

RCW 48.01.290 Legal service plans—Practice of law—Application.

(1) It is the public policy of the state of Washington to promote ready access to legal assistance and counsel for all citizens of the state and to authorize that legal service contractors can issue legal service plans to businesses and individuals in the state of Washington.

(2) Legal service contractors are not insurers under RCW 48.01.050 and legal service plans are not insurance under RCW 48.01.040.

(3) This section does not in any way affect the practice of law in this state.

(4) This section does not apply to or affect any of the following arrangements:

(a) Retainer, fee, engagement, or representation agreements made by an attorney or firm of attorneys with any person or group other than a legal service contractor;

(b) Referral of individual clients to an attorney by a nonprofit lawyer referral service or public corporation or entity such as state or local bar association provided there is no fee or charge for such referral;

(c) Employee welfare benefit plans to the extent that state law or regulation is preempted by federal law or regulation;

(d) The provision of legal assistance to low or moderate-income persons by nonprofit legal aid organizations or legal aid programs affiliated with the Washington state bar association, a local bar association, a law school accredited by the American bar association, or a program operated in conjunction with a paralegal education program approved by the American bar association; or

(e) Policies of insurance, or coverage incidental to such insurance which may include legal defense, issued by an insurer holding a valid certificate of authority in this state and issued under applicable laws in this title pertaining to such insurance.

(5) For the purposes of this section:

(a) "Legal service contractor" means any person, entity, or group of persons, including associations, who does not engage in the practice of law or the business of insurance and who, for consideration, provides members with access to legal services through agreements with providing attorneys.

(b) "Legal service plan" or "plan" means an arrangement between a legal service contractor and an individual or person or group of individuals or persons, whereby specified legal services may be provided to, or provided at discounted rates to[,] members by providing attorneys in consideration of a periodic payment that does not constitute payment of attorney fees of any providing attorneys.

(c) "Member" means an individual, person, or group of individuals or persons eligible to receive legal services under a legal service plan.

(d) "Providing attorney" means an attorney licensed, in good standing, and eligible to practice law in this state who provides legal services under a providing attorney agreement in accordance with the terms of the legal service plan, and pursuant to an engagement agreement between the providing attorney and the member.

(e) "Providing attorney agreement" means a written contract or agreement between a legal service contractor and a providing attorney under which the providing attorney renders and provides legal services to members of a legal service plan. [2023 c 3 § 1.]