

2025
ANDERSON CENTER
ABA CLIENT COUNSELING COMPETITION

Dates of Competition: October 29, 30, November 4, 6

This Year's Topic: Employment Law

OVERVIEW OF THE COMPETITION

Teams receive a short memorandum presenting a client matter. Teams then must interview an actor playing the role of the client and reflect on the effectiveness of the interview. Teams are responsible for keeping time. During the interview, the team should discuss confidentiality and fees, elicit facts, outline the client's problem, and advise the client about options for proceeding. After the client leaves the room, the team should evaluate the interview and discuss their plan of action for handling the client's hypothetical situation. Finally, the judges offer the team feedback on their interviewing and counseling skills.

FEE SCHEDULE, STANDARDS FOR JUDGING, AND ROOM ASSIGNMENTS

The Fee Schedule you should use for the competition and the categories the judges will consider are explained in more detail at the end of this document. All rounds will be held in the law building. Team rooms and time assignments will be emailed to all participants by no later than **Wednesday, October 15**.

PRELIMINARY ROUNDS OF COMPETITION

The **Preliminary Rounds** for will take place from 6:30 – 9:30 pm as follows:

Wednesday / October 29

Thursday / October 30

Each team will compete in one time slot on **ONE** of these nights. (Example: Thursday, October 30, at 7:30.) Times will be 6:30 or 7:30 or 8:30 pm. You must check in **15 minutes prior** to your assigned time. Teams are emailed a short memorandum about the client matter the morning of the day they are assigned to compete.

SEMIFINAL ROUNDS OF COMPETITION

The **Semifinal Rounds** for will take place on **Tuesday, November 4**, from 6:30 – 9:30 pm. Teams will be assigned a time of 6:30 or 7:30 or 8:30 pm. You must check in **15 minutes prior** to your assigned time. Teams are emailed a short memorandum about the client matter the morning of the day they are assigned to compete.

FINAL ROUNDS OF THE COMPETITION

The **Final Round** for all advancing teams will take place on **Thursday, November 6**, from 6:30 – 9:30 pm. Teams will be assigned a time of 6:30 or 7:15 or 8:00 pm. You must check in **15 minutes prior** to your assigned time. Teams are emailed a short memorandum about the client matter the morning of the day they are assigned to compete.

Results from each completed round will be announced via email to the law community the following morning. The top teams who advance to the Semifinal and/or Final Rounds of competition will be emailed room and time assignments.

SUGGESTED PREPARATION

- **Meet with your partner to develop a plan** for the interview. For instance, decide who will discuss fees and who will discuss confidentiality.
- You may **do some general research** in the area of law that is the topic of this year's competition, *but you need not be an expert.*
- **Attend a skills workshop!** The workshops are 90 minutes (total) in length, divided into two 45-minute segments – for 45 minutes you will work with the CC Board to develop skills and strategies for the upcoming competition, and the other 45 minutes you will work with Dr. Vincent Carlson from the Theatre Department who will help students work on physical and vocal skills, including presence and confidence.
- **Review prior winning teams** competing at the higher/highest levels of competition! You may search for them on the internet ("Client Counseling Competition"). We also suggest viewing winning Illinois teams.

Championship Teams

- [2018 World Competition Championship](#)
Julie Holdener & Ben Paulson – World Champions
Coach: Professor James Noonan
 - [2016 ABA National Finals](#)
Betsy Farrington & Libby Martin – Runners Up/2nd Place (first team on video)
Coach: Professor James Noonan
 - [2010 World Competition Championship](#)
James Noonan & Steve Rogers – Bronze Medalists
Coach: Professor George Bell
 - [2010 ABA National Finals](#)
James Noonan & Steve Rogers – National Champions
Coach: Professor George Bell
(1:24:24 on the video)
- As you prepare, **keep in mind the categories the judges will be considering:** Working Atmosphere (including discussion of confidentiality and fees); Description of the Problem; Client's Goals and Expectations; Problem Analysis; Moral and Ethical Issues; Alternative Courses of Action; Client's Informed Choice; Effective Conclusion; Teamwork; Post-Interview Reflection; Overall Effectiveness. These categories are explained in more detail at the end of this document.

These links can also be found on the Client Counseling Competition website under the [Videos Tab](#).

