Chair Michael Bagley called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m.

**Attendance:**

**Committee members:** Michael Bagley, John G. Haubenreich (virtual), Patrick H. Head (virtual), R. Javoyne Hicks (virtual), Catherin Koura, Edward B. Krugman (virtual), David N. Lefkowitz (virtual), Patrick E. Longan (virtual), David O’Neal, William Thomas, Jr. (virtual), J. Maria Waters (virtual), Peter Werdesheim (virtual), Patrick Wheale (virtual), and Judge Paige Whitaker.

**Executive Committee Liaison:** David S. Lipscomb

**Staff:** Paula J. Frederick, Damon Elmore, Jenny K. Mittelman, Andreea Morrison, Billy Hearnburg, Kathya S. Jackson, and Carolyn Williams (virtual).

**Guests:** ITILS Committee members: Glenn Hendrix, Amanda Clark-Palmer (virtual), and Bernard Greer (virtual); Nall & Miller LLP attorneys: Patrick Arndt (virtual) and Ronald Goldstucker (virtual).

**Approval of Minutes:**

The Committee approved the Minutes from the August 16, 2022.

**Action Items:**

**Rule 1.0**

By unanimous vote, the Committee voted to add subsection (dd) defining “willful blindness” to support the changes to Rule 1.2. A copy of the Rule as amended appears at the end of these minutes.

**Rule 1.2**

By unanimous vote, the Committee voted to amend Rule 1.2(d) to address ITILS concerns regarding anti-money laundering. A copy of the Rule as amended appears at the end of these minutes.

**Part VII**

By unanimous vote, the Committee voted to amend Rules 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3, and reserved Rules 7.4 and 7.5. A copy of the Rule as amended appears at the end of these minutes.
**Discussion Item:**

A subcommittee will review the Fagan decision and the associated rules, and provide the Committee with an update at the next meeting. The members of the subcommittee are David Lipscomb, Patrick Head, Patrick Longan, Pete Werdesheim and Catherine Koura.

**Informational Item:**

Patrick Longan advised the committee of a new ABA Opinion regarding pro se lawyers contacting opposing party. The FAOB is currently looking into this matter and Bar Counsel will provide an update at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.
RULE 1.2 SCOPE OF REPRESENTATION AND ALLOCATION OF AUTHORITY BETWEEN CLIENT AND LAWYER

(a) Subject to paragraphs (c) and (d), a lawyer shall abide by a client's decisions concerning the scope and objectives of representation and, as required by Rule 1.4, shall consult with the client as to the means by which they are to be pursued. A lawyer may take such action on behalf of the client as is impliedly authorized to carry out the representation. A lawyer shall abide by a client's decision whether to settle a matter. In a criminal case, the lawyer shall abide by the client's decision, after consultation with the lawyer, as to a plea to be entered, whether to waive jury trial and whether the client will testify.

(b) A lawyer's representation of a client, including representation by appointment, does not constitute an endorsement of the client's political, economic, social or moral views or activities.

(c) A lawyer may limit the scope and objectives of the representation if the limitation is reasonable under the circumstances and the client gives informed consent.

(d) A lawyer shall not either knowingly or with willful blindness counsel a client to engage in criminal or fraudulent conduct that the lawyer knows is criminal or fraudulent, nor knowingly or with willful blindness assist a client in such conduct. However, a lawyer may discuss the legal consequences of any proposed course of conduct with a client and may counsel or assist a client to make a good faith effort to determine the validity, scope, meaning, or application of the law.

The maximum penalty for a violation of this rule is disbarment.
Comment

Allocation of Authority between Client and Lawyer

[1] Paragraph (a) confers upon the client the ultimate authority to determine the purposes to be served by legal representation, within the limits imposed by law and the lawyer's professional obligations. The decisions specified in paragraph (a), such as whether to settle a civil matter, must also be made by the client. See Rule 1.4 (a) (1) for the lawyer's duty to communicate with the client about such decisions. With respect to the means by which the client's objectives are to be pursued, the lawyer shall consult with the client as required by Rule 1.4 (a) (2) and may take such action as is impliedly authorized to carry out the representation.

[2] On occasion, however, a lawyer and a client may disagree about the means to be used to accomplish the client's objectives. Clients normally defer to the special knowledge and skill of their lawyer with respect to the means to be used to accomplish their objectives, particularly with respect to technical, legal and tactical matters. Conversely, lawyers usually defer to the client regarding such questions as the expense to be incurred and concern for third persons who might be adversely affected. Because of the varied nature of the matters about which a lawyer and client might disagree and because the actions in question may implicate the interests of a tribunal or other persons, this rule does not prescribe how such disagreements are to be resolved. Other law, however, may be applicable and should be consulted by the lawyer. The lawyer should also consult with the client and seek a mutually acceptable resolution of the disagreement. If such efforts are unavailing and the lawyer has a fundamental disagreement with the client, the lawyer may withdraw from the representation. See Rule 1.16 (b) (4). Conversely, the client may resolve the disagreement by discharging the lawyer. See Rule 1.16 (a) (3).
[3] At the outset of a representation, the client may authorize the lawyer to take specific action on the client's behalf without further consultation. Absent a material change in circumstances and subject to Rule 1.4, a lawyer may rely on such an advance authorization. The client may, however, revoke such authority at any time.

[4] In a case in which the client appears to be suffering from diminished capacity, the lawyer's duty to abide by the client's decisions is to be guided by reference to Rule 1.14.

Independence from Client's Views or Activities

[5] Legal representation should not be denied to people who are unable to afford legal services, or whose cause is controversial or the subject of popular disapproval. By the same token, representing a client does not constitute approval of the client's views or activities.

Agreements Limiting Scope of Representation

[6] The scope of services to be provided by a lawyer may be limited by agreement with the client or by the terms under which the lawyer's services are made available to the client. When a lawyer has been retained by an insurer to represent an insured, for example, the representation may be limited to matters related to the insurance coverage. A limited representation may be appropriate because the client has limited objectives for the representation. In addition, the terms upon which representation is undertaken may exclude specific means that might State Bar Handbook 58/298 otherwise be used to accomplish the client's objectives. Such limitations may exclude actions that the client thinks are too costly or that the lawyer regards as repugnant or imprudent.

[7] Although this rule affords the lawyer and the client substantial latitude to limit the representation, the limitation must be reasonable under the circumstances. If,
for example, a client's objective is limited to securing general information about
the law the client needs in order to handle a common and typically uncomplicated
legal problem, the lawyer and client may agree that the lawyer's services will be
limited to a brief telephone consultation. Such a limitation, however, would not be
reasonable if the time allotted was not sufficient to yield advice upon which the
client could rely. Although an agreement for a limited representation does not
exempt a lawyer from the duty to provide competent representation, the limitation
is a factor to be considered when determining the legal knowledge, skill,
 thoroughness and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation. See
Rule 1.1.

[8] All agreements concerning a lawyer's representation of a client must accord
with the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct and other law. See, e.g., Rules 1.1,
1.8 and 5.6.

Criminal, Fraudulent and Prohibited Transactions

[9] Paragraph (d) prohibits a lawyer from knowingly counseling or assisting a
client to commit a crime or fraud. This prohibition, however, does not preclude the
lawyer from giving an honest opinion about the actual consequences that appear
likely to result from a client's conduct. Nor does the fact that a client uses advice in
a course of action that is criminal or fraudulent of itself make a lawyer a party to
the course of action. There is a critical distinction between presenting an analysis
of legal aspects of questionable conduct and recommending the means by which a
crime or fraud might be committed with impunity.

[10] When the client's course of action has already begun and is continuing, the
lawyer's responsibility is especially delicate. The lawyer is required to avoid
assisting the client, for example, by drafting or delivering documents that the
lawyer knows are fraudulent or by suggesting how the wrongdoing might be
concealed. A lawyer may not continue assisting a client in conduct that the lawyer
originally supposed was legally proper but then discovers is criminal or fraudulent.
The lawyer must, therefore, withdraw from the representation of the client in the
matter. See Rule 1.16 (a). In some cases, withdrawal alone might be insufficient. It
may be necessary for the lawyer to give notice of the fact of withdrawal and to
disaffirm any opinion, document, affirmation or the like. See Rule 4.1.

[11] Where the client is a fiduciary, the lawyer may be charged with special
obligations in dealings with a beneficiary.

