

Avvo Legal Services Walk-Through

“Access to justice” is a widely acknowledged problem. With only 12% of small businesses hiring lawyers to address legal problems, and nearly 70% of civil defendants choosing to represent themselves pro se, there’s little question that the legal profession has a great deal of work to do in order to rise to the challenge of making access to legal services easy and predictable. Avvo Legal Services is a program designed to solve this problem. Avvo’s belief is that by offering a marketplace of easy-to-understand, fixed-price legal services – all fulfilled by local attorneys – the consumers and small businesses in this latent market can start getting the legal help they need. And that’s a good thing for consumers and lawyers alike.

Regarding the Rules of Professional Conduct

We’ve built Avvo Legal Services with an eye to the Rules of Professional Conduct – but with an important caveat: we have not done so simply focusing on technical compliance, but rather by looking always to the consumer- and client-protective purpose of the RPCs, and building our service to be maximally client-friendly. Please note that while this walk-through doesn't include the First Amendment / antitrust law analysis supporting our position, we are happy to provide or discuss at any time.

How the Avvo Legal Services Marketplace Works

Choosing Services

Avvo makes available a variety of fixed-price, unbundled legal services. Avvo is not the provider of these services, but rather the facilitator of a marketplace through which local attorneys can serve more clients.

The screenshot shows the Avvo Legal Services website. At the top left, there is a breadcrumb trail: "Home > Legal services". The main heading is "Avvo Legal Services" in a large, bold, black font. Below the heading is a sub-heading: "Get the legal help you need, at a fixed price. No hidden fees or long-term commitment." Below this are three icons with text: a document icon with "Choose your service", a briefcase icon with "Select your lawyer", and a hand icon with "Satisfaction guaranteed". A blue downward-pointing chevron is centered below these icons. Below the chevron are three service categories, each with a background image, a title, a description, and a "See details" button:

- Business**: Starting a business, running a business, contracts and agreements, employment and labor.
- Family**: Divorce, separation, child custody, prenuptials.
- Immigration**: Citizenship, naturalization, green card, permanent residency.

Any attorneys who meet Avvo’s criteria¹ may participate in offering these services. Attorneys can sign up to provide any services (on a service-by-service basis) offered within their licensed state and any practice area included in their Avvo profile. Thus, for example, an attorney whose profile indicates they practice 50% Family law and 50% estate planning could offer Avvo Legal Services in those practice areas, but not in business or criminal law. Attorneys can toggle their service offerings “on” or “off” at any time through their Avvo dashboard. This makes it easy for participating attorneys to ensure they are only offering services they are competent to perform, and are not selling at a volume beyond what they can handle.

Avvo Dashboard Services Statements Edit my information Guides Avvo profile

✔ Your availability is set to ON
Turn your availability OFF to stop receiving texts about available sessions. This will also remove the services you offer from your Avvo profile. [Turn Off](#)

Activate the Avvo Legal Services you'd like to offer
You are eligible to offer the services below based on the practice areas you list on your Avvo profile (10% or more) and states where you are actively licensed to practice law.

Your practice areas | [Edit my practice areas](#)

- 25% Bankruptcy & Debt California
- 15% Employment & Labor California
- 25% Landlord & Tenant California
- 10% Real Estate California
- 20% Business California

Avvo advice sessions
When a client buys an advice session with the next available lawyer in your state and practice area, and you successfully claim the session, you have 15 minutes to call the client. When a client buys an advice session with you, specifically, you have 1 business day to call the client. [Read the Advisor guide >](#)

Select to activate

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> California — 15-minute Bankruptcy & Debt advice session Client payment \$39 Marketing fee \$10	Details
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> California — 15-minute Business advice session Client payment \$39 Marketing fee \$10	Details
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> California — 15-minute Real Estate advice session Client payment \$39 Marketing fee \$10	Details

Document review services
When a client buys your service, you have 1 business day to call them for their 30-minute phone call. You must review their document before the call.

Select to activate

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> California — Document review: Consulting agreement Client payment \$149 Marketing fee \$40	Details
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> California — Document review: Contractor agreement Client payment \$149 Marketing fee \$40	Details
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> California — Document review: Vendor agreement Client payment \$199 Marketing fee \$50	Details

Additional legal services
When a client buys your service, you have 1 business day to call your new client for an introductory phone call. Use the call to confirm the client is a good fit for the service and your practice. If so, proceed working with the client to complete the service. If not, decline by text message, or by emailing services@avvo.com with the service name and client name.

Select to activate

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> California — Start a single-member LLC Client payment \$595 Marketing fee \$125	Details
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> California — Form an S Corp or C Corp Client payment \$995 Marketing fee \$200	Details
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> California — Create a business contract Client payment \$399 Marketing fee \$80	Details

¹ At present these criteria include a minimum Avvo Rating, minimum client review score, and a licensing record clean of public disciplinary sanctions.

