COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR LAWYER

It is best to agree on the most effective method of communication (phone calls, letters, faxes, emails and/or office visits) at the *beginning* of your representation by a lawyer.

How often should I communicate with my lawyer?

This will depend on several factors:

- how long the lawyer has represented you;
- the nature of your legal matter; and
- your needs as a client.

You should notify your lawyer if you move or if the way you want to communicate with him or her changes. Your lawyer will expect you to receive his or her communications if they are being handled in the way you agreed.

What is the most effective way for me to communicate with my lawyer?

This will depend on your agreement about communication. You may also communicate with the lawyer's paralegal or support staff. Be sure that you know in advance if you will be charged for the time you spend communicating with your lawyer or their staff. If so, make sure you know the amount of the charge.

[Date]

Dear [name of lawyer]:

I have been trying to reach you by [phone, email, fax, letter, etc.] since [date]. It has been [number of days, weeks or months] since we last communicated.

On [date], I [did , other]. You said you would contact me by [date]. [number of days, weeks or months] have passed and I have not heard from you.

This is important to me because ______. Please contact me at [phone number, fax number, email address, mailing address, other].

I know that I can ask for help from the Washington State Bar Association, but I would prefer to resolve this with you directly.

Sincerely,

[your name]

What should I do if communication breaks down?

We suggest that you send your lawyer a letter. You might want to send the letter by return-receipt certified mail and keep a copy. Please see our sample letter — you do not need to include all parts, and you should make the letter fit your situation. With a letter, the lawyer has your concerns in writing so there is no misunderstanding, and your letter documents the problem.

Can you help me if my lawyer does not respond to my letter?

If you follow the steps above and receive no response from your lawyer within a reasonable amount of time, please call our Consumer Affairs staff at 206-727-8207 and leave a message. Although they cannot offer legal advice, they can try to contact your lawyer for you when:

- your lawyer does not return your phone calls or respond to your emails;
- your lawyer's phone number is no longer in service;
- your lawyer does not respond to your letter; or
- you receive your letter back showing an incorrect address.

We cannot contact your lawyer for other reasons or to convey your disagreement with your lawyer's advice, your lawyer's fees, or the handling of your case. If you feel that your lawyer acted unethically, you might consider filing a grievance. Call us for forms or see www.wsba.org.



WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

1325 Fourth Avenue Suite 600 Seattle, WA 98101-2539

Phone: 206-727-8207 Fax: 206-727-8325

www.wsba.org