[12] Paragraph (d) applies whether or not the defrauded party is a party to the
transaction. Hence, a lawyer must not participate in a transaction to effectuate
criminal or fraudulent voidance of tax liability. Paragraph (d) does not preclude
undertaking a criminal defense incident to a general retainer for legal services to a
lawful enterprise. The last clause of paragraph (d) recognizes that determining the
validity or interpretation of a statute or regulation may require a course of action
involving disobedience of the statute or regulation or of the interpretation placed
upon it by governmental authorities.

[13] If a lawyer comes to know or reasonably should know that a client expects
assistance not permitted by the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct or other law
or if the lawyer intends to act contrary to the client's instructions, the lawyer must
consult with the client regarding the limitations on the lawyer's conduct. See Rule
1.4 (a) (5).
RULE 1.0. TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS.

(a) “Belief” or “believes” denotes that the person involved actually thought the fact in question to be true. A person’s belief may be inferred from the circumstances.

(b) “Confidential Proceedings” denotes any proceeding under these rules which occurs prior to a filing in the Supreme Court of Georgia.

(c) “Confirmed in writing” when used in reference to the informed consent of a person, denotes informed consent that is given in writing by the person, or a writing that a lawyer promptly transmits to the person confirming an oral informed consent. See paragraph (l) for the definition of “informed consent.” If it is not feasible to obtain or transmit the writing at the time the person gives informed consent, then the lawyer must obtain or transmit it within a reasonable time thereafter.

(d) “Consult” or “consultation” denotes communication of information reasonably sufficient to permit the client to appreciate the significance of the matter in question.

(e) “Conviction” or “convicted” denotes any of the following accepted by a court, whether or not a sentence has been imposed:

(1) a guilty plea;

(2) a plea of nolo contendere;

(3) a verdict of guilty;

(4) a verdict of guilty but mentally ill; or

(5) A plea entered under the Georgia First Offender Act, OCGA § 42-8-60 et seq., or a substantially similar statute in Georgia or another jurisdiction.
(f) “Domestic Lawyer” denotes a person authorized to practice law by the duly constituted and authorized governmental body of any state or territory of the United States or the District of Columbia but not authorized by the Supreme Court of Georgia or its rules to practice law in the state of Georgia.

(g) “Firm” or “law firm” denotes a lawyer or lawyers in a private firm, law partnership, professional corporation, sole proprietorship or other association authorized to practice law pursuant to Bar Rule 1-203 (d); or lawyers employed in a legal services organization or the legal department of a corporation or other organization.

(h) “Foreign Lawyer” denotes a person authorized to practice law by the duly constituted and authorized governmental body of any foreign nation but not authorized by the Supreme Court of Georgia or its rules to practice law in the state of Georgia.

(i) “Fraud” or “fraudulent” denotes conduct that is fraudulent under the substantive or procedural law of the applicable jurisdiction and has a purpose to deceive; not merely negligent misrepresentation or failure to apprise another of relevant information.

(j) “Grievance” denotes an allegation of unethical conduct filed against a lawyer.

(k) “He,” “Him” or “His” denotes generic pronouns including both male and female.

(l) “Informed consent” denotes the agreement by a person to a proposed course of conduct after the lawyer has communicated adequate information and explanation about the material risks of and reasonably available alternatives to the proposed course of conduct.

(m) “Knowingly,” “known,” or “knows” denotes actual knowledge of the
fact in question. A person's knowledge may be inferred from the circumstances.

(n) “Lawyer” denotes a person authorized by the Supreme Court of Georgia or its rules to practice law in the state of Georgia including persons admitted to practice in this state pro hac vice.

(o) “Memorandum of Grievance” denotes an allegation of unethical conduct against a lawyer filed in writing with the Office of the General Counsel and containing the name and signature of the complainant or initiated pursuant to Rule 4-203 (2).

(p) “Nonlawyer” denotes a person not authorized to practice law by either the:

(1) Supreme Court of Georgia or its rules (including pro hac vice admission), or

(2) duly constituted and authorized governmental body of any other state or territory of the United States, or the District of Columbia, or

(3) duly constituted and authorized governmental body of any foreign nation.

(q) “Notice of Discipline” denotes a notice by the State Disciplinary Board that the respondent will be subject to a disciplinary sanction for violation of one or more Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct unless the respondent affirmatively rejects the notice.

(r) “Partner” denotes a member of a partnership, a shareholder in a law firm organized pursuant to Bar Rule 1-203 (d), or a member of an association authorized to practice law.

(s) “Petition for Voluntary Surrender of License” denotes a Petition for Voluntary Discipline in which the respondent voluntarily surrenders his license to practice law in this state. A voluntary surrender of license is
tantamount to disbarment.

(t) “Probable Cause” denotes a finding by the State Disciplinary Board that there is sufficient evidence to believe that the respondent has violated one or more of the provisions of Part IV, Chapter 1 of the rules.

(u) "Prospective Client" denotes a person who consults with a lawyer about the possibility of forming a client-lawyer relationship with respect to a matter.

(v) “Public Proceedings” denotes any proceeding under these rules that has been filed with the Supreme Court of Georgia.

(w) “Reasonable” or “reasonably” when used in relation to conduct by a lawyer denotes the conduct of a reasonably prudent and competent lawyer.

(x) “Reasonable belief” or “reasonably believes” when used in reference to a lawyer denotes that the lawyer believes the matter in question and that the circumstances are such that the belief is reasonable.

(y) “Reasonably should know” when used in reference to a lawyer denotes that a lawyer of reasonable prudence and competence would ascertain the matter in question.

(z) “Respondent” denotes a person whose conduct is the subject of any disciplinary investigation or proceeding.

(aa) “Screened” denotes the isolation of a lawyer from any participation in a matter through the timely imposition of procedures within a firm that are reasonably adequate under the circumstances to protect information that the isolated lawyer is obligated to protect under these rules or other law.

(bb) “Substantial” when used in reference to degree or extent denotes a material matter of clear and weighty importance.
“Tribunal” denotes a court, an arbitrator in an arbitration proceeding or a legislative body, administrative agency or other body acting in an adjudicative capacity. A legislative body, administrative agency or other body acts in an adjudicative capacity when a neutral official, after the presentation of evidence or legal argument by a party or parties, will render a legal judgment directly affecting a party's interests in a particular matter.

“Willful blindness” denotes awareness of a high probability that a fact exists and deliberate action to avoid learning of the fact.

“Writing” or “written” denotes a tangible or electronic record of a communication or representation, including but not limited to handwriting, typewriting, printing, photostating, photography, audio or video recording and electronic communications. A “signed” writing includes an electronic sound, symbol or process attached to or logically associated with a writing and executed or adopted by a person with the intent to sign the writing.

Comment

[1] Bar Rule 4-110 includes additional definitions for terminology used in the procedural section of these rules.

Confirmed in Writing

[1A] If it is not feasible to obtain or transmit a written confirmation at the time the client gives informed consent, then the lawyer must obtain or transmit it within a reasonable time thereafter. If a lawyer has obtained a client's informed consent, the lawyer may act in reliance on that consent so long as it is confirmed in writing within a reasonable time thereafter.
Whether two or more lawyers constitute a firm within paragraph (e) can depend on the specific facts. For example, two practitioners who share office space and occasionally consult or assist each other ordinarily would not be regarded as constituting a firm. However, if they present themselves to the public in a way that suggests that they are a firm or conduct themselves as a firm, they should be regarded as a firm for purposes of the rules. A group of lawyers could be regarded as a firm for purposes of the rule that the same lawyer should not represent opposing parties in litigation, while it might not be so regarded for purposes of the rule that information acquired by one lawyer is attributed to another. The terms of any formal agreement between associated lawyers are relevant in determining whether they are a firm, as is the fact that they have mutual access to information concerning the clients they serve. Furthermore, it is relevant in doubtful cases to consider the underlying purpose of the rule that is involved.

With respect to the law department of an organization, including the government, there is ordinarily no question that the members of the department constitute a firm within the meaning of the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct. There can be uncertainty, however, as to the identity of the client. For example, it may not be clear whether the law department of a corporation represents a subsidiary or an affiliated corporation, as well as the corporation by which the members of the department are directly employed. A similar question can arise concerning an unincorporated association and its local affiliates.

Similar questions can also arise with respect to lawyers in legal aid
and legal services organizations. Depending upon the structure of the organization, the entire organization or different components of it may constitute a firm or firms for purposes of these rules.

Fraud

[5] When used in these rules, the terms "fraud" or "fraudulent" refers to conduct that is characterized as such under the substantive or procedural law of the applicable jurisdiction and has a purpose to deceive. This does not include merely negligent misrepresentation or negligent failure to apprise another of relevant information. For purposes of these rules, it is not necessary that anyone has suffered damages or relied on the misrepresentation or failure to inform.

