



Vermont Bar Association

Modest Means Program

What it is:

The Modest Means Program (MMP) is a reduced-fee attorney panel designed to make legal services accessible to lower and moderate income people who have too much income to be eligible for Vermont Legal Aid, but still not enough to afford full attorney's fees. Clients are eligible for the Modest Means Program if their income is at or below 250% of the federal poverty level—under \$49,600 for a family of 4.

We are partnering with Vermont Legal Aid on this project. Possible clients will enter financial information into VLA's on-line intake system. If they meet the criteria for the Modest Means Panel—up to 250% of federal poverty level—they will be redirected to the VBA's on-line Modest Means Program intake system. When you receive a referral through the Modest Means Program, this client meets the criteria for a reduced fee; however clients will be advised that you, as receiving attorney, will ask them for proof of household income.

Benefits to Participants:

- *Potentially increasing business while serving lower income clients;*
- *Learn new skills and help build your client base;*
- *Receiving some pay for legal work clients would otherwise attempt to do themselves;*
- *Assisting the court by reducing the number of pro se litigants;*
- *Provide public service and help close the access to justice gap;*
- *Receiving clients pre-screened for need;*
- *Membership on the Modest Means Program is FREE. There is no annual fee, and no assessment against fees that you collect.*

Fee Structure Recommendations:

- *We ask that you inform clients that they will be charged not more than \$25 for the first thirty minutes of their initial consultation with you. After that, you will charge not more \$75.00 per hour.*
- *We also ask that you eliminate or reduce your usual retainer, or provide for retainer payment plans.*
- *We also ask that you explore with your modest means client options such as unbundled legal services to better enable them to afford legal work, a flat rate, or monthly installment payments to better enable them to afford your legal work.*

Eligibility:

- *Must be a Vermont licensed attorney in good standing with the Vermont Supreme Court;*
- *Must be a member of the Vermont Bar Association;*
- *Must maintain professional liability insurance coverage- \$100,000 minimum.*

Additional Considerations:

- *We ask that you refer back to the Modest Means Program any client with whom you have a conflict of interest.*
- *We ask that you notify VBA Staff if you are unable to accept referrals for a period of time due to vacation, leave of absence, heavy caseload or any other reason.*
- *We ask that you respond to Modest Means Program reporting requests in a timely manner to track the program's successes.*