

Rule 7.3. Solicitation of Clients.

(a) A lawyer shall not by in-person, live telephone or real-time electronic contact solicit professional employment from a prospective client when a significant motive for the lawyer's doing so is the lawyer's pecuniary gain, unless the person contacted:

(a)(1) is a lawyer;

(a)(2) has a family, close personal, or prior professional relationship with the lawyer, or

(a)(3) is unable to make personal contact with a lawyer and the lawyer's contact with the prospective client has been initiated by a third party on behalf of the prospective client.

(b) A lawyer shall not solicit professional employment by written, recorded or electronic communication or by in-person, live telephone or real-time electronic contact even when not otherwise prohibited by paragraph (a), if:

(b)(1) the target of the solicitation has made known to the lawyer a desire not to be solicited by the lawyer; or

(b)(2) the solicitation involves coercion, duress or harassment.

(c) Every written, recorded or electronic communication from a lawyer soliciting professional employment from anyone known to be in need of legal services in a particular matter shall include the words "Advertising Material" on the outside envelope, if any, and at the beginning of any recorded or electronic communication, unless the recipient of the communication is a person specified in paragraphs (a)(1) or (a)(2). For the purposes of this subsection, "written communication" does not include advertisement through public media, including but not limited to a telephone directory, legal directory, newspaper or other periodical, outdoor advertising, radio, television or webpage.

(d) Notwithstanding the prohibitions in paragraph (a), a lawyer may participate with a prepaid or group legal service plan operated by an organization not owned or directed by the lawyer that uses in-person or other real-time communication to solicit memberships or subscriptions for the plan from persons who are not known to need legal services in a particular matter covered by the plan.

Comment

[1] A solicitation is a targeted communication initiated by the lawyer that is directed to a specific person and that offers to provide, or can reasonably be understood as offering to provide, legal services. In contrast, a lawyer's communication typically does not constitute a solicitation if it is directed to the general public, such as through a billboard, an Internet banner advertisement, a website or a television commercial, or if it is in response to a request for information or is automatically generated in response to Internet searches.

[2] There is a potential for abuse when a solicitation involves direct in-person, live telephone or real-time electronic contact by a lawyer with someone known to need legal services. These forms of contact subject a person to the private importuning of the trained advocate in a direct interpersonal encounter. The person, who may already feel overwhelmed by the circumstances giving rise to the need for legal services, may find it difficult fully to evaluate all available alternatives with reasoned judgment and appropriate self-interest in the face of the lawyer's presence and insistence upon being retained immediately. The situation is fraught with the possibility of undue influence, intimidation, and over-reaching.

[3] This potential for abuse inherent in direct in-person, live telephone or real-time electronic solicitation justifies its prohibition, particularly since lawyers have alternative means of conveying necessary information to those who may be in need of legal services. In particular, communications can be mailed or transmitted by email or other electronic means that do not involve real-time contact and do not violate other laws governing solicitations. These forms of communications and solicitations make it possible for the public to be informed about the need for legal services, and about the qualifications of available lawyers and law firms, without subjecting the public to direct in-person, live telephone or real-time electronic persuasion that may overwhelm a person's judgment.

[4] The use of general advertising and written, recorded or electronic communications to transmit information from lawyer to the public, rather than direct in-person or other real-time communications, will help to ensure that the information flows cleanly as well as freely. The contents of advertisements and communications permitted under Rule 7.2 can be permanently recorded so that they cannot be disputed and may be shared with others who know the lawyer. This potential for informal review is itself likely to help guard against statements and claims that might constitute false and misleading communications in violation of Rule 7.1. The contents of direct in-person, live telephone or real-time electronic contact can

be disputed and may not be subject to third-party scrutiny. Consequently, they are much more likely to approach (and occasionally cross) the dividing line between accurate representations and those that are false and misleading.

