ACTIONABLE AI PRACTICAL GUIDE

Client Intake Workflow Playbook for Small Law Firms

A nine-stage system from first contact to signed agreement and matter handoff

September 23, 2026

Actionable AI | actionableai.net

Important notice

This playbook is educational and operational planning material. It is not legal advice, ethics counsel, or a substitute for review of the rules and guidance that apply to your firm.

The default reader is a five to twenty lawyer Florida firm with one intake hub, one person who owns the queue, and a lawyer who makes legal and retention decisions. Change the workflow for your jurisdiction, practice areas, staffing, insurance requirements, and technology.

Product names, contract terms, security controls, data handling, and integrations change. Verify them before adoption. Do not place client or prospective client information in a tool until the firm has approved the exact product, account type, settings, data path, and use case.

Florida Bar Ethics Opinion 24-1 is an advisory opinion and is not binding. ABA Formal Opinion 512 is general Model Rules guidance. The rules and authorities in each jurisdiction where the firm practices control.

What this playbook includes

- A nine-stage workflow with a named owner, handoff, lawyer gate, and measurable signal at every stage.
- Fourteen reusable prompt templates for approved systems.
- Checklists for intake capture, conflict search documentation, consultation preparation, engagement, declination, and handoff.
- A sample one page internal policy for AI assisted intake.
- A thirty day rollout plan that starts with a mapped process and uses fictional test matters before live use.

Fix the front door before buying another tool

Most intake failures are ordinary. A call is not logged. A web form reaches an inbox nobody owns. A referral waits for a callback. A consultation happens before the firm has enough party information to run its conflict process. A signed client has to repeat the story because the matter team never received a clean handoff.

The fix is one visible queue, written stages, named owners, and gates that stop the matter until the right person acts. AI can help summarize, draft, classify, and remind. It does not make conflict decisions, decide whether to accept a matter, give legal advice, approve an engagement agreement, or replace lawyer judgment.

The operating rule

Every lead enters one intake hub. Every record has one current stage, one owner, one next action, and one due date. Every use of AI has an approved input boundary and a human checker.

Start this week

1. Choose the system that will be the intake hub. Use a system the firm already maintains unless there is a documented reason not to.
2. Name one intake queue owner and one lawyer owner for exceptions.
3. List every entry channel and test where each one lands.
4. Define the minimum information needed before the conflict process begins. Collect no more than the firm reasonably needs at that point.
5. Set a written acknowledgment target and a separate target for substantive review. Measure current performance before changing it.
6. Pilot the workflow with fictional matters. Do not start by connecting live client data to a new automation.

The nine stages

Stage	Primary owner	Required result	Gate before moving on
1 First contact	Queue owner	Record created	Entry channel and contact data captured
2 Information gathering	Intake staff	Minimum facts collected	Required fields complete or gaps flagged
3 Conflict process	Lawyer decision	Search documented	Lawyer clears, limits, or declines
4 Communications	Intake staff	Expectations set	Message reviewed under firm rule
5 Preliminary fit	Designated reviewer	Fit decision recorded	Attorney receives exceptions
6 Scheduling	Intake staff	Consultation confirmed	Conflict and fit gates satisfied
7 Consultation	Lawyer	Decision and notes recorded	Next path selected
8 Engagement	Lawyer and billing owner	Agreement signed and payment handled	Scope and recipient verified
9 Matter handoff	Matter owner	Working team receives complete record	Opening checklist complete

Guardrails before prompts

Five rules for the whole workflow

1. Collect the minimum information needed for the current stage. An intake form is not an invitation to gather the whole case before conflict review.
2. Use only firm approved systems and account configurations. A familiar logo does not answer the contract, retention, integration, or training question.
3. Keep legal decisions with a lawyer. AI and nonlawyer staff may organize facts and prepare a record, but the designated lawyer decides conflicts, legal advice, scope, and acceptance.
4. Verify every output before it is relied on or sent. The check should match the risk of the task and the destination of the output.
5. Document the handoff. A completed action that exists only in someone's memory is not complete.

Data gate

Before any prompt, ask what data the tool will receive, where it goes, how long it remains, who can access it, whether it reaches another service, and how the firm can retrieve or delete it. If the answer is unknown, use fictional or fully de-identified test data and stop the live-data path.

Prospective client gate

Information from a person seeking representation can create duties even when the firm is not retained. Limit early collection to what the firm reasonably needs to identify the parties, screen the matter, and decide the next step. Use clear warnings approved for the firm's jurisdiction and process. Do not promise that a form submission creates representation or that every submission is privileged.