Informed Consent

[6] Many of the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct require the lawyer to obtain the informed consent of a client or other person (e.g., a former client or, under certain circumstances, a prospective client) before accepting or continuing representation or pursuing a course of conduct. See, e.g., Rules 1.2 (c), 1.6 (a) and 1.7 (b). The communication necessary to obtain such consent will vary according to the rule involved and the circumstances giving rise to the need to obtain informed consent. The lawyer must make reasonable efforts to ensure that the client or other person possesses information reasonably adequate to make an informed decision. Ordinarily, this will require communication that includes a disclosure of the facts and circumstances giving rise to the situation, any explanation reasonably necessary to inform the client or other person of the material advantages and disadvantages of the proposed course of conduct and a
discussion of the client's or other person's options and alternatives. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for a lawyer to advise a client or other person to seek the advice of other counsel. A lawyer need not inform a client or other person of facts or implications already known to the client or other person; nevertheless, a lawyer who does not personally inform the client or other person assumes the risk that the client or other person is inadequately informed and the consent is invalid. In determining whether the information and explanation provided are reasonably adequate, relevant factors include whether the client or other person is experienced in legal matters generally and in making decisions of the type involved, and whether the client or other person is independently represented by other counsel in giving the consent. Normally, such persons need less information and explanation than others, and generally a client or other person who is independently represented by other counsel in giving the consent should be assumed to have given informed consent.

[7] Obtaining informed consent will usually require an affirmative response by the client or other person. In general, a lawyer may not assume consent from a client's or other person's silence. Consent may be inferred, however, from the conduct of a client or other person who has reasonably adequate information about the matter. A number of Rules require that a person's consent be confirmed in writing. See Rules 1.7 (b) and 1.9 (a). For a definition of "writing" and "confirmed in writing," see paragraphs (s) and (b). Other Rules require that a client's consent be obtained in a writing signed by the client. See, e.g., Rules 1.8 (a) (3) and (g). For a definition of "signed," see paragraph (s).

[8] This definition applies to situations where screening of a personally

Screened

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disqualified lawyer is permitted to remove imputation of a conflict of interest under Rules 1.11 and 1.12.

[9] The purpose of screening is to assure the affected parties that confidential information known by the personally disqualified lawyer remains protected. The personally disqualified lawyer should acknowledge the obligation not to communicate with any of the other lawyers in the firm with respect to the matter. Similarly, other lawyers in the firm who are working on the matter should be informed that the screening is in place and that they may not communicate with the personally disqualified lawyer with respect to the matter. Additional screening measures that are appropriate for the particular matter will depend on the circumstances. To implement, reinforce and remind all affected lawyers of the presence of the screening, it may be appropriate for the firm to undertake such procedures as a written undertaking by the screened lawyer to avoid any communication with other firm personnel and any contact with any firm files or other materials relating to the matter, written notice and instructions to all other firm personnel forbidding any communication with the screened lawyer relating to the matter, denial of access by the screened lawyer to firm files or other materials relating to the matter and periodic reminders of the screen to the screened lawyer and all other firm personnel.

[10] In order to be effective, screening measures must be implemented as soon as practical after a lawyer or law firm knows or reasonably should know that there is a need for screening.

Writing
The purpose of this definition is to permit a lawyer to use developing technologies that maintain an objective record of a communication that does not rely upon the memory of the lawyer or any other person. See OCGA § 10-12-2(8).
RULE 7.1: COMMUNICATIONS CONCERNING A LAWYER'S SERVICES

a. A lawyer shall not make a false or misleading communication about the lawyer or the lawyer's services. By way of illustration, but not limitation, a communication is false or misleading if it: contains a material misrepresentation of fact or law, or omits a fact necessary to make the statement considered as a whole not materially misleading.

1. contains a material misrepresentation of fact or law or omits a fact necessary to make the statement considered as a whole not materially misleading;
2. is likely to create an unjustified expectation about results the lawyer can achieve, or states or implies that the lawyer can achieve results by means that violate the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct or other law;
3. compares the lawyer's services with other lawyers' services unless the comparison can be factually substantiated;
4. fails to include the name of at least one lawyer responsible for its content; or
5. contains any information regarding contingent fees, and fails to conspicuously present the following disclaimer:

"Contingent attorneys' fees refers only to those fees charged by attorneys for their legal services. Such fees are not permitted in all types of cases. Court costs and other additional expenses of legal action usually must be paid by the client."

6. contains the language "no fee unless you win or collect" or any similar phrase and fails to conspicuously present the following disclaimer:

"No fee unless you win or collect" [or insert the similar language used in the communication] refers only to fees charged by the attorney. Court costs and other additional expenses of legal action usually must be paid by the client.

b. A public communication for which a lawyer has given value must be identified as such unless it is apparent from the context that it is such a communication.

c. A lawyer retains ultimate responsibility to insure that all communications concerning the lawyer or the lawyer's services comply with the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct.

The maximum penalty for a violation of this rule is disbarment.

Comment
This rule governs the content of all communications about a lawyer's services, including the various types of advertising permitted by Rules 7.3 through 7.5. Whatever means are used to make known a lawyer's services, statements about them should be truthful.

The prohibition in sub-paragraph (a)(2) of this Rule 7.1: Communications Concerning a Lawyer's Services of misleading truthful statements that may create "unjustified expectations" are prohibited by this Rule. A truthful statement is misleading if it omits a fact necessary to make the lawyer's communication considered as a whole not materially misleading. A truthful statement is misleading if a substantial likelihood exists that it will lead a reasonable person to formulate a specific conclusion about the lawyer or the lawyer's services for which there is no reasonable factual foundation. A truthful statement is also misleading if presented in a way that creates a substantial likelihood that a reasonable person would ordinarily preclude advertisements about results obtained believe the lawyer's communication requires that person to take further action when, in fact, no action is required.

A communication that truthfully reports a lawyer's achievements on behalf of a client, such as the amount of a damage award or the lawyer's record in obtaining favorable verdicts, and advertisements containing client endorsements. Such information may create the clients or former clients may be misleading if presented so as to lead a reasonable person to form an unjustified expectation that the same results could be obtained for other clients in similar results can be obtained for other matters without reference to the specific factual and legal circumstances of each client's case. Similarly, an unsubstantiated claim about a lawyer's or law firm's services or fees, or an unsubstantiated comparison of the lawyer's or law firm's services or fees with those of other lawyers or law firms, may be misleading if presented with such specificity as would lead a reasonable person to conclude that the comparison or claim can be substantiated. The inclusion of an appropriate disclaimer or qualifying language may preclude a finding that a statement is likely to create unjustified expectations or otherwise mislead the public.
Affirmative Disclosure

[3] In general, the intrusion on the First Amendment right of commercial speech resulting from rationally-based affirmative disclosure requirements is minimal, and is therefore a preferable form of regulation to absolute bans or other similar restrictions. For example, there is no significant interest in failing to include the name of at least one accountable attorney in all communications promoting the services of a lawyer or law firm as required by sub-paragraph (a)(4) of Rule 7.1: Communications Concerning a Lawyer’s Services. Nor is there any substantial burden imposed as a result of the affirmative disclaimer requirement of sub-paragraph (a)(6) upon a lawyer who wishes to make a claim in the nature of "no fee unless you win." Indeed, the United States Supreme Court has specifically recognized that affirmative disclosure of a client’s liability for costs and expenses of litigation may be required to prevent consumer confusion over the technical distinction between the meaning and effect of the use of such terms as "fees" and "costs" in an advertisement.

[4] Certain promotional communications of a lawyer may, as a result of content or circumstance, tend to mislead a consumer to mistakenly believe that the communication is something other than a form of promotional communication for which the lawyer has paid. Examples of such a communication might include advertisements for seminars on legal topics directed to the lay public when such seminars are sponsored by the lawyer, or a newsletter or newspaper column which appears to inform or to educate about the law. Paragraph (b) of this Rule 7.1: Communications Concerning a Lawyer’s Services would require affirmative disclosure that a lawyer has given value in order to generate these types of public communications if such is in fact the case.

Accountability

[5] Paragraph (c) makes explicit an advertising attorney’s ultimate responsibility for all the lawyer’s promotional communications and would suggest that review by the lawyer prior to dissemination is advisable if any doubts exist concerning conformity of the end product with these Rules. Although prior review by disciplinary authorities is not required by these Rules, lawyers are certainly encouraged to contact disciplinary authorities prior to authorizing a promotional communication if there are any doubts concerning either an interpretation of these Rules or their application to the communication.