A FEW OTHER POINTS

- Professional dress and a professional attitude are **required**.
- To be fair to all teams, confidential client information must be confidential – ***even after your interview is over.***

- **IF YOU SIGNED UP TO COMPETE, YOU MUST HONOR YOUR COMMITMENT AND SHOW UP!** If it's less than 72 hours prior to the competition and something comes up and you lose your partner, or your team must back out, **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR FINDING A REPLACEMENT PARTNER OR TEAM and reporting the update to Director Shumard** as soon as possible. *This is a professional competition* and the school has hired actors and recruited legal and counseling professionals to donate their personal time and experience, who have already prepared for this event, to come and help you learn. Your fellow competitors are also counting on you as all rooms must have three teams in order to be fair to all participants.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Below are the names and contact information for our **Client Counseling Board Members**. These students excelled in the intraschool competition and are on the law school's Client Counseling Team which competes at ABA regional events and beyond. They are excellent resources for information. Send them an email if you have any general questions about preparing for the competition.



[Caroline Azem](#)



[Kendall Crispin](#)



[Jessica Bury](#)



[Lucas Sodaro](#)

STANDARDS FOR JUDGING

1. *Working Atmosphere:* Established the beginning of an effective professional relationship and working atmosphere and, if and when appropriate, oriented the client to the special nature of the relationship, including confidentiality, explanation of fees, responded to client's concerns, discussed mutual obligations and rights, after-hours availability, duration and plan of the consultation, etc. in a courteous, sensitive and professional manner.
2. *Description of the Problem:* Learned how the client viewed his or her situation, using a combination of listening and questioning, drawing out both information and feelings, as appropriate, to develop a reasonably complete and reliable description of the problem.
3. *Client's Goals and Expectations:* Learned the client's goals and initial expectations and modified or developed them as necessary.
4. *Problem Analysis:* Analyzed the client's problem with creativity and from both legal and non-legal perspectives, resulting in a clear and useful formulation of the problem.
5. *Substantive Law:* Accurately Articulated the applicable substantive law from their jurisdiction or identified legal issues that required more research before legal advice could be given.
6. *Moral and Ethical Issues:* Consistent with the analysis of the client's problem, developed a set of potentially effective and feasible alternatives, both legal and non-legal.

7. *Alternative Courses of Action:* Consistent with their analysis of the problem, the lawyers developed a set of potentially effective and feasible alternatives, both legal and non-legal.
8. *Client's Informed Choice:* As appropriate, assisted the client in his or her understanding of problems and solutions and in making an informed choice, taking potential legal, economic, social, and psychological consequences into account.
9. *Effective Conclusion:* Concluded the interview skillfully and left the client with a feeling of reasonable confidence and understanding, with appropriate reassurance, and with a clear sense of specific expectations and mutual obligations to follow.
10. *Teamwork:* As collaborating counselors, worked together as a team, with flexibility and an appropriate balance of participation.
11. *Post-Interview Reflection:* During the follow-up phase, gave evidence of having recognized their own and the client's feelings, the strengths and limitations of their interviewing and counseling skills, their handling of the substantive aspects of the client's problems (legal and non-legal), and provided for an effective follow-up.
12. *Overall Rating:* Synthesizing the above criteria, including how effectively the team used its time, how do you rate the client counseling team?

JUDGING SCALE

Judges will use the following scale to assess the performance of the team on each of the standards above. Judges may or may not provide additional written feedback.

a = highly effective **b** = effective **c** = somewhat effective **d** = ineffective **e** = very ineffective

FEE SCHEDULE

We have decided to adopt a uniform fee schedule for all contestants so that no team will suffer because a judge disagrees with its decision as to how much to charge. All judges and competitors will be given this schedule:

1. The initial interview with both counsel will be billed a flat rate of \$100.00 total. Further work will be billed at \$200.00 per hour of either lawyer's time.
2. Fees will be waived or suitably reduced in cases of financial hardship, either for persons of low income or for persons of ordinary income faced with very large fees.
3. Work will be done on a contingency basis in appropriate cases. If it is not apparent that the case in question is one in which there is a good chance of recovery, the office may require a preliminary investigation at hourly rates before entering into a contingent fee arrangement.
4. The office may require the client to pay a retainer prior to commencing any further legal services. [The amount of retainer requested, if any, will not be considered for judging purposes, as standard amounts may vary significantly across regions. However, if a retainer is requested, the attorneys should be able to explain how it will be applied against the fees incurred.]