Select the Right Attorney for You

Choosing McDonald’s over Burger King based on the information displayed on a roadside billboard is fine. But that may not be the best way to choose a lawyer. For a start, you need to know the attorney’s specialty and level of experience. Here are some tips for choosing a lawyer.

Get Referrals
There are numerous referral sources, including:

- Personal recommendations: Talk with friends, family members and colleagues who have had the same legal issue as you. Ask how their relationship with that lawyer worked out.
- The ASEA Legal Services Plan website has a list of attorneys who have agreed to limit their hourly fee to the amount the Trust will pay. Organized by location, the website lists their name, phone number and website address. You can even search by category to narrow your search to the service you need. (Please note that the Trust does not regulate or vouch for participating attorneys.)
- Online directories like Nolo.com connect you with local lawyers in the practice area you need.

• State and local bar associations typically won’t recommend attorneys, but they often will give you the names of two or three lawyers who practice in the field of law you need.

Interview the Lawyers
Most attorneys offer a free initial consultation. Go prepared with a list of questions to help you assess each attorney’s qualifications and personality. Ask about:

- Their area(s) of expertise: Most lawyers specialize. With so many laws in existence, make sure your attorney is experienced in the field of law you need.
- The potential cost: Even when you’re represented by an attorney on the ASEA Legal Services Plan list of participating attorneys, ask for a ballpark estimate based on the facts of your situation. And remember, if you choose to use a nonparticipating attorney, you will be responsible for the difference in hourly charges that exceed $225/hour.
- The members of the legal team: Whether your lawyer works alone or in a larger office, chances are someone will be helping out in some way. Ask who that might be and their qualifications.
- Their approach to communication: Your lawyer is likely to be working on more than one case at a time, so you’ll want to know when and how you will communicate with each other.

Make Your Selection
After you’ve done your research, there’s one more thing to consider: fit. Think about how you felt talking with each attorney you interviewed. You will want to choose an attorney who is a good fit—philosophically and practically—for you.
Need to Assist Someone Dealing with Addiction or Mental Illness?

Consider Guardianship

There are few things more difficult to witness than seeing a loved one descend into addiction or grapple unsuccessfully with mental health issues. In addition to the physical, mental and emotional damage, financial consequences and basic survival issues may also exist: debt and bankruptcy, foreclosure and eviction.

If you are concerned that a family member, friend or loved one cannot take care of themself and manage the responsibilities of daily life, Alaska law allows you to file a petition for guardianship.

A separate legal term, conservator, is used to indicate someone who has the power to make only financial decisions. Alaska law also gives financial decision-making power to a guardian. If your concerns are limited to someone’s ability to manage their money, you may choose to file for a conservatorship.

Attorneys Offer Objectivity

Emotionally, it can be hard to think about having a loved one declared incapacitated. An attorney can give you an objective perspective on the situation and help you complete the paperwork.

An attorney may also help you decide whether a legal intervention is the best course of action for your situation. Some of the reasons for granting guardianship or conservatorship include:

- Mental illness or deficiency
- Physical illness or disability
- Chronic use of drugs or alcohol
- Advanced age

Putting someone under guardianship can be particularly important if the ward has property that will be wasted or misused without proper management, or if the money is needed to support the ward.

Consult the list of attorneys on the ASEA Legal Services Plan website if you are thinking about applying for guardianship of a loved one. (Please note that the Trust does not regulate or vouch for participating attorneys.)

The court will appoint a guardian for someone who is incapacitated, meaning they are so impaired that they can’t take care of their own physical health and safety by securing food, shelter, clothing and health care, for example. When the court appoints a guardian, the guardian is allowed to manage the affairs of the incapacitated person (called the ward). A guardian can make decisions about housing, medical care, financial and legal matters.
FAQ

I’m a new member of the ASEA Legal Trust and wonder what are the most common reasons that participants use their Plan benefits.

Exact circumstances may differ for all participants, but our database shows that the three most common reasons participants use their Plan benefits are to:

- Set up a will or a will with trust provisions
- Handle a divorce
- Manage child support issues

See more answers to frequently asked questions, view the Plan Book and find more information on the ASEA Legal Services Plan website.

Plan Year-End Reminders

If you’ve been thinking about setting up a will, are facing a divorce or need other legal services, keep in mind that you have until June 30, 2020 to use your $2,000 ASEA Legal Services Plan benefit for the 2019/2020 plan year (after the $25 annual deductible). Any 2019/2020 plan year benefits that are unused by June 30 will be forfeited. You will be eligible for an additional $2,000 benefit for the 2020/2021 plan year beginning July 1.

You may authorize your eligible dependents to use your benefits up to a combined total of $2,000 per plan year. Eligible dependents include your legal spouse and your unmarried children under the age of 19, who live in your home and depend on you for their principle support.

Important note: You must submit claims no later than 60 days after the end of the plan year on June 30. Claims must be received by the Administration Office by August 31.

If you have questions about your benefits—how much you may have used this Plan Year or what services qualify—you can get information:

- On the ASEA Legal Services Plan website
- By calling the Administration Office at 866-678-8647
  By email: asealegal-eligibility@ltsalaska.com

Your benefits are too valuable to let them go unused!

WARNING: Fraud, attempted fraud, or improper use of the ASEA Legal Plan will terminate your benefits, and the ASEA Legal Plan will not pay accrued charges.

This document is merely a summary. Please refer to the ASEA Legal Plan Book for more details. In the event of a difference between this summary and the Plan Book, the Plan Book prevails, except as it relates to any Summary of Material Modifications enacted after the effective date of the last Plan Book update. Any Plan changes noted in this Newsletter constitute a Summary of Material Modification and amend the Plan accordingly. Please contact us if you need another Plan Book. This summary does not constitute legal advice. If you have legal questions please consult an attorney.

The articles in this newsletter are for informational purposes only. It is not meant to provide legal advice. You should contact your lawyer for legal advice related to any specific problem or issue you may have.