[4] It is professional misconduct for a lawyer to engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation. Rule 8.4(a)(4). See also Rule 8.4(a)(6) for the prohibition against stating or implying an ability to improperly influence a government agency or official or to achieve results by means that violate the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law.

[5] Firm names, letterhead and professional designations are communications concerning a lawyer’s services. A firm may be designated by the names of all or some of its current members, by the names of retired or deceased members where there has been a succession in the firm’s identity or
by a trade name if it is not false or misleading. A lawyer or law firm also may be designated by a distinctive website address, social media username or comparable professional designation that is not misleading. A law firm name or designation is misleading if it implies a connection with a government agency, with a deceased lawyer who was not a former member of the firm, with a lawyer not associated with the firm or a predecessor firm, with a nonlawyer or with a public or charitable legal services organization. If a firm uses a trade name that includes a geographical name such as “Springfield Legal Clinic,” an express statement explaining that it is not a public legal aid organization may be required to avoid a misleading implication.

[6] A law firm with offices in more than one jurisdiction may use the same name or other professional designation in each jurisdiction.

[7] Lawyers may not imply or hold themselves out as practicing together in one firm when they are not a firm, as defined in Rule 1.0(g), because to do so would be false and misleading.
RULE 7.2: COMMUNICATIONS CONCERNING A LAWYER’S SERVICES: SPECIFIC

RULES

a. Subject to the requirements of Rules 7.1 and 7.3, a lawyer may advertise or communicate information regarding the lawyer’s services through any media.

1. public media, such as a telephone directory, legal directory, newspaper or other periodical;
2. outdoor advertising;
3. radio or television;
4. written, electronic or recorded communication.

b. A copy or recording of an advertisement or communication shall be kept for two years after its last dissemination along with a record of when and where it was used.

c. Prominent disclosures. Any advertisement for legal services directed to potential clients in Georgia, or intended to solicit employment for delivery of any legal services in Georgia, must include prominent disclosures, clearly legible and capable of being read by the average person, if written, and clearly intelligible by an average person, if spoken aloud, of the following:

1. Disclosure of identity and physical location of attorney. Any advertisement shall include the name, physical location and telephone number of each lawyer or law firm who paid for the advertisement and who takes full personal responsibility for the advertisement. In disclosing the physical location, the responsible lawyer shall state the full address of the location of the principal bona fide office of each lawyer who is prominently identified pursuant to this paragraph. For the purposes of this Rule, a bona fide office is defined as a physical location maintained by the lawyer or law firm from which the lawyer or law firm furnishes legal services on a regular and continuing basis. In the absence of a bona fide physical office, the lawyer shall prominently disclose the full address listed with the State Bar of Georgia or other Bar to which the lawyer is admitted. A lawyer who uses a referral service shall ensure that the service discloses the location of the lawyer’s bona fide office, or the registered bar address, when a referral is made.

2. Disclosure of referral practice. If the lawyer or law firm will refer the majority of callers to other attorneys, that fact must be disclosed and the lawyer or law firm must comply with the provisions of Rule 7.3(c) regarding referral services.

3. Disclosure of spokespersons and portrayals. Any advertisement that includes a non-attorney spokesperson, portrayal of a lawyer by a non-lawyer, portrayal of a client by a non-client, or any paid testimonial or endorsement, shall include prominent disclosure of the use of a non-attorney spokesperson, portrayal of a lawyer by a non-lawyer, or of a client by a non-client.
4.—Disclosures regarding fees. A lawyer or law firm advertising any fixed fee for specified legal services shall, at the time of fee publication, have available to the public a written statement clearly describing the scope of each advertised service, which statement shall be available to the client at the time of retainer for any such service.

5.—Appearance of legal notices or pleadings. Any advertisement that includes any representation that resembles a legal pleading, notice, contract or other legal document shall include prominent disclosure that the document is an advertisement rather than a legal document.

The maximum penalty for a violation of this Rule is a public reprimand.

Comment

[1] To assist the public in obtaining legal services, lawyers should be allowed to make known their services not only through reputation but also through organized information campaigns in the form of advertising. Advertising involves an active quest for clients, contrary to the tradition that a lawyer should not seek clientele. However, the public's need to know about legal services can be fulfilled in part through advertising. This need is particularly acute in the case of persons of moderate means who have not made extensive use of legal services. The interest in expanding public information about legal services ought to prevail over considerations of tradition. Nevertheless, advertising by lawyers entails the risk of practices that are misleading or overreaching.

[2] (b) A lawyer shall not compensate, give or promise anything of value to a person for recommending the lawyer's services except that a lawyer may:

(1) pay the reasonable costs of advertisements or communications permitted by this Rule;

(2) pay the usual and reasonable fees or dues charged by a lawyer referral service, if the service does not engage in conduct that would violate the Rules if engaged in by a lawyer;

(3) pay the usual and reasonable fees or dues charged by a bar-operated non-profit referral service, including a fee which is calculated as a percentage of the legal fees earned by the lawyer to whom the service has referred a matter, provided such bar-operated non-profit lawyer referral service meets the following criteria:
i. the lawyer referral service shall be operated in the public interest for the purpose of referring prospective clients to lawyers, pro bono and public service legal programs, and government, consumer or other agencies who can provide the assistance the clients need. Such organization shall file annually with the Office of the General Counsel a report showing its rules and regulations, its subscription charges, agreements with counsel, the number of lawyers participating and the names and addresses of the lawyers participating in the service;

ii. the sponsoring bar association for the lawyer referral service must be open to all lawyers licensed and eligible to practice in this state who maintain an office within the geographical area served, and who meet reasonable objectively determinable experience requirements established by the bar association;

iii. the combined fees charged by a lawyer and the lawyer referral service to a client referred by such service shall not exceed the total charges which the client would have paid had no service been involved; and

iv. a lawyer who is a member of the qualified lawyer referral service must maintain in force a policy of errors and omissions insurance in an amount no less than $100,000 per occurrence and $300,000 in the aggregate.

(4) pay the usual and reasonable fees to a qualified legal services plan or insurer providing legal services insurance as authorized by law to promote the use of the lawyer’s services, the lawyer’s partner or associates services so long as the communications of the organization are not false, fraudulent, deceptive or misleading;

(5) pay for a law practice in accordance with Rule 1.17;

(6) refer clients to another lawyer or a nonlawyer professional pursuant to an agreement not otherwise prohibited under these Rules that provides for the other person to refer clients or customers to the lawyer, if:

(i) the reciprocal referral agreement is not exclusive; and
(ii) the client is informed of the existence and nature of the agreement; and

(7) give nominal gifts as an expression of appreciation that are neither intended nor reasonably expected to be a form of compensation for recommending a lawyer’s services.

(c) A lawyer may communicate the fact that the lawyer does or does not practice in particular fields of law. A lawyer who is a specialist in a particular field of law by experience, specialized training or education, or is certified by a recognized and bona fide professional entity, may communicate such specialty or certification so long as the statement is not false or misleading.

(d) Any communication made under this Rule must include the name and contact information of at least one lawyer or law firm responsible for its content.

The maximum penalty for a violation of this Rule is disbarment.

Comment

[1] This Rule permits public dissemination of information concerning a lawyer’s name, address, email address, website, and telephone number; the kinds of services the lawyer will undertake; the basis on which the lawyer’s fees are determined, including prices for specific services and payment and credit arrangements; a lawyer’s foreign language ability; names of references and, with their consent, names of clients regularly represented; and other information that might invite the attention of those seeking legal assistance.

[3] Questions of effectiveness and taste in advertising are matters of speculation and subjective judgment. Some jurisdictions have had extensive prohibitions against television advertising, against advertising going beyond specified facts about a lawyer, or against "undignified" advertising. Television is now one of the most powerful media for getting information to the public, particularly persons of low and moderate income; prohibiting television advertising, therefore, would impede the flow of information about legal services to many sectors of the public. Limiting the information that may be advertised has a similar effect and assumes that the bar can accurately forecast the kind of information that the public would regard as relevant.
Neither this Rule nor Rule 7.3: Direct Contact with Prospective Clients prohibits communications authorized by law, such as notice to members of a class in class action litigation.

Record of Advertising

Paragraph (b) requires that a record of the content and use of advertising be kept in order to facilitate enforcement of this Rule.