Recording and transcription gate

Do not record or transcribe a call merely because the feature is available. The firm must address applicable consent law, notice, account controls, retention, participant expectations, and the destination of the recording and transcript.

Automation gate

A draft may be automated. A legal or external action needs a defined approval step. No new workflow should send a substantive message, accept a matter, clear a conflict, change a deadline, open a matter, or transfer sensitive information without a documented owner and approval rule.

Stage 1 First contact

Outcome: Create one record before the lead becomes another inbox memory.

Owner: Intake queue owner, with backup coverage documented.

Workflow

1. Receive the call, form, email, referral, walk in, or approved chatbot handoff.
2. Create or confirm a record in the intake hub.
3. Capture the contact channel, timestamp, name, contact method, matter category, known parties, jurisdiction, urgency stated by the person, referral source, and consent or warning acknowledgments required by firm policy.
4. Send a short acknowledgment that confirms receipt, states the next step, avoids legal advice, and does not promise representation.
5. Assign the record to one owner with a due date.

Channel map

Entry channel	Where it lands	Who monitors it	Failure test
Phone	[INTAKE HUB]	[PRIMARY AND BACKUP]	Place a test call during and after business hours
Website form	[INTAKE HUB]	[PRIMARY AND BACKUP]	Submit fictional data and confirm record creation
General email	[QUEUE OR HUB]	[PRIMARY AND BACKUP]	Send a test email and confirm ownership
Referral	[INTAKE HUB]	[PRIMARY AND BACKUP]	Confirm the source and prospect are both recorded
Walk in	[INTAKE HUB]	[FRONT DESK OWNER]	Confirm the record exists before end of shift
Chatbot if approved	[INTAKE HUB]	[PRIMARY AND BACKUP]	Test identity disclosure, warnings, routing, and transcript handling

AI can help

- Draft a receipt acknowledgment from approved fields.
- Convert an approved transcript or form response into a structured draft record.
- Flag missing required fields for staff review.

Gate: A human confirms the recipient, contact details, matter category, urgency flag, warnings, and next step before any substantive communication.

Measure: Measure record creation rate by channel, time from receipt to acknowledgment, unassigned records, and failed test submissions. Set targets after measuring the baseline.

Stage 2 Information gathering

Outcome: Give the reviewer enough information to act without inviting unnecessary sensitive facts.

Owner: Intake staff, with lawyer-approved required fields by practice area.

Baseline fields

Field	Why it is collected	Required now
Name and known former names	Identity and conflict search	Firm decides
Reliable contact method	Follow up	Yes
Matter category	Routing	Yes
Known adverse or related parties	Conflict search	Yes when known
Jurisdiction and venue	Routing and fit	When relevant
Dates stated by the person	Urgency flag for lawyer review	When stated
Short factual description	Fit and preparation	Keep it limited
Referral source	Routing and relationship tracking	Firm decides
Documents offered	Plan next collection step	List only at this stage
Consent or warning acknowledgment	Document the intake process	As required by firm policy

Practice area supplements

Each practice group should approve a short supplement. Ask only questions that change routing, conflict searching, urgency review, or preparation. Put legal analysis and detailed document review after the appropriate lawyer gate.

AI can help

- Turn approved source material into a structured draft summary.
- Create a list of missing fields without filling gaps.
- Group names, entities, dates, and documents for staff confirmation.

Gate: Compare the draft to the original form, notes, or transcript. Mark every unsupported item as unknown. Do not let a fluent summary become the source record.

Measure: Measure required-field completeness, average number of follow-up contacts for missing information, and the percentage of summaries that needed material correction.

Information gathering checklist

[ ] The person received the firm's approved warning or notice at the correct point.

[ ] Only information needed for the current stage was requested.

[ ] All names and entities were confirmed for spelling.

[ ] Dates are labeled as stated by the person until verified.

[ ] Any urgency flag is routed to a lawyer, not resolved by staff or AI.

[ ] The original source remains attached or linked in the intake record, and the draft summary was checked against it.

Stage 3 Conflict process

Outcome: Document a search and obtain the required lawyer decision before a substantive consultation proceeds.

Owner: Staff may run the search. The designated lawyer makes the conflict determination.

Operational default

Run the firm's preliminary conflict process before a substantive consultation. If the firm uses a limited screening call first, define what may be discussed, what warnings apply, what information is recorded, and when the lawyer gate occurs. This is a workflow recommendation, not a universal statement of law.

Search workflow

1. Confirm the prospective client's name, former names, entities, known adverse parties, related parties, and other search terms required by firm policy.
2. Search every source named in the firm's conflict procedure, not only the newest practice-management database.
3. Record the exact terms, systems, date, person who searched, and potential matches.
4. Escalate every potential match to the designated lawyer.
5. Record the lawyer's decision, limitations, additional search instructions, and approval date.
6. Move the record forward only when the decision required by firm policy is documented.

