



**LAW SOCIETY**  
OF SOUTH AFRICA

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**ATTORNEYS TO PROVIDE FREE LEGAL ADVICE  
DURING NATIONAL ATTORNEYS WEEK: 7 TO 11 SEPTEMBER 2009**

During National Attorneys Week from 7 to 11 September 2009, members of the public can make an appointment with an attorney participating in the National Attorneys Week for one **free** consultation on any legal problem.

The aim of National Attorneys Week is to assist members of the public who would not normally make use of the services of an attorney, to approach an attorney for a free consultation. 'The National Attorneys Week project is one of the outreach projects through which the attorneys' profession seeks to carry out its commitments to promoting access to justice and greater access to legal services for all,' say LSSA Co-Chairpersons Thoba Poyo-Dlwati and Henri van Rooyen.

This is also an opportunity for members of the public who may not already have an attorney

- to find their own trusted legal representative;
- to find out whether they may have a valid legal case; and
- to find out what the costs may be of proceeding with that case to achieve their expected outcome.

Attorneys are qualified to give legal advice on most legal problems. However, some may choose to concentrate on specific areas only, so it is advisable to check first with the firm when making an appointment. Legal advice will be provided in the following areas:

- Buying and selling a house
- Divorce
- Maintenance and custody
- Wills and estates
- Family violence matters
- Criminal matters
- Motor vehicle accidents
- Contracts
- National Credit Act, debts and financial matters

**Please note:** Although the first consultation is free, any legal steps arising from the free consultation or any further consultations are subject to the normal tariff which must be agreed between the attorney and client.

The National Attorneys Week is a joint initiative of the Law Society of South Africa and its six constituent members: The Black Lawyers Association, the Cape Law Society, the Law Society of the Free State, the KwaZulu-Natal Law Society, the Law Society of the Northern Provinces and the National Association of Democratic Lawyers.

### **Where to find a participating attorney:**

For contact details of an attorney in your area who is participating in the National Attorneys Week, please contact the law society in your province:

- Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, North-West – Law Society of the Northern Provinces (012) 338 5800
- Cape provinces – Cape Law Society (021) 443 6700
- Free State – Law Society of the Free State (051) 447 3237
- KwaZulu-Natal – KwaZulu-Natal Law Society (033) 345 1304
- Website: [www.lssa.org.za](http://www.lssa.org.za)

### **How to make the best use of your first free consultation:**

#### **Be prepared**

- Take your ID document.
- Take any documents that may be related to your problem.
- To save time during the consultation, write down all the facts that you can think of that relate to the matter, before you go for the consultation.
- Give the attorney a clear picture of what your problem is and what you hope to achieve.
- You should tell the attorney all the relevant facts relating to the matter so that the attorney has all the relevant information. The more information you have the easier it is for the attorney to advise you properly in the shortest possible time.

#### **Ask questions**

Use the first interview to get as much information as you can.

- Ask what steps are involved in solving the problem.
- Ask how much time the matter is likely to take.
- Ask how much the matter will cost.
- Ask for an assessment of your chances of success, and whether it would be better to try to negotiate a settlement.

**For future consultations with your attorney once he/she becomes your trusted legal representative**

**What are the attorney's obligations towards you when he/she has been appointed as your legal representative?**

An attorney's obligations are contained in various pieces of legislation and other documentation, including the Attorneys Act, 1979 and the rules and rulings of his/her statutory provincial law society.

- An attorney is expected to provide a knowledgeable, professional legal service to and in the interest of his/her client for reasonable remuneration.
- An attorney must explain his/her fee structure to a reasonable degree.
- An attorney must take proper instructions from the client.
- An attorney is expected to keep his/her client reasonably informed about the developments regarding the client's matter.
- It is accepted practice for an attorney to ask the client to pay a deposit.
- An attorney must account to his/her client during the course of the matter and at the end of the matter with regard to costs being incurred.

(A client has the right to have the final costs taxed to ascertain whether or not they are reasonable, should this be necessary.)

*The client is, at all times, entitled to expect a professional, effective and efficient execution of his/her instructions at a reasonable fee.*

**What are your obligations towards the attorney when you have appointed the attorney as your legal representative?**

- You are obliged to disclose all relevant and material information regarding the matter to your attorney.
- You are obliged to comply reasonably with a request to pay an initial deposit (and a retainer, if required).
- You must respond quickly to all requests from your attorney for information.
- Although you can expect to receive reasonable feedback from your attorney on the progress regarding the matter, you should not direct unnecessary enquiries to your attorney. An attorney may charge fees for such 'repeated consultations' and this will increase costs unnecessarily.

**ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE CO-CHAIRPERSONS OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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