[5] There is far less likelihood that a lawyer would engage in abusive practices against a former client, or a person with whom the lawyer has a close personal or family relationship, or where the lawyer has been asked by a third party to contact a prospective client who is unable to contact a lawyer, for example when the prospective client is incarcerated and is unable to place a call, or is mentally incapacitated and unable to appreciate the need for legal counsel. Nor is there a serious potential for abuse in situations where the lawyer is motivated by considerations other than the lawyer's pecuniary gain, or when the person contacted is also a lawyer. This rule is not intended to prohibit a lawyer from applying for employment with an entity, for example, as in-house counsel. Consequently, the general prohibition in Rule 7.3(a) and the requirements of Rule 7.3(c) are not applicable in those situations. Also, paragraph (a) is not intended to prohibit a lawyer from participating in constitutionally protected activities of public or charitable legal-service organizations or *bona fide* political, social, civic, fraternal, employee or trade organizations whose purposes include providing or recommending legal services to their members or beneficiaries.

[5a] Utah's Rule 7.3(a) differs from the ABA Model Rule by authorizing in-person or other real-time contact by a lawyer with a prospective client when that prospective client is unable to make personal contact with a lawyer, but a third party initiates contact with a lawyer on behalf of the prospective client and the lawyer then contacts the prospective client.

[6] But even permitted forms of solicitation can be abused. Thus, any solicitation which contains information that is false or misleading within the meaning of Rule 7.1, that involves coercion, duress or harassment within the meaning of Rule 7.3(b)(2), or that involves contact with someone who has made known to the lawyer a desire not to be solicited by the lawyer within the meaning of Rule 7.3(b)(1) is prohibited. Moreover, if after sending a letter or other communication as permitted by Rule 7.2 the lawyer receives no response, any further effort to communicate with the recipient of the communication may violate the provisions of Rule 7.3(b).

[7] This Rule is not intended to prohibit a lawyer from contacting representatives of organizations or groups that may be interested in establishing a group or prepaid legal plan for their members, insureds, beneficiaries or other third parties for the purpose of informing such entities of the availability of and the details concerning the plan or arrangement which the lawyer or lawyer's firm is willing to offer. This form of communication is not directed to people who are seeking legal services for themselves. Rather, it is usually addressed to an individual acting in a fiduciary capacity seeking a supplier of legal services for others who may, if they choose, become prospective clients of the lawyer. Under these circumstances, the activity which the lawyer undertakes in communicating with such representatives and the type of information transmitted to the individual are functionally similar to and serve the same purpose as advertising permitted under Rule 7.2.

[8] The requirement in Rule 7.3(c) that certain communications be marked "Advertising Material" does not apply to communications sent in response to requests of potential clients or their spokespersons or sponsors. General announcements by lawyers, including changes in personnel or office location, do not constitute communications soliciting professional employment from a client known to be in need of legal services within the meaning of this Rule.

[8a] Utah Rule 7.3(c) requires the words "Advertising Material" to be marked on the outside of an envelope, if any, and at the beginning of any recorded or electronic communication, but not at the end as the ABA Model Rule requires. Lawyer solicitations in public media that regularly contain advertisements do not need the "Advertising Material" notice because persons who view or hear such media usually recognize the nature of the communications.

[9] Paragraph (d) of this Rule permits a lawyer to participate with an organization that uses personal contact to solicit members for its group or prepaid legal service plan, provided that the personal contact is not undertaken by any lawyer who would be a provider of legal services through the plan. The organization must not be owned by or directed (whether as manager or otherwise) by any lawyer or law firm that participates in the plan. For example, paragraph (d) would not permit a lawyer to create an organization controlled directly or indirectly by the lawyer and use the organization for the in-person or telephone, live person-to-person contacts or other real-time electronic solicitation of legal employment of the lawyer through memberships in the plan or otherwise. The communication permitted by these organizations also must not be directed to a person known to need legal services in a particular matter, but is to be designed to inform potential plan members generally of another means of affordable legal services. Lawyers who participate in a legal service plan must reasonably assure that the plan sponsors are in compliance with Rules 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3(b). See Rule 8.4(a).

