Educational activities designed to educate public about legal matters: Acceptance of employment resulting therefrom

Questions

1. May a lawyer accept clients who decide to contact the lawyer as a result of the lawyer’s authorship of a book, and audiotape or videotape?

2. May a lawyer self-sponsor an educational seminar open to a targeted or general audience or participate in an educational seminar sponsored or conducted by an organization not enumerated under SCR 20:7.3(c)(2) or (3), and may the lawyer provide representation requested by persons attending either type of seminar?

Opinion

1. Subject to SCR 20:7.1, nothing in SCR 20:7.2 or SCR 20:7.3 prohibits the conduct in question.

2. Yes, a lawyer may self-sponsor an educational seminar or participate in one regardless of the sponsor’s identity. But if the seminar sponsor is of a kind other than specified under SCR 20:7.3(c)(2) or (3), SCR 20:7.3(e) prohibits the participating lawyer from “providing representation that is requested as a result of the lawyer’s participation. . . .” SCR 20:7.3(e).

The pertinent sections of SCR 20:7.3 are as follows:

(c)(2) under the auspices of a public or charitable legal services organization;
or

(3) under the auspices of a bona fide political, social, civic, fraternal, employee or trade organization whose purposes include but are not limited to providing or recommending legal services, if the legal services are related to the principal purposes of the organization.

(e) Nothing herein shall be construed to prohibit a lawyer from providing representation that is requested as a result of the lawyer’s participation in
activities designed to educate laymen to recognize legal problems, to make intelligent selection of counsel or to utilize available legal services if such educational activities are conducted or sponsored by an organization described in subsection (c)(2) or (3) above.” [Emphasis added.]