

ATTORNEY REFERRAL SERVICE INSTRUCTION SHEET*

Mission of ARS

The Attorney Referral Service (ARS) of the Ramsey County Bar Association is dedicated to providing legal assistance by referring members of the public to private attorneys who have met the qualifications established by the Attorney Referral Service, or to other appropriate organizations that can provide legal assistance.

How ARS Works

Attorneys who participate in ARS must:

- a) Maintain Lawyer's Liability Insurance throughout involvement in ARS
- b) Sign and agree to all the rules outlined in the application

ARS works on a panel rotation basis. Once ARS staff receives the application, the attorney is placed in the rotation. ARS staff will refer a caller to the first attorney in the appropriate area of law that fits the caller's needs (i.e. geographical location, language requirement, handicap accessibility). ARS staff will not discriminate when making a referral to an attorney based on the attorney's race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex (except when the call involves domestic violence and the caller indicates a preference), marital status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, sexual orientation, or age. ARS staff will, at the request of the caller, tell the caller when the attorney was admitted to the Minnesota Bar. ARS staff informs callers that there is a \$30 referral fee, which **the caller is responsible for paying** either by credit card at the time of scheduling or by check or cash at the initial consultation, and also informs the caller that all attorneys work at their regular fees, and that taking a case on a contingency basis is the decision of the attorney. The caller is encouraged to discuss fees individually with the attorney at the initial 30-minute consultation.

As soon as a consultation is scheduled with the attorney, the attorney moves to the end of the rotation for THAT PANEL ONLY. ARS staff then mails, emails or faxes a Referral Report to the attorney. The Referral Report is the key form of communication between ARS and the attorneys, and **must be remitted within 30 days of the consultation date in order for the attorney to maintain active status in the panel rotation.**

Attorneys are expected to provide ARS clients the same treatment as other clients, including:

- (a) A professional office space and atmosphere
- (b) Being on time for appointments, or canceling or rescheduling them in advance
- (c) Not rushing appointments
- (d) Notice of the attorney's fees and billing structure
- (e) Notice as to whether the attorney will provide future services to the client

Attorneys must waive all attorney fees for the initial 30-minute consultation. However, ARS charges each caller a \$30 administrative fee for scheduling the appointment. If the attorney forgets to collect the \$30 administrative fee from a client who has not prepaid by credit card, then the attorney is responsible for paying the fee. Callers from out state Minnesota or out of state who want a long distance telephone consultation are also required to pay the \$30 administrative fee, whether or not they hire the attorney.

Referral Procedure

- a. After determining the nature of the case, ARS staff will call the attorney to whom the case will be referred.
- b. ARS staff will explain the case to the attorney and will set up a date and time for an appointment.
- c. The attorney will receive a Referral Report with the client's name, address, telephone number, and type of case. The Referral Report should be completed and returned to ARS with the payment of the referral fee. If you do not believe you will be meeting with the client beyond the 30 minute consultation, please clearly indicate that on the Referral Report. Then ARS staff will close the case with the intention of streamlining your work on Quarterly Reports.

d. If the Referral Report and the referral fee are not returned within 30 days, a second notice will be mailed and the attorney will not receive any additional referrals until the Referral Report and referral fee have been received.

e. The attorney will offer a 30-minute free consultation and will specifically notify the client before any additional charges are incurred.

f. As soon as a referral is made, it is issued a case number, and is listed as open. **All referrals remain open for a minimum of six months.** In cases where the client retains the attorney for further services, the case is considered open until the attorney is providing no further services to the client and all fees have been collected. A Quarterly Report will be mailed out to all attorneys listing all cases, and requesting an update on each case's status. The Quarterly Report, indicating the amount of fees that the attorney has collected from each client and the dates on which the fees were collected, must be returned to the ARS office by its due date.

g. If the attorney collects more than \$500 from a client, he/she will remit 10% of the total fees over \$500 to ARS. The percentage should be paid upon receipt of fees by the attorney, and will be listed on the Quarterly Report. If an attorney chooses not to participate in ARS any longer, or is placed on inactive status, all percentage fees are still due, including 10% of fees acquired from the ARS client after termination of ARS involvement.

Annual Membership Dues

Membership in the Attorney Referral Service will be activated once ARS has received a completed application, a copy of the Declarations page of the attorney's Liability Insurance, and the check for membership dues. The cost for a full year of membership is \$130 for one panel for RCBA members, plus additional panel fees for each additional panel the attorney joins. For attorneys who are not members of the RCBA, the cost for a full year of membership is \$260 for one panel, plus additional panel fees for each additional panel. All membership dues are non-refundable.

Serving the Hearing Impaired

The Attorney Referral Service has limited funds to help provide interpreters for hearing impaired clients. Upon scheduling a consultation with an attorney, ARS staff will then schedule an interpreter to assist at the initial consultation only.

Please contact ARS with any questions.

Phone: (651) 224-1775 intake line
(651) 222-0846 Bar Association main line
Fax: (651) 223-8344
E-mail: ars@ramseybar.org

*Attorney Copy. Please file for future reference