

# Lawyer Referral & Information Service



Akron Bar Association

LRIS

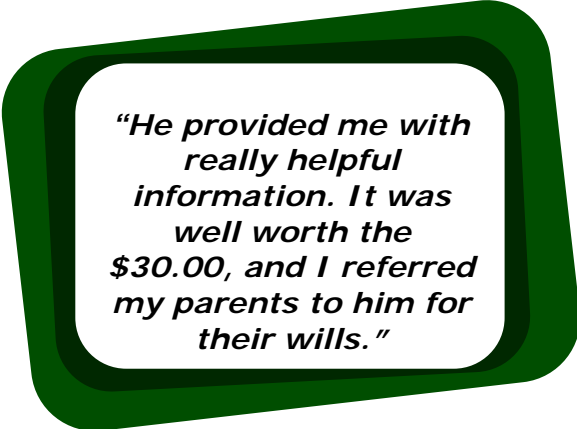
Membership Handbook

THE RIGHT CALL FOR THE RIGHT LAWYER™

*Serving Summit, Portage & Wayne Counties*

## About the LRIS

The Lawyer Referral & Information Service (LRIS) is a public service operated by the Akron Bar Association for the purpose of providing the public with referrals to qualified attorneys to serve the legal needs of both individuals and businesses in Summit, Portage & Wayne Counties. The LRIS also provides the public with information about various public interest agencies throughout Northeast Ohio. The LRIS exceeds all rules and regulations as mandated by the Supreme Court of Ohio, and is American Bar Association Approved.



*"He provided me with really helpful information. It was well worth the \$30.00, and I referred my parents to him for their wills."*

## Requirements to Join the LRIS Panel

There are 4 main requirements which an attorney must meet in order to become a panel member of the LRIS.

1. The attorney must be actively engaged in the practice of law and be in good standing with the Akron Bar Association and the Ohio Supreme Court.
2. The attorney must provide the LRIS with a current copy of the declarations page of their malpractice insurance at all times. The insurance must provide a minimum of \$100,000/\$300,000 in coverage. Coverage must remain in effect throughout the duration of work performed upon a referral matter.
3. The attorney must provide the LRIS with a completed application form including experience requirements listed on the application. Attorneys not meeting the criteria must use the mentor program offered by the Akron Bar Association. All member attorneys must have been in practice a minimum of two years in order to accept referrals in areas of law marked with an (\*) on the Panel Selection Sheet. Attorneys with 0-2 years experience are eligible in all remaining areas. Attorneys may select no more than 5 main areas of practice (i.e. Labor Laws, Domestic, etc.) and as many sub-categories within each selected main area as they are qualified for.
4. Every year a lawyer on the referral list may renew their membership by submitting the annual fee. This fee is pro-rated after January 1<sup>st</sup>, half-way through the fiscal year which runs from July 1<sup>st</sup> through June 30<sup>th</sup>.

## How the Referral Process Works

Referral requests are received by LRIS staff via phone, email and postal mail. The LRIS staff gathers as much relevant information from the client as possible, including their name, address, phone number and a brief description of their legal need. Please note that the client is not required to provide their address or phone number in order to receive a referral. It is the client's responsibility to contact the referred attorney. The client is required to pay a \$30 fee for the initial ½ hour of consultation with the attorney, and must understand that the lawyer's fees for additional services is to be decided between the client and the lawyer. The \$30 fee is waived for referrals pertaining to Social Security, Workmen's Compensation, Personal Bankruptcy and all Tort/Negligence matters, as well as those calling from out of state. The LRIS staff has the right to waive the initial consultation fee for other matters. Please refer to the referral provided to you by LRIS staff to determine if the consultation fee has been waived. **Each client is advised that the attorney's regular fees will apply to any work done after the initial ½ hour is completed.**


The LRIS system allocates the referrals evenly and in a sequential manner among all lawyers on the list. The client's convenience will be served as much as possible with regards to the location of the lawyer's office.

The LRIS staff will provide the client with the name, telephone number and possibly the address of the attorney at the time of the referral. The referral form is then emailed or faxed to the attorney. This form includes the client's name and contact information as well as a brief description of their legal need. The copy of the referral form sent to the lawyer will include a status report which the attorney is to return to the LRIS office within two weeks of the referral date, together with the \$30 conference fee if applicable.

The LRIS staff is not able to refer attorneys based on race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, national origin, attorney hourly rate or by the number of years of attorney experience. Any callers requesting to be referred based on these characteristics are advised that the LRIS staff is unable to do so.

