

General Checklist

File: _____

Date Opened: _____

- Rule out conflicts of interest.
- Open file.
- Calendar deadlines. Prescription date? _____
- Send engagement letter.
- Sign written fee agreement.
- Make client trust account deposit.
- Investigate.
- Recommend action to client.
- Obtain client approval of action.
- Complete litigation or transaction.
- Update client.
- Do follow-up.
- Collect fees and expenses.
- Terminate representation ethically.
- Send trust accounting.
- Send disengagement letter.
- Purge, close and archive file.

Caveat: Supplement with detailed checklists!

Calendar Control System Installation Checklist

- Set up "events" (which means items timed and dated, *e.g.*, appointments and court hearings).
- Set up "to-do's" (which means items dated but not timed, *e.g.*, prescription deadlines).
- Add a to-do for each matter, at least for a periodic status check. Every matter must have at least one entry in the system at all times to avoid "the forgotten file syndrome."
- Consider using some type of visual aid, perhaps a monthly wall calendar. This allows you to see calendar squeezes early.
- Put alerts (early warnings) on your calendar for key dates, *e.g.*, 21, 14, 7-1 days before the due date.
- Double-check each initial entry. Early errors can later propagate throughout the system.
- Add a to-do when any important matter is done, for follow-up as necessary.
- Provide for periodic maintenance; try daily, weekly and monthly.
- The calendar control person may delegate tasks but is always responsible. One person! Owing to the importance of this job, give it to the most compulsively gifted person in your office.
- Install a backup system. At a minimum, make an entry in the calendar that requires the calendar control person to copy paper systems and backup computer systems periodically.
- Add calendar entries for key dates when you accept a representation, when you receive a hearing date or each time you put the file away. This prevents forgotten files. This is a good time to double-check prescription dates.
- Create detailed checklists that go with each element of your calendaring system.
- A key to successful deadline management is using checklists as much as possible. These should remind you of dates and times that should be placed on your calendar system.

Calendar Control Evaluation Checklist

Use this checklist to determine whether you are taking all the major steps to successfully manage your calendar control system.

- Have you designated a single person to be responsible for calendar control?
- Do you have two calendar control systems? Backup calendar systems reduce your malpractice insurance rates and give you a better chance of avoiding malpractice and disciplinary problems. At a minimum, use the firm's central system, backed up with each attorney's hand calendar, coordinated with each secretary's desk calendar.
- Do you calendar, and react to, deadlines properly?
- Do you periodically review usage of your calendar control system?
- Do you refine the calendar control system when problems are encountered?
- Do you document the changes to the calendar control system on appropriate checklists, which serve as your written office policy? Include the checklist or other policy in your employee manual and in orientation for new staff members.
- Do you use a 12-month wall calendar to plan long-term for court hearings, vacations and major events?
- Have you developed a follow-up procedure to make sure calendared matters have been completed? Depending on your practice, you will do this on all items or only on significant items.