

**State Capital Group**  
**Mid-Winter Meeting**  
**March 22, 2014**

**Delivering on Our Promises: Developing and Implementing Meaningful  
Client Service Standards**

- I. Introduction and Rationale for the Adoption of the Standards – Thad Morgan**
  - A. Assistance in marketing our services to clients**
    - 1. Competition is the large multi-national firms**
  - B. Provision of quality services to other Member Firms**
  - C. Improve the quality of services to existing clients**
- II. What are current policies of other networks and SCG member firms – Tom West**
- III. What is current policy of SCG and Should it be revised – Beth Clyne**
  - A. Should SCG Member firms be required to agree to comply with the standards?**
  - B. Should SCG Member firms be regularly reviewed for compliance with standards**
    - 1. By an Internal SCG Committee**
    - 2. By Clients**
  - C. Imposition of a remedy for non-compliance**
  - D. Update of policy regarding technology requirements and e-billing**
  - E. Dissemination of Policy internally and externally?**



## **CRITERIA FOR MEMBERSHIP AND STANDARDS OF MEMBER LAW FIRMS**

**State Capital Group is an association of independent law firms located in or near all 50 U.S. state capitals and in capital cities and commercial centers around the world. State Capital Group member firms render legal services to their respective clients on an individual and separate basis and are not affiliated for the joint practice of law.**

State Capital Group member firms are recognized for their legal expertise, their local market knowledge within their respective jurisdictions, and the quality of their client service. State Capital Group seeks to facilitate communications between its members and help them better serve the needs of their clients.

Membership in State Capital Group is non-exclusive and member firms are not required to refer clients in need of legal services in another jurisdiction to another member firm. When this occurs, however, the referring firm is entitled to know that the receiving firm will proceed in the best interest of the client. Accordingly, in selecting firms for membership, State Capital Group invites only those firms that demonstrate the desire to constantly improve their level of client service and strive to achieve the goals set by such client services as:

### **1. Promptly responding to requests from member firms and clients.**

Telephone messages and correspondence should be returned as soon as possible, preferably within twenty-four hours.

Member firms should employ English-speaking secretaries and receptionists and have after-hours voice mail and message service in English.

Member firms should utilize appropriate technology to ensure accessibility via ordinary telecommunication channels (e.g., fax, email, etc.). Member firms should be in a position to accept, edit and deliver electronic content in standard formats and should take appropriate security measures to prevent unauthorized access.

Firms in smaller jurisdictions that close their offices for annual leave should send a notice to all State Capital Group member firms with adequate information about the availability of their services.

### **2. Keeping clients informed of the status of each matter.**

Member firms should discuss the client's requirements for status reporting, including frequency and format, at the beginning of the relationship.

If a referral is received from a State Capital Group firm, the receiving firm should contact the referring attorney with a general update on the status of the matter and indicate the name of the attorney who will handle the matter.

### **3. Entering into an engagement letter with the client.**

There should be an engagement letter between the firm and the client. Matters that may be addressed include the following: the scope of the engagement; the role of inside and outside attorneys; the process of engagement for new work; the responsible/lead attorney; the persons qualified to handle matters; objectives and measurements; communication (frequency and format); compensation; and billing matters.

*State Capital Group member firms practice independently and not in a relationship for the joint practice of law.*

If a member firm receives a referral from another member firm, billing arrangements should be agreed upon by the client and the receiving firm. Absent agreement to the contrary, the referring firm will have no responsibility for payment of the receiving firm's fees.

**4. Issuing bills that are timely, clear and easy to understand.**

Bills should be sent in a timely manner. Charges and expenses should be explained in detail. Billing problems or questions should be resolved promptly.

**5. Providing other State Capital Group firms, without charge, basic background information regarding a potential referral or client.**

If a State Capital Group member inquires of another member firm about a potential client referral, the latter should provide to the inquiring firm, without charge, basic information such as cost and time estimates and conflict checks.

**6. Providing assistance to member firms in finding appropriate legal services.**

Member firms should be willing to provide assistance to another member firm in locating another appropriate and qualified law firm in its jurisdiction when the receiving firm has a conflict that would prohibit it from accepting the case or when the potential matter does not fall within an area of expertise of the firm.

**7. Disclosing professional indemnity insurance coverage.**

If requested, a member firm receiving a referral from another member firm should be willing to disclose to the potential client information about its professional indemnity insurance coverage.

To enhance communications and better serve individual clients, member firms should encourage sufficient numbers of English-speaking attorneys to participate in State Capital Group activities so that an appropriate contact in various practice areas can be established.

In the event that a member firm fails to meet these standards, the senior lawyer involved in the matter should be notified. If the issue remains unresolved, the firm's primary contact/voting representative or the CEO/Executive Director of State Capital Group should be notified.

## II. Current Policies of Other Networks and SCG Member Firms

### A. Rapid Response Time

1. Contact person available by phone or email seven days/week
2. Alternative contact person made available when the contact person is not
3. Response to request for assistance made w/in 24 hrs and timetable set for providing the assistance requested
4. Viable alternative offered if firm cannot assist

### B. Technology

1. Compatible with that used generally by the legal industry
2. Websites up to date regarding firm personnel and firm capabilities
3. Technology capable of providing rapid conflict checks
4. PDAs
5. Individual attorney email addresses
6. Electronic billing if requested
7. Voicemail with English language prompts before and after normal business hours

### C. Emergency Plan

1. For preserving and rebuilding electronic databases
2. For establishing contact with attorneys and staff

### D. Client Communication

1. Written engagement letters
2. Fee estimates upon request
3. Consideration of alternative fee arrangements upon request
4. Timely bills; detailed bills upon request
5. Discussions with client of deviations from project scope or fee estimates as promptly as possible
6. Status reports
7. English speaking receptionists and operators
8. Up to date list of firm personnel who speak and read languages in addition to the local language and English

### E. Staffing

1. Avoid unnecessary staffing
2. Primary and back up staffing
3. Avoid unnecessary changes in staffing