

Pro Bono Program

GETTING STARTED

Now that you have taken a Pro Bono Prisoner Case, this note is intended to give some guidance on the basics steps to get things going.

1st Contact with the Client

Send your client a letter, explaining how you were appointed.¹

CONSPICUOUSLY mark the outside of the envelope “LEGAL MAIL.”

Include the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada (LACSN) intake documents. They need a copy of their own Retainer Agreement.²

Include a self-addressed stamped envelope. (Stamps and envelopes are very precious items in prison, so don't assume that your client has access to them.)

More About Mail

The prison's mail process is barely functional; it regularly takes more than a week for mail to reach your client, outgoing mail suffers similarly. Each facility has its own mail room, where they open every piece of mail to inspect for contraband or evidence of criminal activity. They aren't supposed to read LEGAL MAIL; they are only supposed to open it in the presence of the client, confirm there is no contraband by shaking it, and

¹ Draft Letter to Client, Attachment 1.

² LACSN Retainer Agreement, Attachment 2.

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then giving it to the prisoner. Be aware that the mail you receive from your client may have been opened by the mail room.

Telephone Contact

Register your office number with NDOC's phone provider; the prison changes providers at times, so contact NDOC Central Administration for the name of the provider.³ I believe the current provider is Securus.

Announcement

When a prisoner calls your office, there is a pre-recorded script played with a blank spot for the prisoner to give his name. If it is your client, it is okay to answer the call. First thing to say into the phone is "This is an attorney-client call, do NOT record or monitor.

Be warned, when your number get around in the prison, you will get calls from other prisoners. IF you decide to take the call, my advice is to discourage telephone calls, but maybe give them your address and tell them to communicate only by letter.

It is against prison regulations for a prisoner to engage in conference calls with a 3rd party. The prison phone system is supposed to detect and terminate any 3rd party calls. Be aware that prisoners often have family or

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friends on the outside attempt such calls, even to attorneys. Don't explain, just terminate the call.

The prison records and monitors ALL telephone calls in and out of the prison system. This is why you need to register your phone number, so that it is "flagged" as an attorney call. Prison officials are all too eager to know what is going on in a prisoner lawsuit and any excuse to record or monitor will do.