

VLCT's Municipal Inquiry Service

The VLCT Municipal Assistance Center provides municipal officers with the education, training and professional assistance they need to fulfill their official duties. A core offering of the Municipal Assistance Center is the municipal inquiry service, which affords local officials the opportunity to submit inquiries related to their duties as elected or appointed officers. The municipal inquiry service is operated by VLCT attorneys and other knowledgeable staff members with training and experience in public administration and local government. You can submit an inquiry by calling (800) 649-7915 or emailing info@vlct.org.

The response to an inquiry placed with the inquiry service may include the provision of legal advice, whose provision is governed by the Vermont Rules of Professional Conduct for attorneys. In accordance with these Rules, and to ensure that inquiries are handled professionally and consistently, the VLCT Board of Directors adopted the following policies:

- To the extent that an attorney-client relationship may arise as the result of an inquiry placed with the municipal inquiry service, that relationship is with the municipality acting through its duly authorized representative, not the individual caller.
- The right to keep information confidential belongs to the municipality. All callers should be aware that information disclosed to our attorneys and staff members, and all advice provided by them, may be shared with other officials in the municipality, so long as such information and advice pertains to the individual's official duties.
- Information disclosed to one of our attorneys or staff members may be disclosed to other attorneys and staff in the Municipal Assistance Center and the VLCT Executive Director, all of whom agree to be bound by the confidentiality provisions set forth in this policy. Such information will not be disclosed to other persons unless the municipality authorizes such disclosure.
- Because our relationship is with the municipality, our attorneys and staff members cannot advise callers on matters that are not relevant to the caller's official duties. Likewise, we cannot advise private citizens or municipal officials inquiring about private matters.
- Because our services are available to all member municipalities, our attorneys and staff members cannot advise one member municipality in a matter involving a dispute, or potential dispute, with another member municipality.
- Inquiries may be delivered by phone or email, though time-sensitive inquiries are best placed by phone. The term "caller" shall include any individual utilizing the municipal inquiry service, regardless of whether he or she does so via telephone, email or another medium.
- Members may also request a written legal opinion from the Municipal Assistance Center attorneys. Legal opinions will be billed at an hourly rate determined annually in the VLCT budget.
- Inquiries requiring more than one hour of staff time will also be billed at an hourly rate determined annually in the VLCT budget, after consultation with the member.
- Our attorneys and staff members do not advise or represent VLCT's insurance trusts and cannot give advice on insurance coverage or on matters concerning insurance policy language. While our attorneys and staff members may discuss issues of general liability, such general information should not be construed as a guarantee of coverage in any specific case.
- The municipal inquiry service is intended to assist officials with questions of general municipal law, management, and administration. It is not intended to interfere with or substitute for the important relationship between a municipality and its regular attorney. If

the answer to an inquiry submitted to the municipal inquiry service depends upon specific facts or documents, or involves litigation, potential litigation, or litigation strategy, we will recommend consultation with the municipality's regular legal counsel.

In addition to the inquiry service, the online Resource Library (<http://resources.vlct.org>) is a comprehensive collection of electronic documents. It also provides access to Vermont Statutes online, VLCT's Municipal Law Index and related websites. For more information, please contact Abby Friedman at (800) 649-7915 extension 1926 or afriedman@vlct.org.