

PRACTICE TIPS – PREPARATION OF A LAW OFFICE PROCEDURAL MANUAL

Current as at October 2014

In order to facilitate the task of the Replacement Lawyer, you should consider preparing an office procedural manual outlining your firm's office procedures and other important information about your law practice. The manual should be reviewed periodically and kept up to date.

A law office procedural manual may include the following information:

1. Information about your filing system and procedures

- How to generate a client list including client names, addresses and phone numbers
- How to generate a client file list
- How active files are opened and assigned numbers
- Where and how active files are stored
- Whether closed files are assigned numbers
- How closed files can be accessed
- How files are closed, retained and destroyed

2. Client Property

- Whether your firm retains original client documents and where these may be found
- What is your firm's policy and procedure regarding the receipt and return of client documents/property
- Does your firm have a safety deposit box and if so how do you obtain access to it
- What is your firm's procedure for dealing with original client wills
- If you store original wills, where are these kept

3. Office Administration

- What are your office hours
- How do you access the office
- Where can you obtain information about the security of the office (e.g. alarm system)
- How do you deal with mail (incoming and outgoing)
- How do you deal with deliveries (incoming and outgoing)
- How do you deal with facsimiles
- How do you organize/file your email
- Who are your service providers and contractors and where can information about the arrangements with them be obtained
- How do you accept or admit service

- Who is responsible for the firm website
- What are the rules regarding the use of technology in your firm

4. Information about your tickler or reminder system

- What type of tickler or reminder system does your firm use
- How does it work
- Who is responsible for inputting dates, retrieving dates, reminders and ensuring that the deadline is met
- How do you ensure that undertakings given and received are fulfilled

5. Information about your conflicts checking system

- What type of conflicts checking system does your firm have
- How does it work
- What information is inputted into the system and when
- Who is responsible for inputting the information
- Who is responsible for doing the conflicts check and identifying potential conflicts

6. Information about your bookkeeping system and financial records

- What type of bookkeeping system do you have
- Where are your financial records kept
- Who is responsible for keeping them up to date
- Who is responsible for doing the monthly reconciliations
- Where do you bank (name, address and phone number) and name and contact information of account manager
- Information on all of your law office bank accounts (trust, general, special trust accounts, account numbers and bank)
- What is the procedure for transferring trust monies (e.g. cheque , electronic, cheque requisitions, who is responsible for this)
- Outline internal controls in place
- Contact information for your bookkeeper, if applicable
- Contact information for your accountant
- How do you deal with petty cash
- Where do you keep your general and trust account cheques

7. Accounts Payable/Filings

- Where do you keep accounts payable information
- How do you deal with the payment of accounts

- Where do you keep information regarding outstanding loans (eg. line of credit)
- Do you have business credit cards and if so particulars
- How do you handle payroll and remittances
- How do you handle Law Society and LAWPRO® filings including payment of transaction levies
- Where do you keep records of filings
- How do you deal with tax filings (income tax, HST) and where do you keep records of filings
- What is your record retention and destruction policy

8. Docketing System

- Describe your timekeeping/docket system
- Where do you keep time records
- Who is responsible for keeping time records

9. Billings

- When and how do you bill clients
- Who is responsible for billing
- Where do you keep information regarding billings
- How do you handle collections of outstanding accounts

10. Office Equipment

a. Photocopier

- Where can information about your photocopier and codes required to access it, if any, be found
- Who services your photocopier (contact information)
- Is it owned or leased and if leased where is the copy of the lease stored
- Where is the warranty kept

b. Computers/Printers

- Where can information about your computers be found
- Where can information about your computer systems and software applications be found
- Where can information about your passwords be found
- Where can information about your printers be found
- Who services your computers (contact information)
- Who services your printers
- Are the computers/printers owned or leased and if leased where is the copy of the lease stored

- What is the system for backing up data on your computer and who is responsible for this
- Where are the software disks and information about the software kept
- Where are the warranties for the computers and printers kept

c. Telephone

- Where can information about your telephone system and passwords required to access voice mail be found
- Who services your telephone system (contact information)
- Is it owned or leased and if leased where is the copy of the lease stored
- How do you retrieve voice mail
- Do you keep a record of your voice mail and what is the procedure for this
- Where is the warranty is kept

d. Facsimile

- Where can information about your fax machine be found
- Who services your fax machine (contact information)
- Is it owned or leased and if leased where is the copy of the lease stored
- Where is the warranty is kept

11. Client Identification and Verification

- What are your law firm procedures for identifying and verifying the identity of a client
- Where are client identification and verification records stored (in file, centralized system)

12. Employees

- Names and addresses of your employees and description of their jobs
- Where can terms of employment of each employee be found (e.g. copy of contract)
- Where are records relating to employees kept
- Where can information about employee pensions and other benefits be obtained

13. Contact Information (Name, Address and Phone Number)

- Attorney for Property
- Executor (s)
- Bank Manager
- Landlord
- Accountant
- Excess Insurer
- Disability Insurer

- Property Insurer
- Business Credit Card Company
- Bookkeeper
- Staff
- Contractors (conveyancer, process server, law clerk)
- Technology Service Provider
- Service providers

14. Office Premises

- Where may information regarding your lease or ownership of the office premises be obtained

15. Power of Attorney or Will

- Where is your will and continuing power of attorney for property

16. Personalized Security Package (PSP) to Access Teraview

- Where can information about your Teraview Account be obtained
- Who has PSPs under your account
- Who has access authority to documents under your account