Conflict search log

Field	Entry
Prospective client and aliases	
Adverse and related parties	
Other search terms	
Systems and sources searched	
Date and searcher	
Potential matches	
Lawyer reviewer	
Decision and limits	
Approval date	

AI can help

AI may format confirmed names and entities into a proposed search list or draft a factual search memorandum. It does not determine whether a conflict exists, whether consent is available, or whether representation may proceed.

Gate: The lawyer reviews the source record and search results, not merely the AI summary.

Measure: Measure records that reached substantive consultation without the required conflict decision, incomplete search logs, and average age of records awaiting lawyer review.

Stage 4 Client communications

Outcome: Set expectations without giving legal advice or promising representation.

Owner: Intake staff sends approved administrative messages. A lawyer reviews messages that cross the firm's legal or risk threshold.

Message sequence

Message	Trigger	Required content	Review rule
Receipt	New record	Received, next step, timing, no promise of representation	Approved template or human review
Missing information	Required field gap	Specific request, safe return method, due date	Staff review
Status	Review exceeds target	Current stage, next action, new timing	Staff review
Scheduling	Gates complete	Date, format, preparation, reschedule path	Staff review
Declination	Lawyer decision	Clear non-engagement, deadline caution approved by firm, resources if appropriate	Lawyer-approved process

Drafting rule

The source record supplies the facts. The template supplies the structure. The sender supplies judgment. AI may draft within those limits, but it must not invent the next step, change a deadline, imply confidentiality beyond the firm's approved language, or suggest that representation exists.

Gate: Confirm the recipient, matter, dates, names, attachment, link destination, promised timing, and review level before sending.

Measure: Measure overdue communications, bounced messages, wrong-recipient incidents, template exceptions, and prospect questions caused by unclear instructions.

Stage 5 Preliminary fit decision

Outcome: Decide whether the matter belongs in the firm's process before consuming attorney consultation time.

Owner: A designated reviewer applies written criteria. A lawyer decides exceptions and legal questions.

Fit screen

Question	Source	Result
Is the matter within an accepted practice area?	Firm service rules	Yes / No / Lawyer review
Is the jurisdiction accepted?	Firm service rules	Yes / No / Lawyer review

Has the required conflict process been completed?	Conflict log	Clear / Limited / Not clear
Is a stated deadline or emergency pending?	Source record	No / Lawyer review now
Does the matter meet the firm's business criteria?	Written intake criteria	Yes / No / Exception
Does the firm have capacity under its current rule?	Current capacity owner	Yes / No / Wait decision
Is more information needed before a decision?	Gap list	No / Request listed items

AI can help

AI may compare confirmed fields to written business criteria and draft an exception list. It must not score case merits, predict an outcome, infer facts, or make the retention decision.

Gate: Every decline, exception, and unclear result follows the firm's lawyer-review rule. Record the reason in internal terms that are accurate and appropriate for the file.

Measure: Measure records stalled at fit review, exceptions by reason, and decisions reversed because the source facts were wrong or incomplete.

Stage 6 Scheduling

Outcome: Book the right person, format, and preparation steps only after the required gates are complete.

Owner: Intake staff owns scheduling. The responsible lawyer owns availability and consultation scope.

Scheduling workflow

1. Confirm that the conflict and preliminary-fit decisions required by firm policy are recorded.
2. Offer only approved appointment types and durations for the matter category.
3. Confirm time zone, location or meeting link, accessibility needs, payment rule if any, and required documents.
4. Send the firm's approved confirmation and reminder sequence.
5. Create one task for missing preparation items and assign it to a person.
6. Route cancellations, no shows, and urgent rescheduling through written rules.

AI can help

- Draft a clear confirmation or reminder from approved fields.
- Summarize missing preparation items for staff review.
- Create a proposed agenda for the attorney from the intake record.

Gate: Confirm the calendar owner, recipient, date, time zone, format, link, payment instruction, attachments, and cancellation language.

Measure: Measure time from clearance to booking, scheduling corrections, no show rate, and consultations missing required preparation.

Stage 7 Consultation

Outcome: Give the lawyer a source-linked brief before the consultation and create a complete note promptly afterward.

Owner: The consulting lawyer owns the discussion, advice, decision, and final note.

Pre consultation brief

[ ] Identity and contact information confirmed.

[ ] Conflict decision and any limits visible.

[ ] Matter summary tied to the source record.

[ ] Names, entities, dates, and documents listed without invented facts.

[ ] Open questions separated from established facts.