Paying Others to Recommend a Lawyer

Except as permitted under paragraphs (b)(1)-(b)(7), lawyers are not permitted to pay others for recommending the lawyer’s services. A communication contains a recommendation if it endorses or vouches for a lawyer’s credentials, abilities, competence, character, or other professional qualities. Directory listings and group advertisements that list lawyers by practice area, without more, do not constitute impermissible “recommendations.”

Paragraph (b)(1) allows a lawyer to pay for advertising and communications permitted by this Rule, including the costs of print directory listings, on-line directory listings, newspaper ads, television and radio airtime, domain-name registrations, sponsorship fees, Internet-based advertisements, and group advertising. A lawyer may compensate employees, agents and vendors who are engaged to provide marketing or client development services, such as publicists, public-relations personnel, business-development staff, television and radio station employees or spokespersons and website designers.

Paragraph (b)(7) permits lawyers to give nominal gifts as an expression of appreciation to a person for recommending the lawyer’s services or referring a prospective client. The gift may not be more than a token item as might be given for holidays, or other ordinary social hospitality. A gift is prohibited if offered or given in consideration of any promise, agreement or understanding that such a gift would be forthcoming or that referrals would be made or encouraged in the future.
A lawyer may pay others for generating client leads, such as Internet-based client leads, as long as the lead generator does not recommend the lawyer, any payment to the lead generator is consistent with Rules 1.5(e) (division of fees) and 5.4 (professional independence of the lawyer), and the lead generator’s communications are consistent with Rule 7.1 (communications concerning a lawyer’s services). To comply with Rule 7.1, a lawyer must not pay a lead generator that states, implies, or creates a reasonable impression that it is recommending the lawyer, is making the referral without payment from the lawyer, or has analyzed a person’s legal problems when determining which lawyer should receive the referral. See Comment [2] (definition of “recommendation”). See also Rule 5.3 (duties of lawyers and law firms with respect to the conduct of nonlawyers); Rule 8.4(a)(1) (duty to avoid violating the Rules through the acts of another).

A lawyer may pay the usual charges of a legal service plan or a lawyer referral service. A legal service plan is a prepaid or group legal service plan or a similar delivery system that assists people who seek to secure legal representation. A lawyer referral service, on the other hand, is any organization that holds itself out to the public as a lawyer referral service.

A lawyer who accepts assignments or referrals from a legal service plan or referrals from a lawyer referral service must act reasonably to assure that the activities of the plan or service are compatible with the lawyer's professional obligations. Legal service plans and lawyer referral services may communicate with the public, but such communication must be in conformity with these Rules. Thus, advertising must not be false or misleading, as would be the case if the communications of a group advertising program or a group legal services plan would mislead the public to think that it was a lawyer referral service sponsored by a state agency or bar association.

A lawyer also may agree to refer clients to another lawyer or a nonlawyer professional, in return for the undertaking of that person to refer clients or customers to the lawyer. Such reciprocal referral arrangements must not interfere with the lawyer’s professional judgment as to making referrals or as to providing substantive legal services. See Rules 2.1 and 5.4(c). Except
as provided in Rule 1.5(e), a lawyer who receives referrals from a lawyer or nonlawyer professional must not pay anything solely for the referral, but the lawyer does not violate paragraph (b) of this Rule by agreeing to refer clients to the other lawyer or nonlawyer professional, so long as the reciprocal referral agreement is not exclusive and the client is informed of the referral agreement. Conflicts of interest created by such arrangements are governed by Rule 1.7. Reciprocal referral agreements should not be of indefinite duration and should be reviewed periodically to determine whether they comply with these Rules. This Rule does not restrict referrals or divisions of revenues or net income among lawyers within firms comprised of multiple entities.

Communications about Fields of Practice

[9] Paragraph (c) of this Rule permits a lawyer to communicate that the lawyer does or does not practice in particular areas of law. A lawyer is generally permitted to state that the lawyer “concentrates in” or is a “specialist,” practices a “specialty,” or “specializes in” particular fields based on the lawyer’s experience, specialized training or education, but such communications are subject to the “false and misleading” standard applied in Rule 7.1 to communications concerning a lawyer’s services.

[10] The Patent and Trademark Office has a long-established policy of designating lawyers practicing before the Office. The designation of Admiralty practice also has a long historical tradition associated with maritime commerce and the federal courts. A lawyer’s communications about these practice areas are not prohibited by this Rule.

Required Contact Information

[11] This Rule requires that any communication about a lawyer or law firm’s services include the name of, and contact information for, the lawyer or law firm. Contact information includes a website address, a telephone number, an email address or a physical office location.
RULE 7.3 DIRECT CONTACT WITH PROSPECTIVE CLIENTS

a. A lawyer shall not send, or knowingly permit to be sent, on behalf of the lawyer, the lawyer's firm, lawyer's partner, associate or any other lawyer affiliated with the lawyer or the lawyer's firm, a written communication to a prospective client for the purpose of obtaining professional employment if:

(i) Rule 7.3: Solicitation of Clients

(a) “Solicitation” or “solicit” denotes a communication initiated by or on behalf of a lawyer or law firm that is directed to a specific person the lawyer knows or reasonably should know needs legal services in a particular matter and that offers to provide, or reasonably can be understood as offering to provide, legal services for that matter.

(b) A lawyer shall not solicit professional employment by live person-to-person contact when a significant motive for the lawyer’s doing so is the lawyer’s or law firm’s pecuniary gain, unless the contact is with a:

(1) lawyer;

(2) person who has been a family, close personal, or prior business or professional relationship with the lawyer or law firm; or

(3) person who routinely uses for business purposes the type of legal services offered by the lawyer.

(c) A lawyer shall not solicit professional employment even when not otherwise prohibited by paragraph (b), if:

1. (1) the target of the solicitation has made known to the lawyer that a person does not a desire not to receive communications from be solicited by the lawyer; or

2. (2) the communication solicitation involves coercion, duress, fraud, overreaching, harassment, intimidation or undue influence; or
3. **(3)** the written communication concerns an action for personal injury or wrongful death or otherwise relates to an accident or disaster involving the person to whom the communication is addressed or a relative of that person, unless the accident or disaster occurred more than 30 days prior to the mailing of the communication; or

4. **(4)** the lawyer knows or reasonably should know that the physical, emotional or mental state of the person is such that the person could not exercise reasonable judgment in employing a lawyer.

b. Written communications to a prospective client, other than a close friend, relative, former client or one whom the lawyer reasonably believes is a former client, for the purpose of obtaining professional employment shall be plainly marked "Advertisement" on the face of the envelope and on the top of each page of the written communication in type size no smaller than the largest type size used in the body of the letter.

c. A lawyer shall not compensate or give anything of value to a person or organization to recommend or secure the lawyer’s employment by a client, or as a reward for having made a recommendation resulting in the lawyer’s employment by a client; except that the lawyer may pay for public communications permitted by Rule 7.1 and except as follows:

1. A lawyer may pay the usual and reasonable fees or dues charged by a lawyer referral service, if the service:
   i. does not engage in conduct that would violate the Rules if engaged in by a lawyer;
   ii. provides an explanation to the prospective client regarding how the lawyers are selected by the service to participate in the service; and
   iii. discloses to the prospective client how many lawyers are participating in the service and that those lawyers have paid the service a fee to participate in the service.

2. A lawyer may pay the usual and reasonable fees or dues charged by a bar-operated non-profit lawyer referral service, including a fee which is calculated as a percentage of the legal fees earned by the lawyer to whom the service has referred a matter, provided such bar-operated non-profit lawyer referral service meets the following criteria:
   i. the lawyer referral service shall be operated in the public interest for the purpose of referring prospective clients to lawyers, pro bono and public service legal programs, and government, consumer or other agencies who can provide the assistance the clients need. Such organization shall file annually with the State Disciplinary Board a report showing its rules and regulations, its subscription charges, agreements with counsel, the number of lawyers participating and the names and addresses of the lawyers participating in the service;
   ii. the sponsoring bar association for the lawyer referral service must be open to all lawyers licensed and eligible to practice in this state who maintain
an office within the geographical area served, and who meet reasonable objectively determinable experience requirements established by the bar association;

iii. the combined fees charged by a lawyer and the lawyer referral service to a client referred by such service shall not exceed the total charges which the client would have paid had no service been involved; and

iv. a lawyer who is a member of the qualified lawyer referral service must maintain in force a policy of errors and omissions insurance in an amount no less than $100,000 per occurrence and $300,000 in the aggregate.

