

**INCUBATOR**

**OVERVIEW**

The program provides licensed attorneys in practice 0-5 years with furnished office hoteling space, meeting space and ancillary services such as printers, discounted or free technology subscriptions, and free CLEs. These programs also provide mentorship through a Practice Advisor who can guide participants on how to set up their practices, obtain a business license, client development marketing strategies, and running a successful legal practice. In return, attorneys in the program help to close the justice gap by agreeing to represent a certain number of modest means clients at a discounted rate and/or donate a percentage of time to pro bono legal services, while growing his or her own practice.

The program would be supported by the Handle|BAR Practice Advisor, who would offer group and one-on-one education on practice and business development and available practice management resources. In addition, the Advisor would draw upon volunteers such as members of the Past President’s Councill to assist in building participants legal skills.

The initial term of the program is 12 months with the option to remain another year.

**PROGRAM TIMELINE**

While the time to set up a practice and begin accepting clients is at the discretion of the participating attorney, the following timeline provides a general outline for how the program would work. During this process, participating attorneys would engage the Practice Advisor regularly for guidance.

**Month One:**

* Obtain business license.
* Open bank accounts for operating, client trust and IOLTA.
* Obtain professional liability insurance.
* Develop a firm budget and determine the amount of revenue needed to pay expenses and earn an income.
* Establish written fee agreements, client engagement/nonengagement/disengagement letters.
* Become familiar with practice management technology, such as Clio, and develop a process for client conflict checks.
* Develop a basic website with an attorney bio, list of services offered, etc.
* Take available CLE programs and Handle|BAR learning modules geared toward practice management.

**Month Two:**

* Enroll in the state bar’s Lawyer Referral Service and begin accepting cases.
* Contact a legal aid organization about how to get involved (accept pro bono matters, lawyer in the lobby, etc.).
* Work with the Handle|BAR Program Director on how to develop a marketing strategy.
* Take CLE programs geared toward practice specific skills.
* Learn how to reconcile firm IOLTA and operating trust accounts.

**Month Three - Eight:**

* Build upon client base by engaging in networking opportunities, developing a social media presence, obtaining contract work, etc.
* Consult with Practice Advisor about any client issues or tips on how to refine business practice.

**Months 9-12:**

* Determine whether to remain in the Incubator Program for another year or explore other opportunities. If going solo, use this time to locate office space and consider budget impact of rent, furnishings, etc.
* If joining an established practice, follow best practices for conflicts checks, closing the practice and notifying clients.