[ ] Stated urgency flagged for lawyer analysis.

[ ] Consultation objective and expected decision listed.

Post consultation record

[ ] Participants, date, format, and duration recorded.

[ ] Facts and client objectives recorded accurately.

[ ] Advice and limitations recorded by the lawyer under firm policy.

[ ] Scope and fee discussion recorded.

[ ] Retention decision and reason recorded.

[ ] Tasks have owners and due dates.

[ ] Documents and follow-up items are listed.

AI can help

AI may turn approved notes or an approved transcript into a structured draft. The lawyer compares it to the source, corrects material omissions, and makes every legal judgment.

Gate: The lawyer approves the note and the next path: engage, decline, refer, request information, or schedule another review.

Measure: Measure briefs delivered on time, notes completed within the firm's target, material corrections to AI drafts, and next actions without owners.

Stage 8 Engagement agreement and payment

Outcome: Move an approved matter from verbal yes to a correctly scoped, signed agreement and a documented financial setup.

Owner: The responsible lawyer owns scope and agreement approval. The billing owner applies the firm's payment procedure.

Engagement workflow

1. Select the lawyer-approved template for the matter and fee arrangement.
2. Populate only confirmed fields. Mark every missing or inconsistent field for review.
3. Have the responsible lawyer verify the client, scope, exclusions, responsible lawyer, fee terms, attachments, and special provisions.
4. Verify the recipient and transmission method before sending.
5. Track signature and payment as separate statuses. Do not treat a sent agreement as a signed engagement.
6. Save the executed agreement and payment record in the firm's authoritative systems.

AI can help

AI may populate a draft from approved fields or compare a draft against a checklist. It must not choose the legal scope, fee structure, waiver, limitation, or special term.

Pre send checklist

[ ] Correct client and matter.

[ ] Correct template and version.

[ ] Scope and exclusions approved by the lawyer.

[ ] Fee terms match the lawyer's decision and applicable requirements.

[ ] All blanks and placeholders resolved.

[ ] Recipient and email address verified against the source record.

[ ] Attachments and signing fields verified.

[ ] Executed copy will return to the authoritative file.

Gate: The lawyer approves the final agreement. The system shows whether it is draft, sent, viewed, signed, and financially complete.

Measure: Measure sent-to-signed time, wrong-template events, unresolved placeholders, recipient corrections, and signed matters waiting for opening.

Stage 9 Matter handoff

Outcome: Give the working team a complete record and make the client repeat nothing the firm already knows.

Owner: The intake owner prepares the handoff. The matter owner accepts it and owns the next legal action.

Handoff packet

Component	Required content	Accepted by
Client identity	Confirmed names and contact information	Matter owner
Matter summary	Source-linked facts, objectives, and open questions	Matter owner
Conflicts	Search record, decision, limits, and approvals	Matter owner
Engagement	Executed agreement, scope, exclusions, responsible lawyer	Matter owner
Financial setup	Payment status and billing instructions	Billing owner
Deadlines	Dates stated, dates verified, calendar status, reviewer	Responsible lawyer
Documents	Received items, storage location, missing items	Matter team
Communication	What the client was told and the next promised contact	Matter owner
Tasks	Immediate actions with owners and due dates	Named owners

Acceptance checklist

[ ] Matter record exists in the authoritative system.

[ ] Executed agreement and financial status are visible.

[ ] Responsible lawyer and working team are assigned.

[ ] Dates and deadlines have a named reviewer and calendar status.

[ ] Documents are stored in the correct location.

[ ] Client received the approved welcome or next-step message.

[ ] Matter owner accepted the handoff and owns the next task.

AI can help

AI may assemble a draft handoff memorandum from approved source records and flag missing fields. The receiving lawyer verifies the summary, dates, scope, tasks, and sources.

Gate: The matter owner records acceptance and confirms the first legal task. A handoff is not complete when the sender presses send.

Measure: Measure signed matters without an accepted handoff, client repetition caused by missing information, unassigned first tasks, and deadline records awaiting lawyer verification.

Prompt library

Use these prompts only in a firm-approved system and account configuration. Replace bracketed fields. Attach or paste only information allowed by the firm's data rule. Preserve the source record. Every output is a draft until the named reviewer approves it.

Prompt 1 Receipt acknowledgment

Purpose: Draft a short administrative receipt message after a new intake record is created.

Data gate: Use only approved contact fields. Do not include detailed matter facts unless the template requires them and the channel is approved.

