

How to launch a law firm quickly in DC

In the event your legal career has been disrupted by the pandemic and you need to quickly establish yourself as a law firm in order to serve one or more clients, here are the essentials to be up and going in a day or two:

You are now a sole proprietor

The fastest way to get started after a lay off or from a firm dissolving is to be a [sole proprietor](#). If you want to create an entity, you can always do that later. To be a sole proprietor, there is no need to file papers or register with a secretary of state. You will need to understand [estimated taxes](#), but you can come back to that issue once you are up and going.

Name your law firm

As a sole proprietor, you will name your law firm. Review D.C. Rule [7.5](#) and [7.1](#) and be sure the name is neither misleading or confusing. [Legal Ethics Opinion 332](#) says a single attorney may use the word *Firm* in the name of the law firm.

Create a professional address

You will need to establish a professional address for your firm. Assuming you are barred in D.C. and reside in the District, you may use your home address, subject to any contractual, zoning or code restrictions. But if you don't want clients to know where you live, or if you live in a jurisdiction where you are not barred, then you can obtain a professional address from [Carr WorkPlaces](#), a D.C. Bar member benefit.

Obtain an EIN

Next, obtain an [employer identification number](#) for your law firm from the IRS.

Open a commercial checking account

Now that your firm has a name, professional address and EIN, it's time to open a commercial checking account for your firm. The fastest way to get this done is to use a bank with which you already do business. It will be more efficient because the bank already has your profile. This account will be for earned legal fees and to pay your firm's overhead.

Open a trust account if necessary

If you are going to charge advance fees, then you will need to establish an IOLTA, a trust account. It is best to have your operating account and IOLTA at the same bank. That bank must be IOLTA compliant and the list of such banks is [here](#). The registration form to prepare before you go to the bank is [here](#). More information on IOLTA is [here](#).

Consider malpractice insurance

While professional liability insurance is not mandatory in D.C., it is a good idea to have it. You may apply to the Bar's member benefit, USI Affinity, [here](#).

Email, case management, etc.

You can quickly establish a commercial email account with [Google](#) or Microsoft's [Office 365](#).

The D.C. Bar has several resources for [case management](#) and [telephone services](#).

Free legal research with Fastcase is available [here](#).

Eventually, you will need a website. Mockingbird Marketing is creating free websites for lawyers impacted by the pandemic [here](#). Other possibilities are [GNGF.com](#), [AttorneySync.com](#), and [RyTechllc.com](#).

Resources

If you have questions about getting your firm started, contact the D.C. Bar's practice management advisors [here](#). They help lawyers with business issues and are free and confidential.

If you need ethics guidance, contact the Bar's legal ethics counsel [here](#).

If you need help with stress, contact the Bar's counselors [here](#).

Other programs with resources are here:

[Continuing Legal Education](#)

[D.C. Bar Communities](#)

