

The Options of Legal Plans

A prepaid legal plan is a system based on the payment in advance of a set fee to defray the cost of providing future legal services to the members enrolled in the system. They differ in cost, scope of legal coverage provided and how the legal services are provided. This article looks at the various types of prepaid legal plans available in the United States and how to enroll into them.

An individual prepaid legal plan is readily available to the general public. There are two types of personal plans: access and comprehensive. An access prepaid legal plan is the most fundamental plan. It is intended to give easy access to a lawyer and a set of simple legal services for a low cost. Basic services provided include unlimited toll-free telephone access to your attorney for discussion and advice, letters written by the lawyer on your behalf, brief office consultation and the drafting or review of basic legal documents.

Complicated legal issues not covered will be subject to an hourly or flat rate negotiable with your provider

The comprehensive plan delves beyond basic legal services, to offer more complex and comprehensive coverage for a premium cost. Commonly, all the benefits of an access plan are provided at no cost to you, plus a broader range of services like drafting complicated legal documents, negotiations with adverse parties, and legal representation in court cases like divorce and child custody. They also cover all the costs associated with legal litigation. Comprehensive plans typically start at \$300 for a year and are most advantageous for middle-class families.

A group legal plan is usually sponsored by an organization as a fringe benefit to its members. The lawyer or law firm contracted provides free or low-cost legal aid to all members of the sponsoring organization. Employers, labor unions and even colleges and universities are now increasingly offering group legal plans to augment the value of their benefits package and decrease the cost of administrative burden. Law firms are contracted to provide participating members telephone and office consultation for their most frequently required legal matters. These usually include preparation of wills and trusts, document preparation and review, debt and real estate matters and family law.

Additional legal coverage can be contracted based on a fee schedule negotiable between the plan sponsor and provider, and publicized to participating members.