If the attorney is retained by the client, the first \$200 collected in attorney fees is considered a deductible. LRIS receives 15% of any attorney fees received after the first \$200. Here is an example of the formula if the attorney fees equaled \$1500:

$\$1500 - \$200 = \$1300 \times .15 = \$195$  owed to LRIS



*"The attorney was excellent. He was helpful, professional, and exactly the sort of attorney I was looking for to help me. I would recommend him to other clients."*

## What is Expected of LRIS Attorneys

1. All lawyers are responsible for scheduling appointments with clients, or they must designate a person in their office to make appointments for them.
2. The referred attorney agrees to speak to the client over the telephone in order to determine whether an in-person consultation is needed.
3. It is the responsibility of the lawyer to collect the \$30 consultation fee prior to meeting with the client. This fee is waived for referrals pertaining to Social Security, Workmen's Compensation, Personal Bankruptcy and Tort/Negligence matters as well as for clients calling from out of state. Occasionally the LRIS staff will waive the consultation fee for other reasons, and this will be noted on the referral form.
4. At the beginning of each month, the LRIS attorney will receive a Referral Update Request which will include any referrals marked as open, maybe future services or any unreported referrals. The lawyer shall submit the completed reports within 2 weeks of receipt along with any applicable fees. Failure to respond will result in the lawyer's name being removed from the panel rotation until the report is received by LRIS.
5. Percentage fees should be remitted within TEN (10) days of payment by the client.
6. To the extent that co-counsel is engaged, the co-counsel attorney will remit the appropriate percentage fees to the Bar or the member attorney is responsible for the entire fee generated in the engagement.
7. If retained, the lawyer and the client must sign the Acknowledgement of Understanding form and send a signed copy to LRIS. **In addition, a written fee agreement and/or contract must be used for all paying clients referred by LRIS.** LRIS reserves the right to request a copy of the fee agreement on referred cases at any time.
8. **Brokering is not permitted.** If you are unable to accept a referral, the client must be referred back to the LRIS. Referrals can only be made to member attorneys.

## What You Can Expect from the LRIS Staff

1. All referrals will be made in a fair and impartial manner.
2. LRIS staff will perform with courtesy and professionalism at all times.
3. When appropriate, callers will be referred to other local or government organizations for assistance before being referred to an attorney in an effort to eliminate unnecessary calls to the attorneys' offices.
4. There are no attorneys on staff in the LRIS office. Although the answers may some times seem simple, the LRIS staff is strictly prohibited from offering legal advice at all times.
5. The LRIS Director will continuously investigate new ways of advertising to promote the LRIS and increase the referrals generated.
6. The LRIS and its staff will make a concerted effort to generate sufficient revenues to maintain and expand the service.

## ***Disputes with Clients***


In the event of a fee dispute between the LRIS attorney and the client, the parties shall first attempt to resolve the dispute within the guidelines of the Fee Arbitration Committee of the Akron Bar Association. The LRIS lawyer shall not proceed with any individual collection efforts or action against the client unless and until the procedures of the Fee Arbitration Committee have been exhausted. If the procedures of the Fee Arbitration Committee are not successful in resolving the fee dispute, then the LRIS lawyer is permitted to pursue individual collection actions or efforts against the client.

In the event of a lawyer/client fee dispute, the lawyer shall notify the LRIS Director in writing, providing the client name, address and telephone number as well as the case number and a brief explanation of the nature of the dispute so that the Director may assist the referred lawyer in submitting the matter to the Fee Arbitration Committee for further handling.

If a grievance complaint is filed with the Board of Commissioners against an LRIS panel member and the Probable Cause Panel certifies said complaint, the lawyer will automatically be removed from the panels pending the outcome of the investigation. If a grievance is filed against a member lawyer, that lawyer must notify the LRIS in writing of said complaint.

## ***Disputes with LRIS***

Any fee dispute between the LRIS and member-lawyer will be resolved through the Fee Arbitration Committee of the Akron Bar Association, pursuant to the rules and regulations governing the conduct of said committee. Said fee arbitration procedure is MANDATORY AND BINDING. The Board of Trustees of the Akron Bar Association may also take whatever action is deemed appropriate.



***"The lawyer was helpful and explained my options. He also sent me information in the mail. The added bonus - the law office is in the same building I work in. Thank you for this valuable service."***

## Important Reminders

- Complete all areas of the application. Limit your panel selection to no more than **five** main areas of law within which you may select as many sub-areas as you choose.
- Malpractice insurance declarations page must show dates of coverage. Approximately one month prior to the expiration date of your current coverage, you will receive a simple reminder from the LRIS staff to submit your updated declarations page upon receipt.
- A \$30 consultation fee is to be collected from the client with the exception of matters such as Social Security, Worker's Compensation, Personal Bankruptcy, Tort/Negligence matters and clients who are calling from out of state. While the LRIS staff alerts the client of the \$30 fee at the time of the referral, it is best to remind the client of the fee when scheduling the consultation with them.
- On retained cases, the first \$200 in attorney fees is a deductible. Thereafter, 15% of collected fees will be remitted to the LRIS. The total attorney fee may not be increased because of the 15% to the LRIS. If co-counsel is engaged, the co-counsel attorney will abide by the percentage for the entire fee generated in the engagement. A contract (fee agreement) as well as the Acknowledgment of Understanding Form must be used.
- Each client will receive a ½ hour consultation if an appointment is scheduled. The LRIS staff alerts all clients that full attorney fees will apply to any work completed after the initial half hour of consultation is completed.
- If a client schedules an appointment with the LRIS attorney but fails to appear or call in advance to reschedule, the attorney shall indicate such on the referral sheet so that the LRIS may take caution in referring the client in the future.
- **Brokering is not permitted.** If you choose not to accept a referral, the client must be referred back to the LRIS. Referrals can only be made to member attorneys.



*The Lawyer Referral Service of the Akron Bar Association is approved  
by the American Bar Association.*