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HOW YOUR ATTORNEY'S FEES ARE USED

The cost of an attorney is expensive, and for some, it is a huge financial burden to hire an attorney. Because the legal system is so complex, you may feel coerced to hire an attorney because you would be lost in the legal system without one. Some people see lawyers as taking advantage of people in tough situations, but what some do not know is that after the costs to operate a law office are paid, the attorney gets a small percentage of the fees that you pay.

When attorneys charge hundreds of dollars an hour, some clients are under the impression that the attorneys actually receive that money. I am writing to let you know that is not true and to let you know what most attorneys, including me, do with your attorney's fees. Here are some of the things for which your fees pay:

- Staff to answer the phone, manage your file, do administrative work, and to do all the things that you would not want a lawyer to bill you to do. Costs include wages, insurance, sometimes retirement, payroll taxes, and other taxes.
- The phone, fax, and internet so that we can communicate with you, the courts and other people involved in your case.
- Computer and phone equipment.
- Other communication products such as a website and online management software.
- Office space where we can meet, work, and manage and store your file in a secure location.
- Furniture so that we can have a place to work and sit.
- Maintenance and upkeep costs on the equipment and furniture.
- Secure storage for your file when your case is completed.

- Utilities, such as electricity, water, sewer, etc.
- Insurance on the practice.
- Fees to renew our licenses each year.
- Fees and travel expenses for continuing education that we are required to attend each year to keep our licenses.
- Legal books and research tools that we pay for monthly and annually – which are very expensive and necessary since the law changes daily.
- Office supplies to produce the work, to be organized and communicate.
- Electronic offsite back-up and file storage, so if some disaster happens at the office, your files and our work are protected.
- Many other little things that makes clients more comfortable.
- After those expenses, we pay taxes to the local, state and federal governments.

Most of these things are necessary to operate a law practice. Attorneys can take steps to reduce costs, but cuts often means loss of services to the client. In addition, clients are picky (as they should be) and want a lawyer who can operate efficiently, who can store their files securely, have access to the law, and tools to communicate.

So, after all of the things above are paid, then the attorney gets a part of what is left over.

When you hire an attorney, you are hiring an office which provides services to you that you may never see. Your dollars are hard at work for things that never show up on your bill.

These ongoing costs are why attorneys require a trust account deposit, because when a client doesn't pay the attorney, it is not just the lawyer who does not get paid. It is also the staff and vendors who might not get paid. It is also why an attorney often must withdraw from a client's case if the client is unable to pay for the fees, even if your attorney cares for you and wants to help you.

We want our clients to know that we know that hiring our office may be financially difficult, but we work hard to keep costs down and provide you the best service we can with the resources we have. Most other attorneys do too.