Potential clients can access the available services in a variety of ways. The primary method is through Avvo’s marketplace pages (found at <https://www.avvo.com/legal-services>), but services can also be accessed directly from the profile pages of participating lawyers, or – for Avvo’s 15-minute paid consultation product – by having Avvo connect the buyer with the first available attorney in their practice area.²

Importantly, at no point in this process is Avvo recommending or referring a lawyer to a potential client. We are simply facilitating a marketplace where consumers can choose amongst all of the participating providers. Or they can simply toggle over to our directory – which features virtually every licensed attorney in the U.S. – and reach out to discuss full-scope representation with any attorney they choose.

Buying Services

To purchase the chosen service, the potential client enters some basic details of their legal issue, their phone number and credit card information. The form that potential clients complete on Avvo indicates the fact that the legal services provided are limited in scope, and specifies what is included in a package, and what is not. We also encourage attorneys to clearly explain the parameters of the services being provided, and to provide any additional information that may help clarify the scope of the attorney-client relationship. This is the statement users see prior to completing the Avvo Legal Services sign-up form:

Important information

- **Terms of use**—By clicking the “Agree and pay” button, you verify you have read and agree to Avvo’s [terms of use](#).
- **Satisfaction guarantee**—If you don’t get the help you need, just contact us at services@avvo.com within 2 days of your service.
- **Additional legal services**—If you want additional legal services beyond the purchased service, you can make arrangements directly with the attorney.
- **Attorney-client relationship**—Once your phone call begins, everything you discuss is protected by attorney-client privilege, meaning what you share is confidential; this relationship does not exist until your call takes place.
- **Representation**—The attorney-client relationship may not be formed if the attorney is unable to help you. This can happen if the lawyer feels they are not qualified to answer your questions or if there’s a conflict of interest.
- **Representation agreement**—For some legal services, the attorney could require that you sign a representation agreement before proceeding with the service.
- **Attorney advertising**—Attorneys participating in Avvo Legal Services pay Avvo a marketing fee for each legal service provided.

Providing Services

Avvo provides the lawyer with the potential client’s name and the information entered about the matter, as well as a tracking phone number that rings through to the phone number entered by the potential client. The lawyer then connects with the potential client via the tracking phone number (Avvo asks that participating attorneys do so within one business day of receiving the inquiry); Avvo can track whether the call is completed, and the duration of the call. Avvo cannot listen in on the content of these calls. Most current Avvo legal services are designed to be handled in a single phone call. We encourage attorneys to do a number of things when engaging with the client on this phone call:

² In this case, Avvo sends a notification to all participating attorneys who are licensed in the user’s state and have indicated they provide the Avvo Legal Service chosen by the potential client. The potential client is connected to the first attorney to respond.

- check for conflicts in the same manner they would any potential client who contacted them in the ordinary course.
- Let the client know if the attorney has a fee agreement, and email that to the client (we encourage attorneys to create Avvo Legal Services-specific fee agreements).
- Ensure that the Avvo Legal Service purchased is appropriate for the client's needs, and if it is not to either refer them back to Avvo or up-sell the client to more advanced services or full-scope representation, provided directly by the attorney.

How the Payments Flow

Once a call of at least 8 minutes has been completed, Avvo charges the user's credit card for the full amount of the Avvo Legal Service package purchased. Avvo will refund the fee paid by a consumer if the services paid for are not delivered, or if the consumer is not satisfied. In the latter case, Avvo will make such a refund proactively, without waiting to collect the fee back from the attorney.³

At the beginning of each month, Avvo pays each participating attorney all of the legal fees generated from Avvo Legal Services in the previous month. This payment is made by ACH transfer directly into the account designated by the attorney; this can be either the attorney's trust or operating account.⁴

Once a month, Avvo charges attorneys a separate marketing fee for each service completed in the prior month. This marketing fee varies depending on the service purchased; no fee is charged for legal services calls resulting in refunds. This fee is taken by ACH transfer from the attorney's operating account.

Conclusion

We hope this walk-through is helpful in understanding the mechanics of Avvo Legal Services, and how it has been designed to meet the needs of consumers of legal services and the consumer-protective goal of the Rules of Professional Conduct.

More Questions? Contact:

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³ Under Avvo's satisfaction guarantee, Avvo will work with the client to replace the lawyer or refund their money. While Avvo may look to the attorney to refund fees to Avvo (in cases where the attorney is at fault), Avvo takes on the cost of first refunding the client's money.

⁴ We offer this optionality because the vast majority of Avvo Legal Services involve fees that are fully earned before the client's credit card is even charged. Attorneys exclusively offering such services can more cleanly and easily abide by comingling restrictions by not having such earned funds flow through their trust accounts at all.