

RPC 7.3 PERSONAL CONTACT WITH PROSPECTIVE CLIENTS

(a) A lawyer may initiate personal contact with a prospective client for the purpose of obtaining professional employment, subject to the requirements of paragraph (b).

(b) A lawyer shall not contact, or send a written communication to, a prospective client for the purpose of obtaining professional employment if:

(1) the lawyer knows or reasonably should know that the physical, emotional or mental state of the person is such that the person could not exercise reasonable judgment in employing a lawyer; or

(2) the person has made known to the lawyer a desire not to receive communications from the lawyer;

(3) the communication involves coercion, duress or harassment; or

(4) the communication involves unsolicited direct contact with a prospective client within thirty days after a specific mass-disaster event, when such contact concerns potential compensation arising from the event; or

(5) the communication involves unsolicited direct contact with a prospective client concerning a specific event not covered by section (4) of this Rule when such contact has pecuniary gain as a significant motive except that a lawyer may send a letter by mail to a prospective client in such circumstances provided the letter:

(i) bears the word "ADVERTISEMENT" prominently displayed in capital letters at the top of the first page of text; and

(ii) contains the following notice at the bottom of the last page of text: "Before making your choice of attorney, you should give this matter careful thought. The selection of an attorney is an important decision."; and

(iii) contains an additional notice also at the bottom of the last page of text that the recipient may, if the letter is inaccurate or misleading, report same to the Committee on Attorney Advertising, Hughes Justice Complex, CN 037, Trenton, New Jersey 08625.

(c) A lawyer shall not knowingly assist an organization that furnishes or pays for legal services to others to promote the use of the lawyer's services or those of the lawyer's partner, or associate, or any other lawyer affiliated with the lawyer

or the lawyer's firm, as a private practitioner, if

(1) the promotional activity involves use of a statement or claim that is false or misleading within the meaning of RPC 7.1; or

(2) the promotional activity involves the use of coercion, duress, compulsion, intimidation, threats, unwarranted promises of benefits, overreaching, or vexatious or harassing conduct.

(d) A lawyer shall not compensate or give anything of value to a person or organization to recommend or secure the lawyer's employment by a client, or as a reward for having made a recommendation resulting in the lawyer's employment by a client except that the lawyer may pay for public communications permitted by RPC 7.1 and the usual and reasonable fees or dues charged by a lawyer referral service operated, sponsored, or approved by a bar association.

(e) A lawyer shall not knowingly assist a person or organization that furnishes or pays for legal services to others to promote the use of the lawyer's services or those of the lawyer's partner or associate or any other lawyer affiliated with the lawyer or the lawyer's firm except as permitted by RPC 7.1. However, this does not prohibit a lawyer or the lawyer's partner or associate or any other lawyer affiliated with the lawyer or the lawyer's firm from being recommended, employed or paid by or cooperating with one of the following offices or organizations that promote the use of the lawyer's services or those of the lawyer's partner or associate or any other lawyer affiliated with the lawyer or the lawyer's firm if there is no interference with the exercise of independent professional judgment in behalf of the lawyer's client:

(1) a legal aid office or public defender office:

(i) operated or sponsored by a duly accredited law school.

(ii) operated or sponsored by a bona fide nonprofit community organization.

(iii) operated or sponsored by a governmental agency.

(iv) operated, sponsored, or approved by a bar association.

(2) a military legal assistance office.

(3) a lawyer referral service operated, sponsored, or approved by a bar association.

(4) any bona fide organization that recommends, furnishes or pays for

legal services to its members or beneficiaries provided the following conditions are satisfied:

- (i) such organization, including any affiliate, is so organized and operated that no profit is derived by it from the furnishing, recommending or rendition of legal services by lawyers and that, if the organization is organized for profit, the legal services are not rendered by lawyers employed, directed, supervised or selected by it except in connection with matters when such organization bears ultimate liability of its member or beneficiary.
- (ii) neither the lawyer, nor the lawyer's partner or associate or any other lawyer or nonlawyer affiliated with the lawyer or the lawyer's firm directly or indirectly who have initiated or promoted such organization shall have received any financial or other benefit from such initiation or promotion.
- (iii) such organization is not operated for the purpose of procuring legal work or financial benefit for any lawyer as a private practitioner outside of the legal services program of the organization.
- (iv) the member or beneficiary to whom the legal services are furnished, and not such organization, is recognized as the client of the lawyer in the matter.
- (v) any member or beneficiary who is entitled to have legal services furnished or paid for by the organization may, if such member or beneficiary so desires, and at the member or beneficiary's own expense except where the organization's plan provides for assuming such expense, select counsel other than that furnished, selected or approved by the organization for the particular matter involved. Nothing contained herein, or in the plan of any organization that furnishes or pays for legal services pursuant to this section, shall be construed to abrogate the obligations and responsibilities of a lawyer to the lawyer's client as set forth in these Rules.
- (vi) the lawyer does not know or have cause to know that such organization is in violation of applicable laws, rules of court and other legal requirements that govern its legal service operations.
- (vii) such organization has first filed with the Supreme Court and at least annually thereafter on the appropriate form prescribed by the

Court a report with respect to its legal service plan. Upon such filing, a registration number will be issued and should be used by the operators of the plan on all correspondence and publications pertaining to the plan thereafter. Such organization shall furnish any additional information requested by the Supreme Court

(f) A lawyer shall not accept employment when the lawyer knows or it is obvious that the person who seeks the lawyer's services does so as a result of conduct prohibited under this Rule.

Note: Adopted July 12, 1984, to be effective September 10, 1984; paragraph (b) (4) amended June 29, 1990, to be effective September 4, 1990; new paragraph (b)(4) adopted and former paragraph (b)(4) redesignated and amended as paragraph (b)(5) April 28, 1997, to be effective May 5, 1997.