

# LRS NEWS

Lawyer Referral Service Newsletter

December 2016

## Welcome to our Second Newsletter!

Communication is the key to any good relationship, and our goal with this newsletter is to keep you informed and to keep those lines of communication open. To that end, we want to start by introducing ourselves—see staff information at the end of this newsletter—and by sharing some news and reminders.

2016 was quite a busy year for LRS. There has been a 36% increase in referrals, we hired a part-time Intake & Referral Specialist, and we implemented a marketing plan that includes a Google AdWords campaign. We also obtained BBB accreditation, and are working towards obtaining ABA approval. We hope these efforts will increase LRS visibility and ultimately increase your business.

Please stop in and see us anytime you are in Concord visiting the Bar Center. We enjoy meeting panel members in person and welcome your ideas and suggestions for improving the service. It is always nice to make a personal connection, so please ask at the front desk for Jackie, Tom, or me, and we will come out to chat with you.

We hope you have a warm and peaceful holiday and we wish you a happy and successful New Year!

*Sheila Vermacy, Coordinator*



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NH Bar Association legal services staff showing some love on November 4, National Love Your Lawyer Day!



NEW HAMPSHIRE BAR ASSOCIATION

Lawyer Referral Service



## What's New at LRS?

### Percentage Fees

Effective January 1, 2017, there will be a slight change to the calculation of percentage fees owed to LRS. The amount owed will be calculated on 10% of the total net collected fees, rather than just on cases that net \$250 or higher.

The "10% of \$250 or higher" rule has caused much confusion and headaches for attorneys and staff who either have the misperception that the first \$250 is deducted from net collected fees, or forget that percentage fees aren't owed if the total amount doesn't reach \$250. Much staff time is expended either making refunds for small dollar amounts or following up with panel members to collect on the remaining \$25 still owed.

### Remit 10% of TOTAL net fees

To alleviate the confusion and the costs associated with collecting or refunding small amounts of money, the rule has been modified to: *remit 10% of the total net collected legal fees to LRS on all cases that generate legal fees beyond the initial \$25 consultation fee. (If the client doesn't hire you, don't report the \$25 consultation fee, if charged.)*

We anticipate this change will streamline the percentage fees process going forward. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns.

## LRS as a Referral Resource

We recently closed out the fiscal year, and our statistics have been compiled. In FY 2016, LRS attorneys made over 1 million dollars in fees! I love statistics and the information the numbers can give us to assist with planning and marketing for the new fiscal year.

For instance, I recently ran reports on how LRS clients heard about us. It is probably not surprising that the top referral source to LRS is the internet. 34% of our clients found out about LRS through our website and our social media efforts.

The second top referral source to LRS is from attorneys – your colleagues (23%).

While LRS rules require Panel Members to refer clients back to the service if unable to provide a consultation and/or representation, what about the clients not referred by LRS?

Revenues generated by percentage fees all go back into supporting and improving the service. With more revenue, LRS can implement more marketing. More marketing will bring in more clients, more referrals, and more legal fees to you.

The next time you are contacted by a client you cannot assist, please remember LRS as a referral source. By referring potential clients to LRS, you are not only supporting the service, you are also supporting your colleagues, and ultimately, your business.

*Sheila Vermacy*

## Reduced-Fee Program

We hear from an increasing number of people who are not eligible for pro bono representation, but who cannot afford an attorney's usual fees. This makes your participation in the Reduced-Fee program more valuable than ever.

The suggested retainer amount has been increased to \$1,200. Remember, no percentage fees are owed on Reduced-Fee Referrals, no matter the amount collected.

Please be aware that client eligibility for the program is determined by a brief phone interview. We don't require documentation of income but callers are informed that the referred attorney might ask for proof of income and assets.

To assist you with verifying eligibility, the income guidelines are now printed on the bottom of each referral confirmation form, along with the income information provided to us by the client. Also, the referral confirmation form provided to clients contains a financial worksheet with instructions to complete and bring to the initial consultation.

If you ever feel that the client does not actually fit the Reduced-Fee program guidelines, you may choose to charge your normal rates or refer them back to LRS. We just ask that you let us know and we will update our records accordingly.

Thank you for your participation in this vital program!

*Jacqueline Geddes*

## LRS is Going (Semi) Paperless

According to a study conducted by the Bar Association in 2014, over 25% of New Hampshire law firms are either considering or have already adopted paperless office technology. Since October 16, 2015, LRS has been doing the same.

Panel Members generate a tremendous amount of paper with reports, applications, invoices, etc., and becoming a semi-paperless office has saved a surprising amount of staff time, not to mention the space needed for file storage. Storing documents in electronic form keeps all this information at our fingertips—no more searching through paper files and no more piles of filing to catch up on!

### *We Encourage Electronic Submission of Reports*

Of course, we will still mail paper copies of your case disposition reports and invoices, and will be happy to receive your reports back in paper form; however, we would prefer to receive them electronically, if possible. Other documents we would be happy to receive electronically include membership applications and professional liability insurance copies. In fact, the LRS Membership Application is now available in a fillable PDF form online in the Member Benefits section of your Member Dashboard on the Bar's website.

If you would like more information about becoming a Paperless Office, the CLE department at the NH Bar Association offers an excellent online seminar titled "Legal Technology Academy - Featuring Paul Unger & Barron Henley" for CLE credit. We attended the live event and found it very helpful for making our transition. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at [svermacy@nhbar.org](mailto:svermacy@nhbar.org).

## Meet the Staff

### **Sheila Vermacy**

Coordinator

603.715.3235 - [svermacy@nhbar.org](mailto:svermacy@nhbar.org)

Sheila has worked with the Lawyer Referral Service for the past fourteen years. She started out as an Intake & Referral Specialist, moved up to Assistant Coordinator, and took over as Coordinator in 2015. She has a BA in Liberal Arts, a Paralegal Certificate, and over 20 years experience in the field of Information & Referral. Sheila enjoys camping and kayaking with her spouse and four canine rescues.



## Meet Jackie



**Jacqueline Geddes,**  
Intake & Referral Specialist  
603.715.3236 - [jgeddes@nhbar.org](mailto:jgeddes@nhbar.org)

Jacqueline comes to the Lawyer Referral Service after working as a paralegal for various law firms throughout the country, specifically in Colorado and Virginia. She is a member of the Paralegal Association of NH, National Federation of Paralegal Associations and American Bar Association. When she is not in the office, she enjoys working outside in her yard.

## Meet Tom



**Tom Jarvis**  
Intake & Referral Specialist  
603.715.3212 - [tjarvis@nhbar.org](mailto:tjarvis@nhbar.org)

Tom Jarvis is working part-time as an Intake & Referral Specialist. He previously worked as a paralegal in run-off insurance and reinsurance, assisting with asbestos, hazardous waste, and toxic tort litigation. Outside of the office, he is an award-winning suspense novelist and a rock musician. He is also an avid practitioner of taekwondo and hapkido.

### Are You Handling a Class Action? If so, let us know!

We want to be able to direct clients to Panel Members who are specifically handling the cases they request referrals for. If we know about your class action, we can pass the information on to the client.

### LRS Panel Member Manual

A new panel member manual is available online at the NHBA website (log-in required) in the Member Dashboard. We encourage you to print it out to make it available to staff who might have questions regarding LRS policies and procedures. Of course, staff should feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns at any time.

### Seeking Guest Bloggers

Whether your blog is personal or professional, we are always looking for great content to share with our followers on our various social networks. Submit articles you'd like to share to [svermacy@nhbar.org](mailto:svermacy@nhbar.org). We will give you the appropriate credit and a link back to your website.