Prompt: Draft an email acknowledging receipt of a prospective client's inquiry. Use only these facts: [FIRM NAME], [PERSON NAME], [DATE RECEIVED], [NEXT STEP], [EXPECTED RESPONSE WINDOW], [CONTACT METHOD]. State that the firm has received the inquiry, explain the next administrative step, and say that representation has not begun unless and until the firm confirms it in writing. Do not give legal advice, assess the matter, or promise representation. Keep the body under 110 words. Mark missing facts [NEEDS REVIEW].

Verify: Recipient, next step, timing, non-engagement language, and firm-approved warnings.

Trap: A warm message can accidentally promise review, confidentiality, or representation beyond the firm's approved language.

Prompt 2 Missing information request

Purpose: Ask for specific intake fields that are necessary for the next gate.

Data gate: Do not ask the model to decide what is legally necessary. Supply the lawyer-approved missing-field list.

Prompt: Draft a concise request for missing intake information. The approved missing items are: [LIST]. The safe return method is: [METHOD]. The requested response date is: [DATE]. Explain why the firm needs each item in plain administrative language. Do not request additional facts, give legal advice, or imply representation. Mark any unclear instruction [NEEDS REVIEW].

Verify: Each requested item, the return channel, the due date, and whether the request collects more information than the current stage needs.

Trap: The model may expand the request and invite sensitive facts the firm did not intend to collect.

Prompt 3 Structured intake summary

Purpose: Turn a completed form, approved transcript, or staff notes into a reviewable summary.

Data gate: The source must be allowed in the approved tool. Redact or use fictional data during testing.

Prompt: Create a draft intake summary from [SOURCE MATERIAL]. Use these headings: Contact, Matter Category, Parties and Entities, Jurisdiction, Facts Stated by the Person, Dates Stated by the Person, Documents Mentioned, Stated Objective, Open Questions, and Source References. Use only supplied facts. Do not infer motives, legal claims, deadlines, or outcomes. Label uncertain or conflicting information [NEEDS REVIEW]. Cite the source section or timestamp for every date and party name when available.

Verify: Every name, date, entity, quotation, urgency flag, and open question against the original source.

Trap: A clean summary can hide a source conflict or turn an unverified date into a legal deadline.

Prompt 4 Conflict search term list

Purpose: Organize confirmed names and entities for the firm's search process.

Data gate: Use confirmed fields only. The output is a search aid, not a conflict decision.

Prompt: From [CONFIRMED INTAKE FIELDS], create a proposed conflict search term list grouped as prospective client, former names or aliases, adverse parties, related people, organizations, opposing counsel if known, and other firm-defined terms. Preserve spelling exactly. Identify duplicates and likely spelling variants as suggestions for staff confirmation. Do not state whether a conflict exists.

Verify: Spelling, identities, relationships, and completeness under the firm's conflict procedure.

Trap: A suggested spelling variant can belong to a different person or entity and must not silently replace the source name.

Prompt 5 Conflict search memorandum

Purpose: Format a factual record after staff completes the search and the lawyer records a decision.

Data gate: Do not paste confidential details beyond what the approved system and memorandum require.

Prompt: Draft a conflict search memorandum using only: [SEARCH TERMS], [SYSTEMS SEARCHED], [SEARCHER], [DATE], [RESULTS], [LAWYER REVIEWER], [LAWYER DECISION], and [LIMITS OR NEXT STEPS]. Separate search facts from the lawyer's decision. Do not analyze the rules or decide whether a conflict exists. Mark every missing field [NEEDS REVIEW].

Verify: Exact terms, systems, date, results, reviewer, decision, and limits against the source record.

Trap: Do not let the drafting tool convert a potential match into a legal conclusion.

Prompt 6 Preliminary fit brief

Purpose: Compare confirmed intake fields with written business criteria and show exceptions.

Data gate: Supply the criteria. Do not ask the model to invent economics, jurisdiction rules, or case-merit standards.

Prompt: Compare [CONFIRMED INTAKE FIELDS] with [FIRM PRELIMINARY FIT CRITERIA]. Create a table with criterion, source fact, result of Match / No Match / Unknown, and required reviewer. Do not assess legal merit, predict an outcome, or decide representation. Put every uncertain item in a separate Lawyer Review list.

Verify: Criteria version, source facts, exceptions, and the assigned reviewer.

Trap: A match to business criteria is not a conflict clearance or acceptance decision.

Prompt 7 Scheduling confirmation

Purpose: Draft a complete confirmation after required gates are satisfied.

Data gate: Use approved calendar and contact fields. Do not expose internal notes in the message.

Prompt: Draft a consultation confirmation using [PERSON], [DATE], [TIME], [TIME ZONE], [FORMAT OR LOCATION], [LAWYER], [PREPARATION ITEMS], [PAYMENT INSTRUCTION IF APPROVED], [CANCELLATION RULE], and [CONTACT]. State what will happen next. Do not promise representation or comment on the matter. Mark missing logistics [NEEDS REVIEW].

