the court—in which event the disclosure is also not a waiver in any other federal or state proceeding.

(e) Controlling Effect of a Party Agreement. An agreement on the effect of disclosure in federal proceeding is binding only on the parties to the agreement, unless it is incorporated into a court order.

(f) Controlling Effect of This Rule. Notwithstanding Rule 101 and 1101, this rule applies to state proceedings and federal court-annexed and federal court-mandated arbitration proceedings, in the circumstances set out in the rule. And notwithstanding Rule 501, this rule applies even if state law provides the rule of decision.

(g) Definitions. In this rule:

(1) “attorney-client privilege” means the protection that applicable law provides for confidential attorney-client communications; and

(2) “work-product privilege” means the protection that applicable law provides for tangible material (or its intangible equivalent) prepared in anticipation of litigation or for trial.