



Saturday Lawyer Program: Conducting Your Phone or Virtual Interview

Thank you so much for volunteering with AVLF's Saturday Lawyer Program. The vital work of our volunteers connects hundreds of clients each year to aid and assistance with claims for which they may otherwise find no assistance.

The following are hints, reminders and general information regarding our policies and procedures.

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Introductions

- Be sure to allow the participant time to introduce themselves** and tell you how they are doing!
- Let the participant know that you will have no more than 45 minutes to meet with them, so it is very important to focus on the legal issue(s) that they presented** when they contacted AVLF or Legal Aid in the past couple of weeks.
- It's helpful to reassure your client that you that you know they have probably already told their story many times** (including to an advocate at Legal Aid or AVLF), and that you appreciate their patience.
- Let your client know that you're going to ask them a number of detailed questions** so that you can get a complete picture of their circumstances.



Signing the Saturday Lawyer Program Disclaimer

- We have two digital versions of this form: one for the volunteer and one for the client.** The participant will sign confirming that they understand the disclaimer and consent to the

interview. The volunteer will sign and confirm that they explained the disclaimer to the participant and confirm their consent before continuing the interview.

- ❑ **Every volunteer assisting in the interview and every potential client actively participating in the interview needs to sign the form.** When you hit submit, your digital signature will be captured and sent to AVLF Staff.
- ❑ **Send the participant the link while you are talking to them, read it with them, and confirm that they have signed and clicked submit** before you go on with the interview.
- ❑ Once you have done that, you need to make sure you also fill out and submit your version of the form before you continue the interview.
- ❑ **If the client does not have the ability to fill out the digital form, please read the form to them and get their affirmative verbal consent.** There is a place on your form to notify AVLF of this verbal consent. You should only do this if the client is unable to fill out their version of the form.



Other Important Information to Share

- ❑ **You are not a lawyer for AVLF.** Make sure the participant knows that you are not a lawyer or employee of AVLF or Atlanta Legal Aid Society (ALAS). We do not want the clients to be confused.
- ❑ **This is a screening process. There is no attorney-client relationship at this point.** Please inform the participant that your meeting with them does not form an attorney-client relationship between you and the participant, or between the participant and AVLF. Inform the participant that you are simply gathering information to determine what, if any, help AVLF or a volunteer attorney can provide them.

As the volunteer, you can explain however you would like what the level of assistance you anticipate providing them with is, but always make sure they understand that you cannot commit to represent them at this time because there is still an approval process you have to go through with your firm.

- ❑ **All information is strictly confidential.** Inform the participant that all information that they have told you and documents you have gathered about their case is confidential.



Reiterate the Process

- ❑ **AVLF will review their information and contact them.** After reviewing the facts of the case, the documents available, and the volunteer's recommendation, AVLF will determine how to proceed.
- ❑ **AVLF may decide to do any of the following:**
 - a. **Self-help/ advice and counsel:** guide them on how to handle your legal problem on their own.

- b. **Referral:** give them the appropriate information or resource to address their problem, or refer them to an agency or an attorney best suited for their needs.
 - c. **Advocacy:** advocate on their behalf, which may include writing letters, or making phone calls to resolve their problem.
 - d. **Representation:** depending on their legal problem and resources, AVLF may decide to directly place their case with a volunteer attorney for full representation.
- Inform the participant that **they can expect to hear from AVLF within the week** with an update on the status of their case.
 - If the client needs advice in the interim or has questions about their case, they should contact Christian Rozzell, Paralegal for the Safe and Stable Homes Project at 678-681-6011 or call the main intake line: 404-521-0790.

General Reminders

1. Prior to being referred to you, the participants have been screened by Atlanta Legal Aid or AVLF for income eligibility and for a brief assessment that they may have a valid legal claim or defense. Your assignment during the interview process is to **expand on the information previously gathered and assist AVLF in assessing whether or not the Saturday Lawyer Program can assist them.**
2. If the individual presents you with another unrelated legal problem, you are not obligated to interview him or them in relation to that new problem, and time will likely not permit it. Please refer the individual back to Legal Aid or AVLF for further assistance with the additional issue.



Gathering Information

- We will provide you with questionnaires tailored to Saturday Lawyer Program's two legal areas (landlord-tenant and unpaid wages).** While you should use the interviewing style with which you are most comfortable, these questionnaires should help guide you through the common issues which should be explored.
- Use the questionnaire as a checklist.** Allow the individual to tell their story, but also be sure to gather as many of the legally relevant facts as possible, using the questionnaires as a checklist for those issues.
- Be sure to **identify every adverse party** who may be involved with the claim, and **obtain as much contact information as possible** about such parties.
- Complete and return your notes and the questionnaire.** At the end of the questionnaire, there are a few questions which we ask you to answer, including an opportunity for you to provide any additional comments and recommended actions. Please take the time to complete these questions along with any of the others from the questionnaire that you deem relevant. **PLEASE SEND A COPY OF ALL OF YOUR NOTES TO AVLF SO THAT WE HAVE THEM FOR OUR RECORDS.**



Questions / Further Assistance / Full Representation

- ❑ If you have any questions or concerns regarding the Saturday Lawyer Program, please do not hesitate to call AVLFL.

- ❑ **If you decide to accept a case for full representation, we'll provide ongoing support and supervision for you throughout your representation of the client.** We can be a great resource for questions about legal issues, strategy, procedure, and form pleadings. We also offer the following to help with your case:
 - a. **Access to top-notch pro bono investigatory work and private process servers** for hard-to-serve defendants where needed;

 - b. **Free or discounted court reporting services** for depositions;

 - c. **Access to expert forensic accountants;**

and more. We also suggest that you seek support from within your firm. Many firms have pleadings banks and experienced attorneys.

MALPRACTICE INSURANCE: Primary malpractice insurance is provided by AVLFL for volunteers who assist with the Saturday Lawyer Program or who are working on a case referred through the Saturday Lawyer Program. **Please notify AVLFL immediately if you believe there is a threat of a claim.**