

USING LIMITED LEGAL SERVICES

(sometimes referred to as "UNBUNDLED" LEGAL SERVICES)

What are "limited legal services"?

Limited legal services are provided most often in family law matters. Rather than representing you all through your divorce or other family law matter, an attorney can help you represent yourself, or represent you at one hearing but leave you to represent yourself for the rest of the case. You would pay the attorney for the portions of your case that he or she helped you with. Some of the services which may be offered by an attorney offering limited legal services are:

- advise you of the appropriate legal action(s) to take in your circumstance
- advise you of the forms appropriate for your case
- preparation of dissolution papers or other legal documents
- review documents

You will still be responsible for most, if not all, activities relating to your case.

Some (but not necessarily all) of these activities may be:

- obtaining and completing the correct forms
- filing completed forms with the Court

- following case schedules
- having papers served
- appearing and arguing your case in a Court hearing
- presenting your final papers

How much will limited legal services cost?

There is no set cost for limited legal services. Attorneys usually charge their regular hourly rate for such services, but the actual charges may vary depending on the specific circumstances and services rendered. There is no retainer fee, but you will have to pay for the services at the time, or before, you receive them.

How do you know if you can use limited legal services?

Call an attorney who provides limited services (see next page for information on finding a limited services attorney). After you discuss your situation, the attorney will be able to advise you on whether you can use these services. It is more likely that you will be able to use limited legal services if your family law matter is uncontested or, if there is disagreement, you and the other party want to work towards a settlement. If you have already started a dissolution and you get lost in the system, limited services might be able to assist you in moving forward again.

How do you find a limited legal services attorney?

In King County, the King County Bar Association (KCBA)'s Lawyer Referral Service has a panel of attorneys who offer limited legal services. In addition, Legal Voice (formerly the Northwest Women's Law Center) can refer you to such

attorneys in many other parts of Washington State, as well as in King County.

KCBA Lawyer Referral Service -- (206) 623-2551

Legal Voice -- (206) 621-7691

Suggestions for making the most of limited legal services.

1. If you have Court documents, or any other documents pertinent to your case, be sure to take all of them with you to show the attorney.
2. Gather all relevant information about your family law situation, such as lists of property (including real property and pension information), debts, etc.. Have this information in writing.
3. Have an organized idea, preferably in writing, of what your goals are; for example, the schedule arrangements you are seeking for the children.
4. Be prepared to take detailed notes of the attorney's advice.
5. If you have a hearing scheduled, have with you names, addresses and phone numbers of witnesses who can sign affidavits or give testimony on your behalf.
6. When you have agreed with the attorney on what services will be performed for what fees, request that the agreement be in writing.

How you should act in Court

1. **Be on time**, and be prepared to spend at least half the day for a motion.
2. Dress neatly.
3. **Do not bring your children** to the downtown Courthouse *if you can avoid it. (There are no facilities for children and you may have a hard time concentrating on what you need to do if you also need to watch your children.)* At the Kent Regional Justice Center you may make child care arrangements by calling (253) 854-5625.
4. Check in with the clerk and be seated.
5. Review your paperwork while you wait.
6. When the clerk reads the list of scheduled cases, answer when your name is called.
7. When your case is called for the hearing, go to the bench and stand facing the Judge/Commissioner.
8. The Judge/Commissioner may ask you to speak, then the other parent or the attorney, then you to reply (or vice-versa).

Speak to the Judge/Commissioner, not the other parent or attorney. Don't interrupt, even if you strongly disagree with what is said.

You may use notes as you speak. Stick to the facts and be brief. You may have only about five minutes to speak.

9. During the hearing:
 - a. The Judge/Commissioner may ask you questions. If

- you don't understand a question, say so. Don't answer until you understand.
- b. Stay on point. If you don't know an answer, say so.
 - c. Take your time when answering. Give the answer as much thought as you need. Explain your answer if needed.
 - d. Be respectful. Address the Judge/Commissioner as "Your Honor."
 - e. Wait until it is your turn to speak, or ask to speak again
 - f. Do not be sarcastic or argumentative
 - g. Be exact about dates and times or be clear if you are only giving an estimate.
 - h. Speak clearly and distinctly. Use words you are comfortable with.

10. Remain polite during and after the Judge/Commissioner's ruling. **Do not interrupt the Judge/Commissioner.** If you need a clarification of the ruling, ask the Judge/Commissioner after he or she is through making their ruling. Ask the Judge/Commissioner which of the parties will write the Court order. The Judge/Commissioner must sign the order before it is effective.

11. You may bring a friend for moral support, but that person may not speak unless the Judge/Commissioner asks the friend to testify.

12. Don't laugh or talk about the case in the hall or restroom in such a way that the other parent, attorneys and witnesses may hear you.