3. A lawyer may pay the usual and reasonable fees to a qualified legal services plan or insurer providing legal services insurance as authorized by law to promote the use of the lawyer's services, the lawyer's partner or associates services; so long as the communications of the organization are not false, fraudulent, deceptive or misleading;

4. A lawyer may pay for a law practice in accordance with Rule 1.17.

d. A lawyer shall not solicit professional employment as a private practitioner for the lawyer, a partner or associate through direct personal contact or through live telephone contact, with a nonlawyer who has not sought advice regarding employment of a lawyer.

e. A lawyer shall not accept employment when the lawyer knows or reasonably should know that the person who seeks to employ the lawyer does so as a result of conduct by any person or organization that would violate these Rules if engage in by a lawyer.

(d) This Rule does not prohibit communications authorized by law or ordered by a court or other tribunal.

(e) Notwithstanding the prohibitions in this Rule, a lawyer may participate with a prepaid or group legal service plan operated by an organization not owned or directed by the lawyer that uses live person-to-person contact to enroll members or sell subscriptions for the plan from persons who are not known to need legal services in a particular matter covered by the plan.

The maximum penalty for a violation of this Rule is disbarment.

Comment

Direct Personal Contact

[1] There is a potential for abuse inherent in Paragraph (b) prohibits a lawyer from soliciting professional employment by live person-to-person contact when a significant motive for the lawyer’s doing so is the lawyer’s or the law firm’s pecuniary gain. A lawyer’s communication is
not a solicitation if it is directed to the general public, such as through a billboard, an Internet
banner advertisement, a website or a television commercial, or if it is in response to a request
for information or is automatically generated in response to electronic searches.

[2] “Live person-to-person contact” means in-person, face-to-face, live telephone and other
real-time visual or auditory person-to-person communications where the person is subject to a
direct personal contact by a lawyer of prospective clients encounter without time for reflection.
Such person-to-person contact does not include chat rooms, text messages or other written
communications that recipients may easily disregard. A potential for overreaching exists when a
lawyer, seeking pecuniary gain, solicits a person known to be in need of legal services. #This
form of contact subjects the laya person to the private importuning of athed trained advocate in
a direct interpersonal encounter. A prospective client often feelsThe person, who may already
feel overwhelmed by the situation circumstances giving rise to the need for legal services, and
may have an impaired capacity for reason, may find it difficult to fully evaluate all available
alternatives with reasoned judgment and protective appropriate self-interest. Furthermore, in
the lawyer seeking face of the retainer lawyer’s presence and insistence upon an immediate
response. The situation is fraught with a conflict stemming from the lawyer’s own interest,
which may color the advice and representation offered the vulnerable prospect possibility of
undue influence, intimidation, and overreaching.

[2] The situation is therefore fraught with the possibility of undue influence, intimidation and
overreaching. [3] The potential for abuse overreaching inherent in solicitation of prospective
clients through personal live person-to-person contact justifies its prohibition, particularly since
the direct written contact permitted under paragraph (b) of this Rule offers an lawyers have
alternative means of communicating conveying necessary information to those who may be in
need of legal services. Also included in the prohibited types of personal contact are direct,
personal contact through an intermediary and live contact by telephone.

Direct Written Solicitation
[3] Subject to the requirements of Rule 7.1 and paragraphs (b) and (c) of this Rule, promotional
communication by a lawyer through direct written contact is generally permissible. The public’s
need to receive information concerning their legal rights and the availability of legal services has
been consistently recognized as a basis for permitting direct written communication since this
type of communication may often be the best and most effective means of informing. So long as
this stream of information flows cleanly, it will be permitted to flow freely.
Certain narrowly drawn restrictions on this type of communication are justified by a substantial state interest in facilitating the public's intelligent selection of counsel, including the restrictions of paragraphs (a) (3) and (a) (4) which proscribe direct mailings to persons such as an injured and hospitalized accident victim or the bereaved family of a deceased.

In order to make it clear that the communication is commercial in nature, paragraph (b) requires inclusion of an appropriate affirmative "advertisement" disclaimer. Again, the traditional exception for contact with close friends, relatives and former clients is recognized and permits elimination of the disclaimer in direct written contact with these persons particular, communications can be mailed or transmitted by email or other electronic means that do not violate other laws. These forms of communications make it possible for the public to be informed about the need for legal services, and about the qualifications of available lawyers and law firms, without subjecting the public to live person-to-person persuasion that may overwhelm a person’s judgment.

This Rule does not prohibit communications. The contents of live person-to-person contact can be disputed and may not be subject to third-party scrutiny. Consequently, they are much more likely to approach (and occasionally cross) the dividing line between accurate representations and those that are false and misleading.

There is far less likelihood that a lawyer would engage in overreaching against a former client, or a person with whom the lawyer has a close personal, family, business or professional relationship, or in situations in which the lawyer is motivated by considerations other than the lawyer's pecuniary gain. Nor is there a serious potential for overreaching when the person contacted is a lawyer or is known to routinely use the type of legal services involved for business purposes. Examples include persons who routinely hire outside counsel to represent the entity; entrepreneurs who regularly engage business, employment law or intellectual property lawyers; small business proprietors who routinely hire lawyers for lease or contract issues; and other people who routinely retain lawyers for business transactions or formations.

Paragraph (b) is not intended to prohibit a lawyer from participating in constitutionally protected activities of public or charitable legal-service organizations or bona fide political,
social, civic, fraternal, employee or trade organizations whose purposes include providing or recommending legal services to their members or beneficiaries.

[6] A solicitation that contains false or misleading information within the meaning of Rule 7.1, that involves coercion, duress, fraud, overreaching, harassment, intimidation or undue influence within the meaning of Rule 7.3 (c)(2), or that involves contact with someone who has made known to the lawyer a desire not to be solicited by the lawyer within the meaning of Rule 7.3(c)(1) is prohibited. Live, person-to-person contact of individuals who may be especially vulnerable to coercion or duress is ordinarily not appropriate, for example, the elderly, those whose first language is not English, or the disabled.

[7] This Rule does not prohibit a lawyer from contacting representatives of organizations or groups that may be interested in establishing a group or prepaid legal plan for their members, insureds, beneficiaries or other third parties for the purpose of informing such entities of the availability of and details concerning the plan or arrangement which the lawyer or lawyer's firm is willing to offer. This form of communication is not directed to people who are seeking legal services for themselves. Rather, it is usually addressed to an individual acting in a fiduciary capacity seeking a supplier of legal services for others who may, if they choose, become prospective clients of the lawyer. Under these circumstances, the activity which the lawyer undertakes in communicating with such representatives and the type of information transmitted to the individual are functionally similar to and serve the same purpose as advertising permitted under Rule 7.2.

[8] Communications authorized by law, such as or ordered by a court or tribunal include a notice to potential members of a class in class action litigation.

Paying Others to Recommend a Lawyer

[7] A lawyer is allowed to pay for communications permitted by these Rules, but otherwise is not permitted to pay another person for channeling professional work. This restriction does not prevent an organization or person other than the lawyer from advertising or recommending the lawyer's services. Thus, a legal aid agency, a prepaid legal services plan or prepaid legal insurance organization may pay to advertise legal services provided under its auspices.
Paragraph (e) of this Rule permits a lawyer to participate with an organization which uses personal contact to enroll members for its group or prepaid legal service plan, provided that the personal contact is not undertaken by any lawyer who would be a provider of legal services through the plan. The organization must not be owned by or directed (whether as manager or otherwise) by any lawyer or law firm that participates in the plan. For example, paragraph (e) would not permit a lawyer to create an organization controlled directly or indirectly by the lawyer and use the organization for the person-to-person solicitation of legal employment of the lawyer through memberships in the plan or otherwise. The communication permitted by these organizations must not be directed to a person known to need legal services in a particular matter, but must be designed to inform potential plan members generally of another means of affordable legal services. Lawyers who participate in a legal service plan must reasonably assure that the plan sponsors are in compliance with Rules 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 (c).
RULE 7.1: COMMUNICATIONS CONCERNING A LAWYER’S SERVICES

A lawyer shall not make a false or misleading communication about the lawyer or the lawyer’s services. A communication is false or misleading if it contains a material misrepresentation of fact or law, or omits a fact necessary to make the statement considered as a whole not materially misleading.

The maximum penalty for a violation of this rule is disbarment.

Comment

[1] This Rule governs all communications about a lawyer’s services, including advertising. Whatever means are used to make known a lawyer’s services, statements about them must be truthful.