Verify: Recipient, time zone, link or address, lawyer, preparation, payment instruction, cancellation rule, and attachments.

Trap: Calendar errors and wrong meeting links are more common than drafting errors.

Prompt 8 Consultation reminder

Purpose: Create a short reminder that reduces avoidable no shows and missing materials.

Data gate: Use the approved scheduling record only.

Prompt: Draft a reminder for [PERSON] about the consultation on [DATE] at [TIME AND TIME ZONE] with [LAWYER]. Include [FORMAT OR LOCATION], [PREPARATION ITEMS], and [RESCHEDULE METHOD]. Keep it under 90 words. Do not discuss the merits or include sensitive matter facts.

Verify: Date, time zone, link or address, preparation items, and reschedule method.

Trap: Do not put matter details into a reminder that may appear on a lock screen or shared calendar.

Prompt 9 Pre consultation attorney brief

Purpose: Prepare the lawyer to begin with the right facts and questions.

Data gate: Use the approved intake summary and conflict decision. Keep source links or timestamps.

Prompt: Create a one page pre consultation brief from [INTAKE SUMMARY], [CONFLICT DECISION], and [SCHEDULING RECORD]. Use: Who, Matter in Two Sentences, Parties and Entities, Dates Stated, Documents Mentioned, Client Objective as Stated, Open Questions, Conflict Limits, and Source References. Do not analyze the law, predict an outcome, or convert a stated date into a verified deadline. Mark gaps [NEEDS REVIEW].

Verify: Names, dates, objective, conflict limits, open questions, and source references.

Trap: The brief is navigation for the lawyer, not a replacement for the source record.

Prompt 10 Post consultation note

Purpose: Create a structured draft for the lawyer's review after the consultation.

Data gate: Use only notes or a transcript obtained and stored under the firm's approved process.

Prompt: Draft a post consultation note from [SOURCE]. Use: Participants, Date and Format, Facts Discussed, Objectives, Documents, Advice or Limitations as Reflected in the Source, Scope and Fee Discussion, Retention Decision, Follow Up Items, Tasks with Owners and Dates, and Source References. Do not add legal analysis or fill gaps. Label uncertainty [NEEDS REVIEW].

Verify: Every statement about advice, scope, fees, decisions, deadlines, and tasks against the lawyer's source record.

Trap: A transcript can misidentify speakers and a summary can omit a qualification that changes the advice.

Prompt 11 Engagement agreement population

Purpose: Populate a lawyer-selected template without inventing scope or terms.

Data gate: Use the approved template and confirmed client and matter fields. Do not submit the draft directly for signature.

Prompt: Populate [APPROVED TEMPLATE] using only [CONFIRMED FIELDS]. Preserve all template provisions unless a supplied instruction expressly changes a field. Do not create or revise scope, exclusions, fee terms, waivers, conflicts language, or legal provisions. Replace every unresolved field with [NEEDS ATTORNEY INPUT]. Produce a completion checklist listing each populated field and its source.

Verify: Client, matter, scope, exclusions, fee terms, responsible lawyer, attachments, blanks, recipient, and source list.

Trap: A polished agreement can still use the wrong client, wrong template, or wrong email address.

Prompt 12 Declination draft

Purpose: Draft a clear non-engagement message after the lawyer records the decision.

Data gate: Supply the lawyer-approved reason category and template instructions. Avoid unnecessary internal detail.

Prompt: Draft a non-engagement letter using [APPROVED TEMPLATE RULES], [PERSON], [MATTER CATEGORY], [DECISION DATE], [APPROVED REASON CATEGORY], [DEADLINE CAUTION TEXT], and [REFERRAL RESOURCE IF APPROVED]. State clearly that the firm will not represent the person in this matter. Do not explain internal conflicts, assess the case, or invent a deadline. Mark missing language [NEEDS ATTORNEY INPUT].

Verify: Identity, matter, clarity of non-engagement, timing, approved caution, resources, and delivery record.

Trap: Generic deadline language can be too broad or too weak for the firm's practice and jurisdiction.

Prompt 13 Matter handoff memorandum

Purpose: Give the receiving team a source-linked summary and task list.

Data gate: Use only records approved for the firm's authoritative matter system.

