The State Bar of Michigan Modest Means Program

The Bar’s Modest Means Program ("MMP") is a reduced-fee referral panel operating through the SBM Pilot Referral Service and is designed to make legal services available to lower and moderate income people that may be ineligible for legal aid programs.

Further information about the MMP, including eligibility requirements and attorney rates, is available online at http://www.michbar.org/programs/layyerreferral_panel/MMP

Permissible Fees

- **Initial Consultation/Referral Fee**: Before making a referral, potential clients will pay a $25 referral fee, which covers the initial 25 minute attorney consultation, as well as the cost of program administration.

- **Hourly Rates**: Panelists may charge no more than $75.00 an hour for legal services billed on an hourly basis.

- **Retainer Maximum**: The initial retainer may not exceed 10 hours, i.e. 10 hours @ $75.00 per hour = $750.00, but excluding costs and fees. If the amount of work will likely exceed this cap, the attorney will promptly notify the client and MMP staff. The attorney and client will agree upon a plan for moving forward, how to reduce costs, and method of payment, which will be detailed in an additional retainer agreement that the attorney and client must sign. No costs or fees above the initial retainer may accrue unless an additional retainer agreement is first executed.

- **Fixed-Fee Services**: Services under the MMP Bankruptcy panel are provided on a fixed-fee basis. Providers will charge no more than $500 fee for the preparation and filing of a Chapter 7 bankruptcy. This fee does not include the cost of filing fees or any adversarial or contested proceedings.

- **Court or Ancillary Fees**: The maximum retainer caps and fixed-fee arrangements do not apply to the court fees, such as filing, motion, or other court costs, or to ancillary fees, such as witness, expert, deposition and interpreter fees so long as such fees have been discussed and approved in advance of the expenses being incurred. The attorney should notify the client of court fees that the court may waive and when appropriate, assist the client in preparing the waiver request.

Client Eligibility

- The MMP is generally available to clients with an income at or below 250% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines as posted annually on the federal register, based on household income and size, bank accounts and other assets will be taken into consideration.

- Clients will complete an application through the SBM LKS website, and an initial eligibility determination will be made based on income and the type of legal issue.

- Initial eligibility is determined electronically by the intake form. The eligibility determination will be made by the attorney at the initial consultation. The attorney may request income and asset verification such as pay stubs, tax returns, notice of social security benefits, or other relevant documentation. If the attorney determines the client ineligible for the program due to income or assets, the client may choose to hire the attorney at a higher rate. If the attorney determines the client ineligible, written notice must be provided to the MMP.

- A client who disagrees with an attorney’s eligibility determination may seek review with the MMP but great weight is given to the attorney’s determination.

- If the client’s financial status changes significantly during the course of representation, the attorney may provide future legal services at their normal billing rate, after providing notice to MMP staff.