



## HOW TO PREPARE TO WORK WITH AN ATTORNEY

If assigned an attorney through Community Law Center, your organization may be represented by one of CLC's staff attorneys or by a member of the private bar who has volunteered time and resources to work with you. In either situation, the following information should help ensure that you understand what is involved in working with an attorney, which will help your organization in receiving the best services for your legal needs. Please note that submitting the Application for Legal Services does not guarantee acceptance of your case by CLC or placement with an attorney.

### **As a client, your organization will be expected to do the following:**

1. Appoint one contact person for the organization to interact with the attorney, and make sure that person can respond promptly to the attorney's requests. This person should be identified in any client agreement entered into with the attorney. Other persons involved with the organization should be informed that only the contact person should be in communication with the attorney.
2. Be involved with your case, and respond promptly to requests for additional information or documentation. Make sure your board takes an active role in the information exchange. Your attorney agreed to take the case based on her current availability; delays can cause problems when the attorney's commitments change over time.
3. Be honest with your attorney about your organization's needs and issues. Provide immediate updates to your attorney if situations that affect the case change.
4. Do not be afraid to ask questions of your attorney, but be patient with the attorney to locate the correct answer. Sometimes a seemingly simple issue is made much more complex by the law. When making phone calls or sending emails, give your attorney ample time to get back to you. Most will be able to respond to your message within 48 hours, but not within the hour.
5. Do not show up at an attorney's office without first making an appointment. Keep scheduled appointments with your attorney in order to ensure a streamlined process.

### **In return, you will be able to expect for your attorney to work with you to efficiently resolve your legal matter. Your attorney should:**

1. Protect the integrity of your organization by maintaining confidentiality. Subject to the Maryland Rules of Professional Conduct, the attorney will not discuss any private matters relating to your case with anyone outside of the pro bono attorney's firm and Community Law Center, unless disclosure is necessary in order to conduct the representation, you or another member of your organization reveals the information publicly, you consent to the disclosure, or you waive your right to confidentiality.
2. Be honest with you about the law and the potential outcomes of your matters. This might mean that the attorney gives you advice that is contrary to what you want to hear.
3. Communicate with the contact person identified for your organization, keeping you abreast of important developments in your legal matters. You should be comfortable discussing your organization's concerns with your attorney and receiving answers and feedback.
4. Be knowledgeable about the law. While no attorney knows *everything*, you should rest assured that your attorney has exhausted all resources to get the answers you require.
5. Avoid working with competing interests that would distract your attorney from dedicating herself fully to your cause. Potential conflicts of interest should be disclosed and avoided.
6. Not charge legal fees for representation, unless agreed to in advance in writing.

If you experience problems in working with your pro bono attorney, please contact Becky Lundberg Witt, Esq., Staff Attorney for the Pro Bono Program, at 410.366.0922 ext. 18 or [beckyw@communitylaw.org](mailto:beckyw@communitylaw.org). If you experience problems in working with a CLC staff attorney, please contact Kelly Pfeifer, Esq., Supervising Attorney, at 410.366.0922 ext. 33 or [kellyp@communitylaw.org](mailto:kellyp@communitylaw.org). Please keep this page for future reference.