

# Lawyers

## Street Law, Chapter 6

# Numbers

- There are more than one **million** lawyers in the United States.
- Many work in **private** practice
- Others work for
  - the **government**,
  - **corporations**,
  - and **public interest organizations**.

# Public Interest Organizations

- Examples include
  - American Civil **Liberties** Union (ACLU)
  - American Center for Law and **Justice** (ACLJ)
  - **Amnesty** International
  - Common **Cause**
  - Human **Rights** Watch
  - Southern **Poverty** Law Center

# Reaching higher

- Some lawyers are also
  - law **professors**,
  - **judges**,
  - and **elected** officials.

# Contrary to popular belief...

- ...most lawyers rarely go to **court**.
- Their practice typically involves
  - giving **advice**,
  - drafting legal **opinions, contracts**
  - negotiating **settlements**, or providing other out-of-court legal assistance.
  - **Justice Factory video**

# The lawyer's role

- Lawyers act as **advocates** for their clients and
- must represent their clients' **interests** to the best of their ability.

# When Do You Need a Lawyer?

- Generally, the best time to seek a lawyer is **before** a problem occurs.
- Attorneys can offer **advice** to help their clients avoid problems or make important **decisions**.
- It is especially wise to consult a lawyer when a **question of law** is involved, if a legal **document** needs to be drafted, or if you are involved in a legal case.

# How Do You Find a Lawyer?

- There are many **resources** available to help people find a lawyer to meet their needs.
- The best way to find an attorney may be to ask for a **recommendation** from someone who has had to deal with a **similar** legal issue.
- You can also look in the **phone** book, Internet, use a local lawyer **referral** service, or consult the *Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory*, ([martindale.com](http://martindale.com)) which provides general information about almost every lawyer in the United States.



# What about cost?

- If you cannot **afford** an attorney, there are some options for you.
- You may qualify for **free legal** assistance, or—if your legal problem is of interest to a public **interest** organization—the organization may agree to take your case free of charge.

# Contingency fees (civil)

- Attorneys also take some cases on a **contingency** fee.
- This means that the attorney will receive a certain **percentage** of any money the client wins in the case.
- **If the client does not** win the case, the lawyer **does not** receive any money.
- The amount the lawyer gets is *contingent* on the **outcome** of the case

# Working with Your Lawyer

- **Trust** is essential to the attorney-client relationship.
- The law grants attorney-client **privilege** to encourage clients to speak openly and **honestly** to their attorneys.
  - This **privilege** prevents a lawyer from **revealing** the client's information without **permission**.

# Ethics

- Lawyers must also follow certain **standards of conduct** that are enforced by the **state bar** association.
- Clients can file a **malpractice** lawsuit against an attorney if they believe the attorney has acted **irresponsibly** and mishandled the case.