STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

# Law Firm Client Intake SOP

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| **Document no.** | SOP-LAW-001 |
| **Revision** | 1.0 |
| **Owner** | Intake Coordinator |
| **Effective date** | September 15, 2026 |
| **Review cycle** | Every 12 months |

## 1. Purpose

To make sure every new client and matter is properly identified, cleared for conflicts, documented with a signed engagement letter, and opened in the firm's systems before billable work begins.

## 2. Scope

Applies to new clients and new matters for existing clients across all practice groups. The detailed conflict of interest search process is covered by a separate SOP and is only referenced here.

### Definitions

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| **Matter** | A single client engagement or case tracked separately in the practice management system for billing, conflicts and calendaring. |
| **Engagement letter** | The signed agreement that defines the scope of representation, fee arrangement and client responsibilities. |
| **Client trust account** | A bank account used to hold client retainers and funds that belong to the client until they are earned or disbursed. |
| **Conflict clearance** | Confirmation from the conflicts process that no conflict of interest prevents the firm from accepting the matter. |

## 3. Responsibilities

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| **Intake Coordinator** | Logs new client contacts, gathers intake information, requests conflict checks and opens new matters. |
| **Conflicts Analyst** | Runs and documents the conflict of interest search and reports the result to the intake team. |
| **Responsible Attorney** | Confirms engagement terms, reviews conflict results, signs the engagement letter and owns the matter. |
| **Billing Coordinator** | Collects signed engagement letters and retainers and deposits funds into the client trust account. |

### RACI matrix

| Activity | Intake Coordinator | Conflicts Analyst | Responsible Attorney | Billing Coordinator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Collect prospective client information | R/A | - | C | - |

| Activity | Intake Coordinator | Conflicts Analyst | Responsible Attorney | Billing Coordinator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Run conflict of interest check | C | R/A | I | - |
| Approve engagement terms and fees | C | - | R/A | C |
| Collect engagement letter and retainer | C | - | I | R/A |
| Open matter and matter file | R/A | - | I | I |

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

## 4. Materials and PPE

### Materials, tools and systems

- Practice management system
- Client intake questionnaire
- Conflict check request form
- Engagement letter template
- Client trust account ledger
- Document management system
- Matter numbering log

## 5. Procedure

| Step | Task | Owner | Done |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5.1 | **Log the initial client contact**<br>When a prospective client calls, emails or is referred to the firm, the intake coordinator records the contact date, referral source, and a short description of the legal issue in the practice management system. | Intake Coordinator | ☐ |
| 5.2 | **Collect client and matter details**<br>The intake coordinator gathers the full legal names of the client and all related parties, contact information, and a summary of the matter, since complete names are required to run a conflict check.<br>**Checkpoint:** All party names, including former names and related entities, are captured before the conflict check is submitted. | Intake Coordinator | ☐ |
| 5.3 | **Submit conflict of interest check request**<br>The intake coordinator submits a conflict check request listing the client, adverse parties and related entities to the conflicts analyst, following the separate conflict of interest check SOP. | Intake Coordinator | ☐ |
| 5.4 | **Review conflict check results**<br>The conflicts analyst reports the search results to the intake coordinator and responsible attorney, noting any potential conflicts that need a decision before the matter can proceed.<br>**Checkpoint:** The matter stays on hold until a clearance or a documented waiver is received. | Conflicts Analyst | ☐ |
| 5.5 | **Confirm engagement terms and fees**<br>The responsible attorney reviews the conflict clearance, defines the scope of representation, and agrees the fee arrangement, such as hourly, flat fee or contingency, with the client. | Responsible Attorney | ☐ |

| Step | Task | Owner | Done |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5.6 | **Draft and send the engagement letter**<br>The intake coordinator drafts the engagement letter from the firm's template using the agreed scope and fee terms and sends it to the client for signature. | Intake Coordinator | ☐ |
| 5.7 | **Collect signed letter and retainer**<br>The billing coordinator confirms the signed engagement letter and any required retainer payment have been received from the client before the matter is treated as active.<br>**Warning:** Do not begin billable work before the signed engagement letter and any required retainer are on file, except with documented partner approval. | Billing Coordinator | ☐ |
| 5.8 | **Deposit retainer into trust account**<br>The billing coordinator deposits the retainer into the client trust account and records the deposit on the client's trust ledger, keeping client funds separate from firm operating funds.<br>**Checkpoint:** Trust deposits are reconciled by someone other than the person who recorded them. | Billing Coordinator | ☐ |
| 5.9 | **Open the matter and assign a number**<br>The intake coordinator creates the matter record in the practice management system, assigns a matter number, and links the responsible attorney and billing arrangement. | Intake Coordinator | ☐ |
| 5.10 | **Set up the client and matter file**<br>The intake coordinator creates the matter folder in the document management system using the standard folder structure and uploads the engagement letter and intake questionnaire. | Intake Coordinator | ☐ |
| 5.11 | **Calendar key dates and deadlines**<br>The responsible attorney identifies any statutes of limitations, court deadlines or renewal dates known at intake and enters them into the firm's calendaring system with reminders. | Responsible Attorney | ☐ |
| 5.12 | **Send portal access and welcome packet**<br>The intake coordinator sets up the client's access to the client portal, where used, and sends a welcome packet explaining how to reach the team and review billing. | Intake Coordinator | ☐ |

## 6. Quality checks

- Every new matter has a documented conflict clearance or signed waiver on file before work begins.
- Signed engagement letter and retainer are on file before billable time is entered.
- New matter numbers are unique and linked to the correct responsible attorney.
- Client trust deposits are reconciled monthly against the trust ledger.

## 7. Records

- Conflict check request and result
- Signed engagement letter
- Client trust account ledger
- Matter file in the document management system

## 8. KPIs

- Average time from first contact to matter opening

- Percentage of matters opened without a documented conflict clearance
- Percentage of engagement letters signed within the target turnaround time

## 9. Common mistakes

- Starting work before the conflict check is cleared.
- Missing former names or related entities on the conflict check request.
- Depositing retainers into the operating account instead of the trust account.
- Opening a matter number before the engagement letter is signed.

## 10. Revision history

| Revision | Date | Description | Reviewed by |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.0 | September 15, 2026 | Initial release | Ilia Pirozhenko |

## Approval

| Prepared by | Approved by | Date |
|---|---|---|
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