

You advise that two partners in your firm wish to start a lawyer referral system with the name, “Lawline”. The partners intend to advertise in the yellow pages for the referral line and set up a separate phone line within the firm. The line would be answered “Lawline” and the callers would not know they were calling your firm. Other attorneys outside your firm would be solicited to join and would pay a monthly fee to be a part of the service. Attorneys within your firm would also receive referrals.

You wish to know whether this arrangement will present any ethical dilemmas.

Lawyer referral services must comply with Canon 2 of the Code of Professional Responsibility. The practice of listing the referral service under the yellow pages, setting up a separate phone line in the law firm and not having potential clients aware of the law firm, is deceptive to the public and therefore violative of Canon 2.

The Committee urges you to review Canon 2 and ensure that your service is in compliance with these code provisions.

The Committee refers you to LE Op. 738, LE Op. 910 and LE Op. 926 for further guidance.

Committee Opinion  
January 7, 1988