

ETHICS ADVISORY PANELSP
OPINION 92-55, - REQUEST # 278
Issued - July 23, 1992

An attorney seeks Panel advice regarding the promotion of law related seminars conducted by the attorney. The attorney intends to promote the seminars by advertising in the newspaper and by direct mail. The attendees of the seminars would receive brochures and educational materials which would not promote the attorney's legal services. The materials would contain the Rule 7.4 disclaimer regarding certification or specialization of attorneys.

Rule 7.1 of the Rhode Island Rules of Professional Conduct states that " a lawyer may not make a false or misleading communication about the lawyer or the lawyer's services" and cannot "create an unjustified expectation about results the lawyer can achieve." Rule 7.4 states that "A lawyer may not . . . indicate that his or her practice is limited to or concentrated in particular fields of law unless, as part of the same communication the lawyer also indicates that Rhode Island does not have a procedure for certification or recognition of specialization by lawyers." Rule 7.3(a) states that "A lawyer may not solicit professional employment from a prospective client with whom the lawyer has no family or prior professional relationship . . ."

A law firm may provide legal seminars to clients and non-clients so long as neither the seminar brochures nor the presentation itself contain a recommendation that the firm be employed for legal representation. The seminar and the brochures do not constitute solicitations even if the seminar's motivation is to generate future business. (See, Massachusetts Ethics Advisory Opinion 86-3 (11/25/86).)