

# Limited Scope Representation in Alabama

## Frequently Asked Questions by Potential Clients

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### **I think I need a lawyer, but I don't know if I can afford one. What should I do?**

One way to reduce the cost of legal help is to use limited scope representation, sometimes called unbundling. This is when a lawyer helps you to do some of the work on your legal problem, but you also do some of the work yourself. You only pay the lawyer for the parts that s/he helps you with. The legal work can be out of court, such as preparing court papers or coaching you on how to handle your case. Or it might be going to court for only part of a case, such as a child support or visitation hearing.

### **How does limited scope representation work?**

- You and the lawyer talk about all the tasks that need to be completed to handle your legal problem or case.
- You and the lawyer agree on which tasks you will do and which tasks s/he will do. You also agree on how much you will pay the lawyer to do the tasks.
- You and the lawyer put your agreement in writing.
- You only pay the lawyer for the tasks he or she is to complete. You are not paying him/her for full representation.
- The lawyer completes his/her tasks, and you complete your tasks.
- If you want the lawyer to do more tasks, the lawyer and you enter into a new agreement and put it in writing.

**For example**, you may feel comfortable going to court and telling your side of the story to a judge, but you may not know how to draft the required court papers. A lawyer can tell you which court papers you need and can draft them. Then you can go to court on your own. You would only pay the lawyer for helping you with the court papers. Or the lawyer and you might agree that the lawyer will represent you in court at only one hearing but not your entire case. You would not pay him/her to help you with the entire legal problem or case.

### **Can limited scope representation be used for any legal matter?**

Limited scope representation is allowed for all types of civil cases, but it does not work well for all kinds. Limited scope representation is used most often in family law cases. It is best to talk to a lawyer who offers limited scope representation to decide if limited scope representation will work for your case.

### **How much does limited scope representation cost?**

Most lawyers who use limited scope representation charge a flat fee up front. Lawyers charge different amounts for different tasks. It is important to talk about the cost of each task the lawyer is going to do for you before you make an agreement.

### **How do I find out if a lawyer offers limited scope representation?**

Call or e-mail the lawyer's office to ask if he or she offers limited scope representation.

