

Attorney Frequently Asked Questions

Updated 2.15.23

Question	Response
Will attorneys be covered under malpractice insurance for their legal services?	Yes. Administer Justice provides malpractice insurance for attorneys giving brief advice and referral to clients.
Are attorneys able to assist clients with areas of law that they don't practice?	Yes. Most issues raised at Centers involve very basic assistance. This includes basic legal procedure, understanding legal documents, and common-sense legal strategy. Training and resources on substantive law are also made available so that attorneys can educate themselves if they are interested or a specific question arises.
How often should an attorney commit to serving at a clinic?	All volunteers are expected to serve monthly. That said, we encourage all centers to have at least 2 volunteer attorneys on the team so that if one needs to miss a month the Center can still operate.
How do referrals work?	<p>The type of legal service we provide is often called “brief advice and referral.” It is highly likely you will be referring clients to other resources for additional help. These are often legal resources but could be other social services as well.</p> <p>Administer Justice maintains a list of legal aids and private attorneys in Illinois that we trust. We are adding to this list as we continue to grow into new communities. Our staff periodically reviews the resources on the referral list to verify the attorneys are in good standing.</p> <p>We also recommend teams create their own referral list of trusted attorneys based on their own network and connections in the area.</p> <p>We recommend clients be given names of more than one attorney where possible so they can make a choice as to which attorney they want to work with. Administer Justice does not receive a fee for a referral.</p>
Can a volunteer attorney take on a client as a paying client, if the need for representation is there and the client can afford to pay?	Sometimes an individual will want to hire the volunteer attorney with whom they have just met – having built trust and rapport. That is fine so long as it is reasonable and the client gives informed consent. The volunteer attorney must make clear to the client that the new representation is happening outside of the operation of the clinic and will have no affiliation to Administer Justice. The attorney must also provide the names of other attorneys who practice in that area of law so that the client can make an informed choice.

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How should attorneys work with Client Advocates?	The attorney provides compassionate legal counsel, offering the client a Next Steps plan to solve their problem. The Client Advocate provides emotional and social support and makes sure that the client understands their Next Steps plan.
What areas of law are covered?	All legal issues are covered. The most common legal issues are: family (parentage, child support, visitation, divorce, and post-decree); housing (landlord-tenant and foreclosure); small claims; debt collection and consumer law; employment; and criminal records relief (expungement).
What is the expected scope of the legal services?	The attorney is not expected to go beyond the one-time 45-minute consultation. In that time, the attorney will coach the client, so they are empowered to take the next steps themselves. The attorney may offer additional limited scope services outside of the session, for example, helping to draft a document, but this is not expected. Attorneys may not file an appearance in court on behalf of a client.
Do lawyers have to be Christian?	Administer Justice recommends that lawyers be Christian, as the lawyer may be asked to pray for the client, but this is not a requirement. Prayer is a demonstration of compassion that has powerful impact on a client. We also hope the lawyer has opportunity to share how much God loves the client and has a plan for their life.
Does brief advice even help?	<p>Yes. All clients are asked whether they feel their session helped them with their legal problem and over 93% say “yes.” While we as attorneys have trouble imagining that anything less than full representation is helpful, the fact is that most people just need some guidance in order to solve their legal issue on their own, or to know where to turn for additional help.</p> <p>Also, our model involves the spiritual and emotional side of people’s lives, which is often overlooked in legal aid settings. We find that being holistic and focusing on things like active listening, empathy, and prayer can have an even greater impact than the legal advice that is given. Just as many clients report feeling a greater sense of God’s hope for their lives after their session as do those who feel they were helped by their legal issue.</p>