[2] Misleading truthful statements are prohibited by this Rule. A truthful statement is misleading if it omits a fact necessary to make the lawyer’s communication considered as a whole not materially misleading. A truthful statement is misleading if a substantial likelihood exists that it will lead a reasonable person to formulate a specific conclusion about the lawyer or the lawyer’s services for which there is no reasonable factual foundation. A truthful statement is also misleading if presented in a way that creates a substantial likelihood that a reasonable person would believe the lawyer’s communication requires that person to take further action when, in fact, no action is required.

[3] A communication that truthfully reports a lawyer’s achievements on behalf of clients or former clients may be misleading if presented so as to lead a reasonable person to form an unjustified expectation that the same results could be obtained for other clients in similar matters without reference to the specific factual and legal circumstances of each client’s case. Similarly, an unsubstantiated claim about a lawyer’s or law firm’s services or fees, or an unsubstantiated comparison of the lawyer’s or law firm’s services or fees with those of other
lawyers or law firms, may be misleading if presented with such specificity as would lead a
reasonable person to conclude that the comparison or claim can be substantiated. The
inclusion of an appropriate disclaimer or qualifying language may preclude a finding that a
statement is likely to create unjustified expectations or otherwise mislead the public.

[4] It is professional misconduct for a lawyer to engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud,
deceit or misrepresentation. Rule 8.4(a)(4). See also Rule 8.4(a)(6) for the prohibition against
stating or implying an ability to improperly influence a government agency or official or to
achieve results by means that violate the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law.

[5] Firm names, letterhead and professional designations are communications concerning a
lawyer’s services. A firm may be designated by the names of all or some of its current members,
by the names of retired or deceased members where there has been a succession in the firm’s
identity or by a trade name if it is not false or misleading. A lawyer or law firm also may be
designated by a distinctive website address, social media username or comparable professional
designation that is not misleading. A law firm name or designation is misleading if it implies a
connection with a government agency, with a deceased lawyer who was not a former member of
the firm, with a lawyer not associated with the firm or a predecessor firm, with a nonlawyer or
with a public or charitable legal services organization. If a firm uses a trade name that includes a
geographical name such as “Springfield Legal Clinic,” an express statement explaining that it is
not a public legal aid organization may be required to avoid a misleading implication.

[6] A law firm with offices in more than one jurisdiction may use the same name or other
professional designation in each jurisdiction.

[7] Lawyers may not imply or hold themselves out as practicing together in one firm when they
are not a firm, as defined in Rule 1.0(g), because to do so would be false and misleading.
RULE 7.2: COMMUNICATIONS CONCERNING A LAWYER’S SERVICES: SPECIFIC RULES

(a) A lawyer may communicate information regarding the lawyer’s services through any media.

(b) A lawyer shall not compensate, give or promise anything of value to a person for recommending the lawyer’s services except that a lawyer may:

(1) pay the reasonable costs of advertisements or communications permitted by this Rule;

(2) pay the usual and reasonable fees or dues charged by a lawyer referral service, if the service does not engage in conduct that would violate the Rules if engaged in by a lawyer;

(3) pay the usual and reasonable fees or dues charged by a bar-operated non-profit referral service, including a fee which is calculated as a percentage of the legal fees earned by the lawyer to whom the service has referred a matter, provided such bar-operated non-profit lawyer referral service meets the following criteria:

   i. the lawyer referral service shall be operated in the public interest for the purpose of referring prospective clients to lawyers, pro bono and public service legal programs, and government, consumer or other agencies who can provide the assistance the clients need. Such organization shall file annually with the Office of the General Counsel a report showing its rules and regulations, its subscription charges, agreements with counsel, the number of lawyers participating and the names and addresses of the lawyers participating in the service;

   ii. the sponsoring bar association for the lawyer referral service must be open to all lawyers licensed and eligible to practice in this state who maintain an office within the geographical area served, and who meet reasonable objectively determinable experience requirements established by the bar association;

   iii. the combined fees charged by a lawyer and the lawyer referral service to a client referred by such service shall not exceed the total charges which the client would have paid had no service been involved; and
iv. a lawyer who is a member of the qualified lawyer referral service must maintain
in force a policy of errors and omissions insurance in an amount no less than $100,000 per
occurrence and $300,000 in the aggregate.

(4) pay the usual and reasonable fees to a qualified legal services plan or insurer providing legal
services insurance as authorized by law to promote the use of the lawyer’s services, the
lawyer’s partner or associates services so long as the communications of the organization are
not false, fraudulent, deceptive or misleading;

(5) pay for a law practice in accordance with Rule 1.17;

(6) refer clients to another lawyer or a nonlawyer professional pursuant to an agreement not
otherwise prohibited under these Rules that provides for the other person to refer clients or
customers to the lawyer, if:

   (i) the reciprocal referral agreement is not exclusive; and

   (ii) the client is informed of the existence and nature of the agreement; and

(7) give nominal gifts as an expression of appreciation that are neither intended nor reasonably
expected to be a form of compensation for recommending a lawyer’s services.

(c) A lawyer may communicate the fact that the lawyer does or does not practice in particular
fields of law. A lawyer who is a specialist in a particular field of law by experience, specialized
training or education, or is certified by a recognized and bona fide professional entity, may
communicate such specialty or certification so long as the statement is not false or misleading.

(d) Any communication made under this Rule must include the name and contact information
of at least one lawyer or law firm responsible for its content.

The maximum penalty for a violation of this Rule is disbarment.
[1] This Rule permits public dissemination of information concerning a lawyer’s or law firm’s name, address, email address, website, and telephone number; the kinds of services the lawyer will undertake; the basis on which the lawyer’s fees are determined, including prices for specific services and payment and credit arrangements; a lawyer’s foreign language ability; names of references and, with their consent, names of clients regularly represented; and other information that might invite the attention of those seeking legal assistance.

Paying Others to Recommend a Lawyer

[2] Except as permitted under paragraphs (b)(1)-(b)(7), lawyers are not permitted to pay others for recommending the lawyer’s services. A communication contains a recommendation if it endorses or vouches for a lawyer’s credentials, abilities, competence, character, or other professional qualities. Directory listings and group advertisements that list lawyers by practice area, without more, do not constitute impermissible “recommendations.”

[3] Paragraph (b)(1) allows a lawyer to pay for advertising and communications permitted by this Rule, including the costs of print directory listings, on-line directory listings, newspaper ads, television and radio airtime, domain-name registrations, sponsorship fees, Internet-based advertisements, and group advertising. A lawyer may compensate employees, agents and vendors who are engaged to provide marketing or client development services, such as publicists, public-relations personnel, business-development staff, television and radio station employees or spokespersons and website designers.

[4] Paragraph (b)(7) permits lawyers to give nominal gifts as an expression of appreciation to a person for recommending the lawyer’s services or referring a prospective client. The gift may not be more than a token item as might be given for holidays, or other ordinary social hospitality. A gift is prohibited if offered or given in consideration of any promise, agreement or understanding that such a gift would be forthcoming or that referrals would be made or encouraged in the future.
[5] A lawyer may pay others for generating client leads, such as Internet-based client leads, as long as the lead generator does not recommend the lawyer, any payment to the lead generator is consistent with Rules 1.5(e) (division of fees) and 5.4 (professional independence of the lawyer), and the lead generator’s communications are consistent with Rule 7.1 (communications concerning a lawyer’s services). To comply with Rule 7.1, a lawyer must not pay a lead generator that states, implies, or creates a reasonable impression that it is recommending the lawyer, is making the referral without payment from the lawyer, or has analyzed a person’s legal problems when determining which lawyer should receive the referral. See Comment [2] (definition of “recommendation”). See also Rule 5.3 (duties of lawyers and law firms with respect to the conduct of nonlawyers); Rule 8.4(a)(1) (duty to avoid violating the Rules through the acts of another).

[6] A lawyer may pay the usual charges of a legal service plan or a lawyer referral service. A legal service plan is a prepaid or group legal service plan or a similar delivery system that assists people who seek to secure legal representation. A lawyer referral service, on the other hand, is any organization that holds itself out to the public as a lawyer referral service.

[7] A lawyer who accepts assignments or referrals from a legal service plan or referrals from a lawyer referral service must act reasonably to assure that the activities of the plan or service are compatible with the lawyer's professional obligations. Legal service plans and lawyer referral services may communicate with the public, but such communication must be in conformity with these Rules. Thus, advertising must not be false or misleading, as would be the case if the communications of a group advertising program or a group legal services plan would mislead the public to think that it was a lawyer referral service sponsored by a state agency or bar association.

