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Client Handout: What Is Limited Scope Representation?

Limited scope representation (sometimes called “unbundling”) is a way that a lawyer can help you with part of your case while you do the rest of your case. For example:

1. You can consult with a lawyer to prepare or review your paperwork, but attend the hearing yourself;
2. You can represent yourself through the whole case, and periodically consult with a lawyer who can coach you on the law, procedures and strategy;
3. You can do the preparation yourself and hire an lawyer just to make the court appearance for you;
4. You may want to do your own investigation of the facts and ask the lawyer to assist you in putting the information in a format which is useful to the court;
5. You may ask the lawyer to be on “standby” while you attend the settlement conference yourself.

With limited scope assistance, you may be able to handle the whole case yourself, except for a few legal issues where the lawyer can help you. It really is between you and the lawyer how much of your case you hire them to do.

Some areas of the law are *extremely technical* and it is rare for non-lawyers to effectively handle them. Among these are pension rights, stock options, and business interests. You will almost certainly need the assistance of a lawyer if your case involves any of these issues.

Why it is important to discuss your case thoroughly with your lawyer

It is important to thoroughly discuss **all aspects** of your case (even those which **you** think are simple) with your lawyer before deciding which parts you want to do yourself and which ones the lawyer will assist you with. It is equally important to realize that there may be important issues presented by your case that you aren't even aware of. You could be at serious legal risk about an issue you don't even realize exists. If you don't discuss them with your lawyer, how will you know?

Never make assumptions about the law which applies to your case. **The law shows you've seen on TV are rarely accurate**, and just because you've “seen it on TV,” doesn't mean it is correct, or even “legal.” The **only** way you know this is to talk it over with a qualified lawyer.

Sometimes new issues will pop up after your case is started. If they do, it is important to advise your lawyer and discuss them, so that you know the potential legal consequences to you. Remember that your lawyer can only advise you on matters you tell him/her about, so it is essential that you provide complete information about your case.

Remember, you and your lawyer are working as a team. That means good communication and a clear understanding of each person's assignments is essential.

This document can be found on LAWPRO's Limited Scope Representation Resources page at practicepro.ca/LimitedScope. It was adapted out of the Limited Representation Committee Risk Management Materials at the California Commission on Access to Justice, as created and updated by M. Sue Talia.

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