

Tips and To Dos for Opening a Law Office in South Carolina

NOTIFICATIONS/REGISTRATIONS

- ☐ Provide SC Supreme Court with correct contact info by logging into your AIS (Attorney Information System) account <https://ais.sccourts.org>. [SCACR 410\(g\)](#) mandates that lawyers update their contact information within five (5) days of any change. The South Carolina Bar, the Bar Foundation, and the Commission on CLE are automatically notified when you update your status and address in the AIS system. For assistance using AIS, call (855)235-2500 or email aissupport@sccourts.org.) While you're at sccourts.org, sign up for email notifications to stay informed of Court news.
- ☐ Choose a firm name. In AIS, if your firm is new, the firm name will not appear in the drop-down list in AIS and you must submit it to be added. In SC, the Bar does not need to approve your firm name but it should comply with the South Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct for firm names. ([SCRPC 7.5](#))
- ☐ Incorporate with SC Secretary of State (forms online). You do not need to file a copy with the SC Bar.
- ☐ Visit FinCEN www.fincen.gov/boi for information about filing beneficial ownership information
- ☐ Choose an office location. If sharing an office, consult ethics rules and opinions.
- ☐ Obtain city and/or county business license for your office
- ☐ Rent Post Office Box. It offers better security for receiving mail.
- ☐ Apply to be a Notary <https://sos.sc.gov/services-and-filings/notaries>
- ☐ Business Cards
- ☐ Website and domain name
- ☐ Join the [SC Bar's Solo and Small Firm Section](#) and the Solofirm listserv to network with other small firm lawyers or join a practice area specific Bar section
- ☐ Sign up for [SC Bar Lawyer Referral Service](#) (need 2 years of legal experience)
- ☐ If you're a solo, make an agreement with another lawyer to be your emergency backup or successor. Add their name to the [Successor Registry](#) on SCBar.org or on your annual license fee statement.
- ☐ Make a list to help a successor or receiver quickly and temporarily act in your place and touch base with your backup at least annually.
- ☐ Contact the SC Bar's Practice Management Assistance Program (PMAP) with any questions you have about starting a law practice: pmmap@scbar.org

LAW OFFICE FINANCIALS

- ☐ Seek expert advice from a CPA and/or business lawyer
- ☐ Open a trust account (IOLTA) and operating/business account. SC Bar Foundation handles IOLTA <https://scbarfoundation.org/iolta/>. Their website has forms and a list of eligible banks.

- ☐ Give bank [IOLTA Enrollment Form](#) and [bank directive](#) regarding reporting insufficient funds to the ODC and keep copies (sample NSF letter <https://www.scbars.org/forms-lawyers/quicklinks/practice-management/forms/> in Forms)
- ☐ Rent safe deposit box at bank (optional)
- ☐ Apply for a firm credit card
- ☐ Order checks, deposit slips. Order different colors for operating account and trust account.
- ☐ Open a law firm credit card merchant account for client payments ([LawPay](#) discount available to Bar members). Most practice management software now includes payment processing designed for lawyer trust accounts.
- ☐ Purchase [Trust Accounting for South Carolina Lawyers](#) (2021) by Barbara M. Seymour from the SC Bar
- ☐ Consider purchasing practice management software with accounting functions.
- ☐ Review SCACR 407 ([R. 1.15 Safekeeping Property](#)), [SCACR 417](#) (Financial Recordkeeping), [SCACR 412](#) (IOLTA)

TECH/SUPPLIES

- ☐ Photocopier/High volume scanner/printer (a lease with service, toner and supplies is a customary choice for law firms)
- ☐ Shredder
- ☐ Internet Service Provider (ISP) and other utilities
- ☐ Phone service (most small firms choose a VoIP system for cost savings)
- ☐ Answering system, answering service, or virtual receptionist
- ☐ Domain name and email address (subscription Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace includes email hosting)
- ☐ Postage scale, lease postage meter or use online mail service
- ☐ Consider practice management software such as Clio, Smokeball, Practice Panther, MyCase or CosmoLex. Be sure to ask if there's a discount for SC Bar members.

RESEARCH

- ☐ [vLex Fastcase legal research](#): state and federal law *free* for Bar members. Many SC Bar digital publications are offered for sale in vLex Fastcase.
- ☐ SC Bar Book Store for SC law books <https://cle.scbars.org/>

INSURANCE PROTECTION

- ☐ Health, Dental, Life and Disability insurance <https://siconsultants.com/south-carolina-bar/>
- ☐ [Professional \(malpractice\) liability](#)
- ☐ Cybersecurity, Business Interruption, Loss of valuable documents
- ☐ Auto insurance for business use
- ☐ Property (liability, wind, fire, earthquake, flood, etc.)