NEED A LAWYER? LOOK FOR “MEETS ABA STANDARDS” LOGO

CHICAGO, June 14, 2001 – Looking for a lawyer? Start by contacting Lawyer Referral, a public service program developed by the American Bar Association, which for more than 50 years has helped consumers find lawyers who provide competent and effective legal service.

For the client seeking legal help, the Lawyer Referral logo is the legal community’s “Seal of Approval.” Only Lawyer Referral programs that have complied with the ABA’s rigorous criteria to ensure that consumers receive qualified, affordable legal advice can display the ABA’s Lawyer Referral logo, which bears the legend “Meets ABA Standards.”

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LAWYER REFERRAL, Add One

“Consumers should seek out referral services carrying this legend from the ABA to make certain they receive legal representation from highly qualified lawyers,” says John Busch, chair of the ABA’s Standing Committee on Lawyer Referral and Information Service.

State and local bar associations have more than 300 Lawyer Referral programs operating throughout the United States. “But of these 300, each of which offers qualified lawyers to handle consumers’ legal problems, only 46 offices have been certified to display the prestigious ‘Meets ABA Standards’ logo,” says Busch.

The Lawyer Referral programs currently meeting ABA standards include services in California, Connecticut, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.

In addition to the logo, these programs also are certified to use the slogan, “Lawyer Referral: The Right Call for the Right Lawyer.”

To meet ABA standards, a Lawyer Referral service must comply with several rules, including:

- A qualified service must operate in the public interest rather than in the interest of lawyers
- Participating lawyers must be licensed in the geographical area served
- Participating lawyers must be in good standing with their state licensing authority and must maintain malpractice insurance so clients are protected
- Clients should not pay more for services obtained through the Lawyer Referral service than if they obtained the lawyer on their own.

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LAWYER REFERRAL, Add Two

In addition, the program must screen its lawyers and have “subject matter panels.” Subject matter panels, also known as “experience panels,” are established in specific areas of law. Lawyers on these panels are screened and must meet participation requirements. ABA-approved Lawyer Referral services have established these panels to assure that the clients who use the service are referred only to lawyers who regularly handle the particular kind of case for which legal help is sought.

“These approved Lawyer Referral services will not simply refer callers to the next lawyer on their list without determining that the lawyer is qualified in the field of practice in which legal services are needed,” explains Busch.

To find a Lawyer Referral service, visit the ABA’s Web site at www.abanet.org/referral. The site contains a listing of more than 300 Lawyer Referral programs throughout the country. Those that are ABA-certified are identified by the logo to the right of their name. Or consult the Yellow Pages® under Lawyer Referral.

Callers to the referral program will speak with trained staff persons who will determine the nature of the legal questions at hand and will suggest lawyers who can answer them. A caller referred to a lawyer by the service is entitled to a half-hour initial consultation at no charge or for a nominal fee, typically $30 or less, that helps to fund the local Lawyer Referral program. If additional legal services are needed, the client has the option to hire the lawyer at regular rates.

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More than 10 million inquiries for legal information are made annually through the Lawyer Referral programs. The ABA Standing Committee on Lawyer Referral and Information Service approves public service Lawyer Referral programs that meet its standards for providing consumer help and information through referrals to public agencies and lawyers qualified in particular areas of law.

The American Bar Association is the largest voluntary professional membership association in the world. With more than 400,000 members, the ABA provides law school accreditation, continuing legal education, information about the law, programs to assist lawyers and judges in their work, and initiatives to improve the legal system for the public.