



## Attorney Client Understanding

***Please review this document orally at your first meeting to promote common understanding about your respective roles, as well as identify and address any invisible resource-related barriers your client may have to participating in the case.***

You have qualified for free legal services through VLN. I am a volunteer attorney for VLN and I will not charge you fees for my legal services. I have a license to practice law in Minnesota.

I will be diligent in protecting your legal rights and achieving the goals we set for your case.

So you can make informed choices, I will explain the law, your rights, your responsibilities, your legal options, your other options, how those options might play out, and my recommendations.

If your case might require you to pay fees to the court or another agency, I will let you know in advance and discuss your options.

I will let you know of any updates to your case, including any settlement offers.

What you share with me about your case is confidential, per the Rules of Professional Conduct.

I will try to work around what is going on in your life when setting up meetings. Please note, however, that the courts are open only during normal business hours.

I will review with you a separate written agreement naming the issue I'm helping you with and telling you what I will do for you. I will answer any questions you have about this agreement, including reasons that would require any lawyer to stop representing someone.

These types of cases typically take \_\_\_\_\_, but your case may take longer or shorter depending on various circumstances, some of which are out of our control.

If I can't help you with something, I will do my best to connect you with someone who can.

Please note that no lawyer can guarantee that you'll win or meet your goals.

### **It will help me represent you if you could . . . .**

#### **Overall**

**Tell me what you want to happen in your life related to your legal issue.** If I know your goals, I can help you better.

**Share all the facts with me** - even facts that you think might be unimportant or may make you look bad. If you don't, the advice I give you and my plan to help you might not be best for your situation. It can make things a lot worse if the judge or others involved in the case find out facts that I don't know about.

If my recommended plan for meeting your goals seems like more than you can or want to do, please let me know. We can look at **other options**. Sometimes, the legal system can result in more work than benefits, and problems may be best solved in other ways.

**Before you see me**, think of questions you might have for me. Some people find it's helpful to write down questions ahead of time.

Let me know if you have a hard time getting the **paperwork** I need for your case. If that happens, I will try to help or find others who can. I'll attach a list of some of the paperwork I will need and where you can get it. You may mail it to me or fax it to me (see my business card).

Let me know if **other legal issues** come up as they may change how we work on this case. I will look for someone who can help you with the other legal issue(s), including VLN.

**If I am ever not being clear**, please ask me to explain it again or in another way. I also will write down my advice or instructions so you can look it over later or with a friend.

Please tell me: Are there any physical or mental disabilities you would like me to know about that may impact our work together? Are there any other legal or personal problems you'd like me to know about that may impact our work together?

### **Scheduling meetings**

Please tell me: What hours do you work? Can you get time off during those hours? Do you have childcare? If yes, how would that impact your availability for meetings? Would it be difficult to get to my office by car or bus? Would there be a more convenient public location to meet? Is there anything else you'd like me to know about that will impact your ability to meet with me or attend a court hearing?

Please do your best to **arrive on time to our scheduled meetings**. If you will be late, please call me at \_\_\_\_\_. If you will be more than \_\_\_\_ minutes late, and I have another meeting scheduled after yours, I may need to reschedule our meeting to another day, to make sure we have enough time together.

If something comes up and you are unable to make a scheduled meeting at all, please call me as soon as you know so we may reschedule.

### **Staying in touch with each other**

Please tell me: what are the best ways to reach you (such as phone, address, and email)? How would you prefer that I contact you? What are some alternate ways to reach you? What are some contingency ways to reach you (such as family or friends)? What are some emergency ways to reach you? Do you have easy access to a free fax machine? Do you have easy access to an email? (The more information I have, the more likely we'll be able to stay in touch).

**If these change**, please give me new information right away. The law might require me to notify others of any address/phone number changes within as little as five days.

**If something happens in your case**, such as: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, call or write me per my business card (You may want to put my card in your wallet and phone so you have it with you.)

**When I contact you**, please get back to me as quickly as you can. Legal issues can move fast and I may need a decision from you.

I will return your phone calls as soon as I can. (If your call is urgent, please let me know.) If \_\_\_\_ days pass and I haven't returned your call, please call back again.