

# 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.