Law Society
of British Columbia

Practice Resource

Practice Coverage checklists

The following checklist is designed to help you prepare your practice for temporary coverage by a Covering Lawyer. While it covers many key considerations, it may not address every aspect of your unique practice, so feel free to tailor it as needed. Delegating your practice can feel overwhelming, but careful planning can help ensure a smooth transition and continued excellent service for your clients.

Practice Coverage checklist for Home Lawyer

Preparing your practice for your leave

Key case and file preparation

- □ **Key files and deadlines briefed** – Provide a summary of important files, including key deadlines, limitation periods, and undertakings.
- □ **Detailed memos on each file** – Prepare a memo for each active file, outlining the current status, next steps, and client information.
- □ **Scope of work outlined** – Clearly define the covering lawyer's responsibilities, including the types of cases or matters they will handle.
- □ **List of active client files** – Provide a list of active client files, including client names, addresses, and phone numbers. Example: Use a spreadsheet or your case management software.
- □ **Contact your financial institution** – Consider whether the covering lawyer will need access to your banking information. You may wish to consult with your bank manager.
- □ **Notify your clients** – Notify your clients that someone else will be in charge of their file during your absence. Consider what consent is needed from your clients to do conflict checks – see proposed language in our model letter: notice to clients.

Access and organization of files

- □ **Open/active files** – Explain how active files are organized and where they are stored.
- □ **Closed files** – Describe the system for organizing closed files, how they're assigned numbers, and where they are stored.
- □ **Original documents** – Outline the policy on retaining original client documents, such as wills or powers of attorney. Indicate where these are stored.

- □ **Corporate records** – Share the location of corporate minute books and corporate files, if applicable.

Setting up office systems and resources

Technology and system access

- □ **Passwords** – Provide information on accessing computer systems, including passwords or who to contact for access.
- □ **Voice mail setup** – Explain how to access the office voicemail system, including codes and instructions.
- □ **Calendaring system** – Provide instructions on using the firm's calendar system to track hearings, trials, closings, or other important dates.
- □ **File management systems** – Arrange access to document management, billing systems, and email. Offer training if needed.

Financial systems

- □ **Accounts payable** – Provide a list of creditors and instructions for paying bills.
- □ **Banking information** – Share the bank name, address, account signers, and account numbers for all office accounts.
- □ **Trust accounting** – If you use a trust account, ensure that the covering lawyer is added as a signatory. If you use an electronic funds transfer platform, ensure that the covering lawyer has access.
- □ **Safe deposit box** – Explain where the safe deposit box is located and how to access it.
- □ **Billing and expenses** – Outline how the covering lawyer will submit invoices for expenses and how they will be reimbursed.

Office operations and support

Policies and procedures

- □ **Office policies** – Provide copies of relevant policies, including confidentiality and security procedures.
- □ **Emergency contacts** – Share an emergency contact list with names, roles, and phone numbers

Support staff

- □ **Introductions** – Introduce support staff and provide their contact information.

- ☐ **Roles and responsibilities** – Clarify the roles of staff members and the level of supervision expected. Example: "The receptionist will manage client intake but needs oversight for scheduling court dates."

Preparing the Covering Lawyer for success

Orientation and communication

- ☐ **Orientation session** – Schedule time to review key cases, systems, and procedures with the covering lawyer.
- ☐ **Communication protocols** – Agree on how and when to communicate, including what constitutes an urgent issue. Example: Provide an alternative contact if you will be unavailable.

Resources and insurance

- ☐ **Office equipment** – Confirm the availability of equipment like printers, phones, and computers.
- ☐ **Insurance details** – Provide copies of business and personal insurance policies, along with broker contact information.

Final checklist for readiness

- ☐ **Trust account signing authority** – Arrange for the necessary permissions if the covering lawyer will handle trust accounts.
- ☐ **Security protocols** – Explain security measures for the office and files.
- ☐ **Compensation and payment setup** – Confirm how and when payment for the covering lawyer's services will occur.

Practice Coverage checklist for Covering Lawyer

Setting up your profile

- ☐ **Insurance confirmed –** Ensure that your professional liability insurance is current and up to date. Be prepared to show proof of coverage.
- ☐ **References ready –** Have a list of references available for the home lawyer to review, if requested.
- ☐ **Availability updated –** Confirm that your schedule has been updated on your profile in the Practice Coverage Network, consider if you have any flexibility for extensions if needed.

Agreeing on the contract terms

- ☐ **Office space confirmed –** Clarify where you'll be working (on-site, remote, or hybrid) and arrange any necessary equipment.
- ☐ **Resources and support –** Confirm what resources (administrative support, office supplies, etc.) will be available to you.
- ☐ **Supervisory role established** (if applicable) **–** Clarify any responsibilities for supervising staff and the extent of this role.
- ☐ **Client communication plan –** Agree on a plan for handling client communications and whether you will be keeping the home lawyer informed.
- ☐ **Contract terms understood –** Review the contract terms, including termination, scope of work, and confidentiality expectations.

Preparing to take over

- ☐ **Orientation with home lawyer –** Schedule a meeting with the home lawyer to review key cases, deadlines, and client information.
- ☐ **Accommodation arranged** (if needed) **–** Ensure your accommodation is sorted if the contract requires temporary relocation.
- ☐ **Establish communication protocols –** Agree on how, when and if you'll communicate with the home lawyer. Determine what constitutes an urgent issue and who you can contact if you are unable to reach the home lawyer.
- ☐ **Billing and payment setup –** Confirm how and when you will submit invoices, and clarify any agreed-upon terms for payment. What is the protocol for billing clients in the home lawyer's absence?
- ☐ **Conflicts check –** Complete a conflict-of-interest check for the home lawyer's client list to avoid any ethical issues.
- ☐ **Access to files and systems –** Arrange for access to the firm's document management, billing, and email systems. Request training if needed.

Trust account signing authority (if applicable) **–** If you'll have trust account responsibilities, ensure authorization is documented and permissions are set up.

Questions

If you have questions about this resource or any other issue regarding ethics or practice management, feel welcome to [contact a practice advisor].