

DENISE J. KNECHT, ATTORNEY

About Fees

Advice is a lawyer's only stock and trade. (*Paraphrased from a quote by Abraham Lincoln.*)

Often we receive calls from people who just want to know "if I have a case." An employment problem cannot be fully evaluated in a short phone conversation. If you truly want to understand your legal employment rights, you should be willing to meet with an attorney and explore all of your rights and remedies.

We try to tailor our fees to meet your needs. However, to stay in business, give sound advice, and provide quality legal service, we must charge fees.

Different kinds of legal services may require different fee arrangements.

HOURLY FEES

If your legal needs are short-term like negotiating a contract or sending a letter, we will probably bill on an hourly basis.

We will keep a record of the amount of time spent on your legal problem by tenths of an hour. This time will be multiplied by the attorney's hourly rate to prepare an invoice. Paralegal hourly rates will be lower than attorney hourly rates.

Phone calls, drafting documents, and research are examples of the kinds of services that will be billed. If you are sued and become a defendant in a lawsuit your defense attorney will probably want to be paid hourly.

Attorneys charge different hourly rates depending upon their experience, skill, and knowledge. If you are going to pay for services by the hour, be sure to ask the hourly rate. You have the right to an accounting of the time spent and service provided.

We charge hourly fees until we have a good idea of the extent of the legal services we will be providing.

CONTINGENCY FEES

A contingency fee is usually calculated as a percentage of some amount of money. A contingency fee arrangement may apply when money is expected in the future. For example, if you are fired and the attorney believes you will receive money if you sue your former employer for back wages, you and the attorney may decide a contingency fee is appropriate.

You have the right to know what these percentages will be. A higher percentage means a higher fee.

We charge a contingency fee if we pursue a lawsuit for you that we believe has a good chance of success. If the case is somewhat risky, we may ask for a combination of a reduced hourly rate against a reduced contingency fee. If we ask you to do this, it means that we need you to share a greater portion of the risk of the litigation.

FLAT FEES

If we can predict the time it will take to perform certain legal services, we may agree on a flat fee for those services. For example, if we anticipate that it will take us five hours to prepare a letter plus follow-up negotiations, a flat fee will cap the amount that you will pay for our service.

We charge an initial consultation fee, which is an example of a flat fee.

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Trusted. Dedicated. Successful.

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*Employment Law
and
General Practice*

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RETAINER FEES

Sometimes we may ask for a retainer fee before legal services are provided. A retainer is usually requested when legal services are to be provided over a period of time.

When we charge a retainer, the money is placed in an escrow account. We will draw from the escrow account after we provide services to earn some or all of the fee, or after we incur costs on your behalf.

WHAT ARE "COSTS?"

"Costs" are not fees paid to your attorney. They are money spent on your behalf by the attorney. They will be billed to you for repayment to the attorney. An attorney may spend the money for filing the suit, court reporters, long-distance phone calls, legal research, photocopying, expert witness fees, and even word processing services under certain situations. These are all examples of the "costs" or expenses of the case.

Your attorney cannot ethically pay for your costs. Sometimes these costs are built into your hourly rate or other fee arrangement.

We try to show our clients what kinds of costs we pay on their behalf. We itemize costs in our invoices to them. You may or may not be billed separately for your costs, depending upon our fee agreement. Generally, the filing fees and extra expenses are billed to our clients.

FEE AGREEMENTS SHOULD BE IN WRITING

Attorneys are ethically required make sure that fee arrangements are in writing. Our clients have a right to know what the fee arrangements will be before deciding if they want us to represent them. We want to know if we will be paid for the service we provide.

Once we have an idea of the kinds of services needed, we can better discuss the arrangements. When possible, we try to arrange monthly payment plans, but we cannot always do so.

As time passes, memories fade. If we put our fee agreement in writing, we can refer to it in the future if a question arises. Clients should always read the agreement before signing to be sure the agreement says exactly what it should say.