

Law Firm Client Intake SOP

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

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

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 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 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. 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 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 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. Checkpoint: The matter stays on hold until a clearance or a documented waiver is received.	Conflicts Analyst	☐
5.5	Confirm engagement terms and fees 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 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 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. 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 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. 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 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 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 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 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

This is a template. Adapt it to your organization, equipment and local regulations before use.



Scan for the latest version

Opens this template online, where you can download it again in Word, PDF, Excel or CSV — free, no sign-up.

Or [add it to Perfect Wiki](#) so your team can find it and ask questions about it in Microsoft Teams, Slack, kChat or Mattermost.