

## Unbundling Fact Sheet



### What is unbundling?

Unbundling refers to the practice of breaking legal representation into separate and distinct tasks. Think of unbundling as an a la carte option for legal services, where, instead of handling an entire case from start to finish, a lawyer may handle only certain parts. For instance, a lawyer may provide legal advice and prepare pleadings, while a client handles all other tasks in the case, including filing court documents and appearing at hearings.

Unbundling is also known as “limited scope representation,” “limited scope legal assistance,” “limited assistance representation” and “discrete task representation.” The terms are often used interchangeably, but all refer to the same practice. It is sometimes called “limited representation,” but this term misses the point: it is the scope of the representation that is limited, not the legal assistance.

### Who benefits from unbundling?

Unbundling has the potential to benefit lawyers, their clients and the courts. Through unbundling, lawyers have the opportunity to obtain clients who would otherwise represent themselves; lawyers reach an untapped market and generate additional income. Unbundled legal services increase collectibles and reduce the risk of malpractice. Clients benefit from the legal expertise of lawyers, while paying only for those services that they most need. Courts also stand to benefit from unbundling: unbundling clients are often better prepared for court, saving staff time and resources compared to those who self-represent with no assistance from a lawyer.

### Is unbundling ethical?

[ABA Model Rule 1.2\(c\)](#) governs unbundling. It states, “A lawyer may limit the scope of the representation if the limitation is reasonable under the circumstances and the client gives informed consent.”

To date, 41 states have adopted the Model Rule or a substantively similar rule. Nearly twenty states have adopted rules that provide additional guidance on unbundling, addressing issues related to ghostwriting, communications with opposing parties and their counsel, limited appearances and service. To see which states have adopted Model Rule 1.2(c), or have rules that provide additional guidance, [click here](#).

Unbundled services are not a short-cut or second-class services. Lawyers who unbundle must provide competent representation, and must follow all other ethical and procedural rules in their jurisdiction.

### When is unbundling appropriate?

Unbundling is not appropriate for every case or every client. The lawyer must determine if the representation is reasonable under the circumstances, and must ensure that the client fully understands the limits of the representation.

### To find out more about unbundling, check out the following ABA resources:

[Pro Se/Unbundling Resource Center](#)  
[Handbook on Limited Scope Legal Assistance](#)  
[Unbundling Training Video and Risk Management Materials](#)