Prompt: Draft a matter handoff memorandum from [INTAKE RECORD], [CONFLICT RECORD], [CONSULTATION NOTE], [EXECUTED AGREEMENT], [PAYMENT STATUS], and [DOCUMENT LIST]. Use: Client, Matter and Objective, Scope and Exclusions, Conflict Decision and Limits, Key Facts, Dates Stated and Dates Verified, Documents, What the Client Was Told, Open Items, and Tasks with Owner and Due Date. Do not infer missing facts or legal deadlines. Mark gaps [NEEDS REVIEW].

Verify: Scope, conflict limits, dates, documents, communications, tasks, owners, due dates, and source references.

Trap: Do not merge stated dates and lawyer-verified deadlines into one unlabeled list.

Prompt 14 New client welcome message

Purpose: Confirm who is responsible and what happens next after engagement and opening are complete.

Data gate: Use approved client contact and matter-opening fields. Keep sensitive facts out of the subject line.

Prompt: Draft a new client welcome message using [CLIENT], [RESPONSIBLE LAWYER], [PRIMARY CONTACT], [CONTACT METHODS], [PORTAL INSTRUCTIONS], [NEXT STEP], [EXPECTED TIMING], and [FIRM COMMUNICATION RULES]. Confirm the engagement in the limited terms supplied. Do not add legal advice, promises, or facts. Keep the body under 180 words. Mark missing logistics [NEEDS REVIEW].

Verify: Recipient, responsible lawyer, contact path, portal link, next step, timing, scope reference, and attachments.

Trap: Do not send a welcome message until the firm's engagement and opening gates are actually complete.

Sample policy for AI assisted intake

Purpose: The firm uses approved AI functions only when they support a documented intake task, protect client and prospective-client information, preserve lawyer judgment, and produce a reviewable record.

Approved systems and accounts

The AI Policy Supervisor maintains the approved tools list. Approval names the product, account type, allowed users, approved use cases, permitted data classes, required settings, connected services, retention rule, and review date. A tool is not approved merely because another product from the same vendor is approved.

Data handling

Users may enter only the data allowed for the approved use case. If the tool, account, configuration, or destination is unclear, use fictional or fully de-identified data and ask the AI Policy Supervisor. Users must not paste passwords, access tokens, private keys, full payment-card data, or material outside the approved data boundary.

Human review and legal judgment

AI output is a draft. The named reviewer compares it to the source and checks names, dates, facts, recipients, links, attachments, scope, and required warnings. Only a lawyer makes conflict determinations, gives legal advice, approves representation, sets legal scope, or approves legal work product.

External communications

An AI-assisted message may be sent only through the firm's approved communication process. The sender remains responsible for content and recipient. A chatbot or automated interface must use the disclosures, warnings, screening questions, escalation path, and advertising review required by firm policy and applicable authority.

Recordings transcripts integrations and agents

Recording, transcription, connectors, plugins, browser actions, agents, and automated transfers require separate approval. The approval identifies consent steps, data sources, destinations, permissions, retention, logging, human approval points, and shutdown procedure. No agent may accept a matter, clear a conflict, send substantive legal advice, or open a matter without the firm's documented human gate.

Incident response

A user who enters prohibited data, sends incorrect output, connects an unapproved service, or observes unexpected access must stop the workflow and notify [INCIDENT OWNER] at [CONTACT]. Preserve the relevant record. Do not attempt an informal cleanup that destroys evidence.

Training and review

The AI Policy Supervisor trains users before access, reviews this policy and the approved tools list at least annually, and re-reviews a tool after a material product, contract, security, integration, ownership, or use-case change.

Approved by: [NAME AND TITLE] Effective: [DATE] Next review: [DATE]

Thirty-day rollout

Period	Work	Owner	Exit test

Days 1 to 5	Map every entry channel, stage, handoff, system, owner, target, and known failure. Measure the current queue.	Managing partner and intake owner	One current-state map approved
Days 6 to 10	Choose the intake hub. Define baseline fields, warnings, conflict process, fit criteria, communication templates, and data classes.	Intake owner and designated lawyer	Written rules and templates approved
Days 11 to 15	Review the exact AI account and use cases. Configure permissions and retention. Build prompts in the approved system.	AI Policy Supervisor and admin	Tool record and settings captured
Days 16 to 20	Run at least five fictional matters across different entry channels and outcomes. Include a potential conflict, missing data, a decline, a scheduling change, and a signed handoff.	Pilot team	Every defect logged and assigned
Days 21 to 25	Correct the workflow. Train primary and backup users. Run the incident and shutdown drill.	Intake owner	Users complete supervised practice
Days 26 to 30	Launch with a limited live scope. Review the queue daily and sample outputs against sources.	Designated lawyer	Go, limit, or stop decision recorded

Pilot defect log

Date	Stage	Test	Expected	Actual	Risk	Owner and fix

Launch decision

[ ] Every entry channel creates or routes to one visible record.

