

Silverblatt Law Office & Trust Services

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Dear Client:

We are pleased that you have selected Silverblatt Law Office to assist you in your legal matter. This letter sets out some of our office policies. We ask that you take a few moments to read it because we believe this will help result in a smooth and efficient working relationship.

Our Availability

Unlike too many professional offices these days, we do not over-book our attorney. We therefore can usually see our clients precisely at their scheduled appointment time. Please arrive a few minutes early so you can complete any necessary paperwork and our staff can seat you in our conference room. As a matter of courtesy, please contact us as soon as possible if you cannot make an appointment so that we can offer that time slot to someone else. Failure to do so at least 24 hours ahead of time will result in a \$25 charge.

According to the bar association, the number one complaint clients have with their lawyers is that they can never just call and speak to their attorney. Although this is often true, there are reasons for this. An attorney may be in a meeting with a new client or a returning client; may be attending a court hearing or traveling to and from a hearing; or may be reviewing legal documents that require uninterrupted attention, just to mention a few areas. Just as you do not want your meeting with your attorney interrupted by telephone calls, neither do the other clients whom your attorney advises. Often your questions can be handled by speaking with one of our paralegals. They are highly trained and well versed in their areas of concentration. They can often answer your questions quickly, and their fee rate is at a lower hourly fee rate than that of the attorney. When your question requires legal advice that only an attorney is allowed to give, the paralegal will ensure that your question gets to your attorney as quickly as possible and will get the answer to you as quickly as possible.

Paralegals : The Attorney's Right Hand

As previously mentioned, here at Silverblatt Law Office, Attorney Silverblatt works side-by-side with paralegals to promote speed and efficiency during the legal process. It is thus important that clients be aware of just how much work a paralegal can do on their case. This includes conducting client interviews; maintaining general contact with the client after establishment of the attorney-client relationship; locating and interviewing witnesses; conducting investigations and statistical and documentary research for review by the attorney; conducting legal research for review by the attorney; drafting legal documents for review by the attorney; drafting correspondence and pleadings for review by and signature of the attorney; attending executions of wills, real estate closings,

depositions, court or administrative hearings and trials with the attorney; and writing and signing letters to the client providing case-related information (but not legal advice). All of these services should be used fully if the client wishes to make the legal action as timely as possible while keeping expenses to a minimum.

Our paralegals are school-trained and experienced individuals. They will often be the individuals working on your case on a daily basis. However, your case will not have any actions taken without your attorney's review and approval. Be assured that your case is personally monitored, reviewed, and supervised by Mr. Silverblatt. Of course you always have the right to meet with your attorney to personally discuss your case.

Your Availability

In order to properly represent you, you will need to provide us with current business, home, and cell phone numbers as well as your e-mail address if you have one. This is because we may need to contact you very quickly about an issue in your case. Your personal information will never be given out to others unless you expressly authorize it. Additionally, remember that in the event your case involves litigation, you may be required to attend Court appearances and comply with discovery requests and deposition notices.

Fee Determinations

In cases such as simple probates, we use a "flat fee" approach. This works well in routine or quantifiable legal matters. However, a flat fee is always based on certain assumptions. If those assumptions are incorrect, changed, or modified, then your attorney must charge an hourly rate since he or she cannot provide competent professional services needed under a flat fee arrangement. For example, in a probate case where heirs have to be located or negotiated with, or where heirs call and want information, such actions are not included in the flat fee for the probate case. You would be charged at our hourly rate for us to work on these additional issues. You should refer to your Contract and Exhibit A of that Contract for the list of items included in any flat fee. Of course, feel free to ask us about it at any time.

Now a word about our billing rates. It is a rate, and we "meter" it in 1/10th an hour (6 minute) increments. This is fully documented for the client in each bill which sets out what services were provided, by whom, and how much time was involved. Time record notations are made for any and all work performed, including but not limited to, office conferences, legal research, preparation of legal instruments, telephone and personal conferences, interoffice meetings on your case, receiving or responding to e-mails, trips to and from the office to the courthouse, and any other properly billable legal services.

People naturally see the hourly rate and think that is what we earn. If only it were so! In a perfect world, legal services would not cost clients anything. In that same perfect world, we would not have any costs for providing those services. There would be no salaries, rent, malpractice insurance premiums, or continuing legal education costs. In order to function and provide professional services, our law firm has additional expenses such as law libraries, computers or word

processing machines, copy machines, typewriters, office furniture and equipment, and file cabinets and file storage equipment in order to keep up with the many matters handled by our firm.

As part of the time based charges, it is important to realize that services are rendered as necessary for the proper handling of the case regardless of whether it is specifically authorized or not. A good example would be calls from other heirs on a probate case. We still must charge for that time even if you don't like the fact that they are calling. We are legally obligated to represent you in that matter regardless of what arises. It would be the same if the Judge orders us to prepare a research brief for him on your matter. Also as part of the charges involved in the case is the time for interoffice strategy and guidance meetings between the attorney and the paralegal as well as administrative time such as organizing the many documents in your file for efficient access.

Nevertheless, there are times when the time-based billing approach will not work either. Some projects such as wills, trusts, and powers of attorney are based on a document fee basis because the attorney has spent a great deal of time developing forms, procedures and computer applications used in handling legal matters. Rather than charge the client for the set up time and charges, it is easier and fairer to allocate a portion of the set up time by using a flat document fee. This way the client benefits from the attorney's experience and efficiency without having to pay for all of the attorney's time.

Having said that, we should not be viewed as simply document producers. While a product is tangible and it is fairly easy to determine its value, in reality you are purchasing a service, not just a product. We are estate planners for example, not just trust document producers. We certainly can produce a trust as a result of our meetings with you, but you are in reality receiving the benefit of our knowledge, experience, and expertise. So don't see this as just any piece of paper costing X dollars—it is a legal service that has resulted, in part, with that document being generated to meet your legal needs.

One last issue is that of file retention. We do not keep documents after the case is closed except for Wills and Trusts. Many of the documents generated are part of the public record of the county clerk's office where the action was filed and can be obtained directly from them. Please be sure to receive back from us any original documents we might have in our possession. Wills and Trusts are scanned but as with all technology, we can make no guarantees that we will always be able to provide you with a copy of those documents down the road. If you do desire an electronic copy of your documents, please understand that there is a charge for that time and technology.

We hope this information helps you understand our systems here at Silverblatt Law Office. We appreciate your confidence in us and pledge to you in return our commitment to excellence in the delivery of legal services.

Sincerely,

Silverblatt Law Office