



DO-IT-YOURSELF LEGAL SERVICES

DIY (Do-It-Yourself) is a phrase most often used to describe home repair, but there is a DIY option for legal services as well. The DIY option is referred to as limited scope representation or unbundled services by the legal profession. DIY unbundled services are intended for self-represented persons who are not prepared to hire an attorney to handle every aspect of his/her case, but who need specific advice, services, document review or other related limited services.

In DIY unbundled services the attorney and the client mutually agree to specific and limited service or services. The legal service is tailored to the needs and concerns of the client through a detailed Limited Scope Client-Lawyer Agreement. This type of practice is a joint effort on the part of the attorney and the client. The attorney has a specified end to what he/she will perform for the client based upon what service the client elected.

Unbundled service is no substitute for traditional legal services where one attorney handles all aspects of a client's legal matter, but merely an alternative form of representation for the person who desires to handle his/her own legal matter and wants to keep fees within his/her budget.

Family law cases are time-intensive, but most cases do not have highly technical issues that require full legal representation. Because a client pays for an attorney's time, the best solution in resolving a family legal matter is one that makes the most efficient use of time.

For example, a client may decide to pay for unbundled services for coaching on an upcoming court appearance instead of having counsel sit around the courthouse waiting for the appearance. A client may want assistance in preparing for early neutral evaluation or mediation.

The best cases for unbundled services are the cases with few technical issues or one or two technical issues that can be split off for the attorney to handle while the client handles the simpler issues.

What is the Benefit to You?

There may be many things that you can do to assist in your own representation. For example, you may be able to gather much of the necessary information required for your legal matter. The attorney can take that information and put it in the proper form in a way that is useful and acceptable to the Court. You can make the most efficient use of the attorney's time and your budget by focusing the attorney's time on things that you cannot do by yourself. By doing this, you can save money on legal fees and retain greater control of your case.

What are the Trade-Offs?

Your attorney went to law school and has years of experience in this field. This means that your attorney will know things that you don't about the legal process. There may be hidden complications in your case that you aren't aware of because you don't have the legal training.

Many non-lawyer document preparers have experience drafting simple documents, but they have not been to law school. One of the common problems that you may face is the fact is that the case seems simple to you, but actually has those hidden complications, which someone who is not legally trained will not be able to spot. If you don't consult with an attorney first, then you won't know if potentially serious complications in your case have been overlooked by non-lawyer who is drafting. A full and complete discussion with your attorney can isolate any hidden complications and you can decide what parts of your case you are comfortable handling without representation and have your attorney help you on the other parts of your case.

What If I Want the Attorney to Handle the Case?

You and your attorney are always free to make other arrangements consistent with your needs and desire for assistance. You may decide at any time during your case that you would rather have your attorney take over the entire process. It is more efficient to have the attorney who already knows you and your legal matter handle your case full-time if that is your choice rather than pay a new attorney to get up to speed.

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