[ ] Every stage has a primary owner, backup, next action, and escalation path.

[ ] Required fields and minimum-necessary limits are written.

[ ] Conflict search and lawyer decision records are tested.

[ ] Communication templates and review thresholds are approved.

[ ] The exact AI product, account, settings, data classes, integrations, and retention are documented.

[ ] Prompt outputs were checked against fictional source records.

[ ] Incident reporting and shutdown were tested.

[ ] The first live-use scope and daily reviewer are named.

Measurement without fiction

Do not claim hours saved or higher conversion until the firm measures a baseline and a comparable post-launch period. Track operational facts first.

Signal	Definition	Source	Review
Capture completeness	New contacts with a record, owner, and next action	Intake hub	Weekly
Acknowledgment time	Elapsed time from receipt to approved acknowledgment	Channel and message logs	Weekly
Queue age	Records beyond the firm's target in each stage	Intake hub	Daily
Conflict gate	Substantive consultations with required decision documented	Conflict and calendar records	Monthly
Summary correction	AI drafts with material source mismatch	Quality sample	Weekly during pilot
Consultation preparation	Consultations with complete brief delivered on time	Calendar and intake hub	Weekly
Engagement completion	Agreements by draft, sent, signed, and financial status	E-sign and billing systems	Weekly
Handoff completion	Signed matters accepted by a matter owner with a first task	Matter system	Weekly
Incidents	Wrong recipient, prohibited data, unexpected transfer, bad link, or unapproved action	Incident log	Immediate and monthly

Before and after record

Metric	Baseline period	Post launch period	Result	Notes

Source notes

Sources were checked September 7, 2026. They support the guardrails, not a universal answer for every firm or jurisdiction.

Florida Bar Ethics Opinion 24-1. Advisory guidance on confidentiality, vendor policies, supervision, verification, fees, advertising, chatbots, and intake. Official source

ABA Formal Opinion 512. Model Rules guidance on competence, confidentiality, communication, supervision, candor, and fees. Official source

ABA Model Rule 1.18 comments. Guidance on prospective-client information and limiting an initial consultation to what is reasonably necessary. Official source

NIST AI Risk Management Framework 1.0. Voluntary framework organized around Govern, Map, Measure, and Manage. Official source

NIST Generative AI Profile. Suggested actions for governance, testing, monitoring, and incident disclosure. Official source

OWASP GenAI LLM Top 10 2026. Current security-risk reference for AI applications. Official source

Dated product policy examples

These are examples, not approvals. Verify the exact contract, account type, settings, features, connected services, optional feedback, and retention before client-data use.

Service context	What the vendor states	Firm still checks
OpenAI business products	Business inputs and outputs are not used for model training by default.	Contract, workspace, settings, retention, connectors, feedback, users
Microsoft organizational Copilot	Enterprise data protection applies to prompts and responses and foundation-model training is excluded.	License, Entra sign-in, permissions, web search, agents, retention, connected services
Google Workspace Gemini	Qualifying Workspace content is not used for model training outside the domain without permission.	Edition, admin controls, sharing, extensions, retention, user account
Anthropic commercial products	Commercial inputs and outputs are not used for training by default.	Plan, feedback, settings, retention, connectors, eligible features

OpenAI business data commitments. Official business-data page. Official source

Microsoft Copilot privacy and protections. Official privacy and enterprise-data-protection page. Official source

Google Workspace Gemini FAQ. Official administrator FAQ. Official source

Anthropic commercial data use. Official commercial-product training-data page. Official source

The next action

Pick one recent intake and map it through the nine stages. Do not start with software. Mark where the record disappeared, where ownership changed, where a lawyer decision was needed, and where the client waited without an explanation. That map tells you what to fix first.

Want help adapting the workflow to your firm? Schedule a complimentary 15 minute introductory call.

Schedule with Greg Yates. Current Actionable AI scheduling page, checked September 7, 2026. Official source

Actionable AI helps small law firms fix one workflow at a time using the systems they already pay for.

Actionable AI

Download the free Florida AI Starter Playbook.

Eight practical resources for managing partners and firm administrators: a readiness checklist, five pilot workflows, a tool-approval scorecard, a lawyer verification checklist, and a 90-day plan. It is free, and the button below downloads it directly.

Scan to download the Starter Playbook

Download the Starter Playbook (PDF)

Direct download: Florida AI Starter Playbook (PDF)

Want a second set of eyes on which workflow to pick?

I take 15-minute calls with managing partners and administrators. I will tell you whether there is a fit. No deck.

Book a 15-minute introductory call

Book a 15-minute introductory call