[8] A lawyer also may agree to refer clients to another lawyer or a nonlawyer professional, in return for the undertaking of that person to refer clients or customers to the lawyer. Such reciprocal referral arrangements must not interfere with the lawyer’s professional judgment as to making referrals or as to providing substantive legal services. See Rules 2.1 and 5.4(c). Except
as provided in Rule 1.5(e), a lawyer who receives referrals from a lawyer or nonlawyer professional must not pay anything solely for the referral, but the lawyer does not violate paragraph (b) of this Rule by agreeing to refer clients to the other lawyer or nonlawyer professional, so long as the reciprocal referral agreement is not exclusive and the client is informed of the referral agreement. Conflicts of interest created by such arrangements are governed by Rule 1.7. Reciprocal referral agreements should not be of indefinite duration and should be reviewed periodically to determine whether they comply with these Rules. This Rule does not restrict referrals or divisions of revenues or net income among lawyers within firms comprised of multiple entities.

Communications about Fields of Practice

[9] Paragraph (c) of this Rule permits a lawyer to communicate that the lawyer does or does not practice in particular areas of law. A lawyer is generally permitted to state that the lawyer “concentrates in” or is a “specialist,” practices a “specialty,” or “specializes in” particular fields based on the lawyer’s experience, specialized training or education, but such communications are subject to the “false and misleading” standard applied in Rule 7.1 to communications concerning a lawyer’s services.

[10] The Patent and Trademark Office has a long-established policy of designating lawyers practicing before the Office. The designation of Admiralty practice also has a long historical tradition associated with maritime commerce and the federal courts. A lawyer’s communications about these practice areas are not prohibited by this Rule.

Required Contact Information

[11] This Rule requires that any communication about a lawyer or law firm’s services include the name of, and contact information for, the lawyer or law firm. Contact information includes a website address, a telephone number, an email address or a physical office location.
Rule 7.3: Solicitation of Clients

(a) “Solicitation” or “solicit” denotes a communication initiated by or on behalf of a lawyer or law firm that is directed to a specific person the lawyer knows or reasonably should know needs legal services in a particular matter and that offers to provide, or reasonably can be understood as offering to provide, legal services for that matter.

(b) A lawyer shall not solicit professional employment by live person-to-person contact when a significant motive for the lawyer’s doing so is the lawyer’s or law firm’s pecuniary gain, unless the contact is with a:

(1) lawyer;

(2) person who has a family, close personal, or prior business or professional relationship with the lawyer or law firm; or

(3) person who routinely uses for business purposes the type of legal services offered by the lawyer.

(c) A lawyer shall not solicit professional employment even when not otherwise prohibited by paragraph (b), if:

(1) the target of the solicitation has made known to the lawyer a desire not to be solicited by the lawyer; or

(2) the solicitation involves coercion, duress, fraud, overreaching, harassment, intimidation or undue influence; or

(3) the written communication concerns an action for personal injury or wrongful death or otherwise relates to an accident or disaster involving the person to whom the communication is addressed or a relative of that person, unless the accident or disaster occurred more than 30 days prior to the communication; or
(4) the lawyer knows or reasonably should know that the physical, emotional or mental state of
the person is such that the person could not exercise reasonable judgment in employing a
lawyer.

(d) This Rule does not prohibit communications authorized by law or ordered by a court or
other tribunal.

(e) Notwithstanding the prohibitions in this Rule, a lawyer may participate with a prepaid or
group legal service plan operated by an organization not owned or directed by the lawyer that
uses live person-to-person contact to enroll members or sell subscriptions for the plan from
persons who are not known to need legal services in a particular matter covered by the plan.

The maximum penalty for a violation of this Rule is disbarment.

Comment

[1] Paragraph (b) prohibits a lawyer from soliciting professional employment by live person-to-
person contact when a significant motive for the lawyer’s doing so is the lawyer’s or the law
firm’s pecuniary gain. A lawyer’s communication is not a solicitation if it is directed to the
general public, such as through a billboard, an Internet banner advertisement, a website or a
television commercial, or if it is in response to a request for information or is automatically
generated in response to electronic searches.

[2] “Live person-to-person contact” means in-person, face-to-face, live telephone and other
real-time visual or auditory person-to-person communications where the person is subject to a
direct personal encounter without time for reflection. Such person-to-person contact does not
include chat rooms, text messages or other written communications that recipients may easily
disregard. A potential for overreaching exists when a lawyer, seeking pecuniary gain, solicits a
person known to be in need of legal services. This form of contact subjects a person to the
private importuning of the trained advocate in a direct interpersonal encounter. The person,
who may already feel overwhelmed by the circumstances giving rise to the need for legal
services, may find it difficult to fully evaluate all available alternatives with reasoned judgment
and appropriate self-interest in the face of the lawyer’s presence and insistence upon an
immediate response. The situation is fraught with the possibility of undue influence,
intimidation, and overreaching.

[3] The potential for overreaching inherent in live person-to-person contact justifies its
prohibition, since lawyers have alternative means of conveying necessary information. In
particular, communications can be mailed or transmitted by email or other electronic means
that do not violate other laws. These forms of communications make it possible for the public
to be informed about the need for legal services, and about the qualifications of available
lawyers and law firms, without subjecting the public to live person-to-person persuasion that
may overwhelm a person’s judgment.

[4] The contents of live person-to-person contact can be disputed and may not be subject to
third-party scrutiny. Consequently, they are much more likely to approach (and occasionally
cross) the dividing line between accurate representations and those that are false and
misleading.

[5] There is far less likelihood that a lawyer would engage in overreaching against a former
client, or a person with whom the lawyer has a close personal, family, business or professional
relationship, or in situations in which the lawyer is motivated by considerations other than the
lawyer’s pecuniary gain. Nor is there a serious potential for overreaching when the person
contacted is a lawyer or is known to routinely use the type of legal services involved for
business purposes. Examples include persons who routinely hire outside counsel to represent
the entity; entrepreneurs who regularly engage business, employment law or intellectual
property lawyers; small business proprietors who routinely hire lawyers for lease or contract
issues; and other people who routinely retain lawyers for business transactions or formations.
Paragraph (b) is not intended to prohibit a lawyer from participating in constitutionally
protected activities of public or charitable legal-service organizations or bona fide political,
social, civic, fraternal, employee or trade organizations whose purposes include providing or recommending legal services to their members or beneficiaries.

[6] A solicitation that contains false or misleading information within the meaning of Rule 7.1, that involves coercion, duress, fraud, overreaching, harassment, intimidation or undue influence within the meaning of Rule 7.3 (c)(2), or that involves contact with someone who has made known to the lawyer a desire not to be solicited by the lawyer within the meaning of Rule 7.3(c)(1) is prohibited. Live, person-to-person contact of individuals who may be especially vulnerable to coercion or duress is ordinarily not appropriate, for example, the elderly, those whose first language is not English, or the disabled.

[7] This Rule does not prohibit a lawyer from contacting representatives of organizations or groups that may be interested in establishing a group or prepaid legal plan for their members, insureds, beneficiaries or other third parties for the purpose of informing such entities of the availability of and details concerning the plan or arrangement which the lawyer or lawyer's firm is willing to offer. This form of communication is not directed to people who are seeking legal services for themselves. Rather, it is usually addressed to an individual acting in a fiduciary capacity seeking a supplier of legal services for others who may, if they choose, become prospective clients of the lawyer. Under these circumstances, the activity which the lawyer undertakes in communicating with such representatives and the type of information transmitted to the individual are functionally similar to and serve the same purpose as advertising permitted under Rule 7.2.

[8] Communications authorized by law or ordered by a court or tribunal include a notice to potential members of a class in class action litigation.

[9] Paragraph (e) of this Rule permits a lawyer to participate with an organization which uses personal contact to enroll members for its group or prepaid legal service plan, provided that the personal contact is not undertaken by any lawyer who would be a provider of legal services through the plan. The organization must not be owned by or directed (whether as manager or otherwise) by any lawyer or law firm that participates in the plan. For example, paragraph (e)
would not permit a lawyer to create an organization controlled directly or indirectly by the
lawyer and use the organization for the person-to-person solicitation of legal employment of
the lawyer through memberships in the plan or otherwise. The communication permitted by
these organizations must not be directed to a person known to need legal services in a
particular matter, but must be designed to inform potential plan members generally of another
means of affordable legal services. Lawyers who participate in a legal service plan must
reasonably assure that the plan sponsors are in compliance with Rules 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 (c).