

**AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION
LAW STUDENT DIVISION**

CLIENT COUNSELING COMPETITION

CLIENT INSTRUCTIONS

On behalf of the participants, the American Bar Association, and everyone involved with the Client Counseling Competition, thank you for assisting us. We hope you will find this to be a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

Please review the following information before the competition begins.

1. **BASIC FORMAT OF THE COMPETITION.** The American Bar Association's Client Counseling Competition simulates a law office consultation in which law students, acting as lawyers, are presented with a typical client matter. Your job is to play the role of the client. You will be interviewed by two or three teams, with each team consisting of two law students. The judges' job will be to decide which team did the best job in light of the standards for judging the competition. After the interviews are over, the judges will most likely ask your opinion about the teams.
2. **TIMING.** All interviews last up to forty-five (45) minutes. You will be able to take a break between each interview. Approximately fifteen to twenty (15-20) minutes after you complete your last interview, you may be asked to speak with the judges.
3. **YOUR "SCRIPT" (CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION FOR CLIENTS AND JUDGES).** Each team is provided with a consultation memorandum that contains information that you have supposedly told their secretary when you made the appointment to see them. This information is all the student lawyers have. In contrast, you and the judges will be provided with a "script" that details your background, personality, and possible legal problem. The team members do not see this script.
4. **PLAYING YOUR ROLE.** Prior to the competition, you should become thoroughly familiar with your client role as described in the script. In the end, your consistency and familiarity with the client role are the keys to making the competition successful. Within the framework of the script, it is entirely up to you how you will play the part. However, the profile has been written with certain facts to reach certain goals, so it's important that you stick to the profile.

It is crucial that you act your part in the same way with each team. If you act differently with each team, it will be difficult to evaluate which team did the best job. If you do one thing with the first team, you must do the same thing for the

other teams (even if it varies from the information or directions in your script). Thus, if you make up certain facts for the first team, use those facts for later teams. Likewise, you should be as cooperative or uncooperative with the second and third teams as you are with the first.

On the other hand, you must play your role consistent with what is asked of you by the students. If one team is asking questions very much different from what another asks, you must respond to the agenda set by the students. Therefore, each interview may in fact be different from the next. But the difference should be a product of the behavior of the student competitors, not you. **Be sure to guard against the natural tendency to volunteer more information to later teams (as you become more familiar with the role and the questions) than to the first team.**

Please do not review your profile between interviews because it is likely to result in your changing how you play the role for those interviews that come afterwards.

5. **CONFIDENTIALITY.** The script that you will receive is confidential. If you take it with you to the interview, make sure that you keep it with you at all times. **Do not discuss the problem between rounds with any team, even if the team has already competed. In fact, you must avoid even casual conversation with all teams until the competition has ended.**
6. **COMMUNICATING WITH JUDGES.** After all teams have performed and prior to making a decision, it is recommended (but not required) that the judges consult with the client. They may ask for your impressions, feelings, or reactions to the various teams. Remember that you do not have a vote in determining the winning team. To avoid the appearance of impropriety, once the round has begun the judges shall not communicate with the client until after all teams have performed.
7. **INABILITY TO PARTICIPATE ON THE DAY OF THE COMPETITION.** Please remember that a large number of students and lawyers (as judges) are depending on you. If for some reason you are unable to fulfill your commitment, please find a suitable replacement client and give your materials to that person. **Failure to play your role causes serious disruptions.** In the event that you will be unable to play your role, contact the school as soon as you know that you will not be able to participate.

How to be a good client

- Know your role well enough that you can be that person
- Be consistent
- Don't divulge all your facts at the beginning of the conversation
- Remember this is the student lawyers' chance to show what they can do. Remember that this about them.
- Don't go off script.