# How to Write a Closing-Your-Practice Letter

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# Meet Mark:

Mark Bassingthwaighte, Esq., serves as Risk Manager at ALPS, a leading provider of insurance and risk management solutions for law firms. Since joining ALPS in 1998, Mark has worked with more than 1200 law firms nationwide, helping attorneys identify vulnerabilities, strengthen firm operations, and reduce professional liability risks.

He has presented over 700 continuing legal education (CLE) seminars across the United States and written extensively on the topics of risk management, legal ethics, and cyber security.

A trusted voice in the legal community, Mark is a member of the State Bar of Montana and the American Bar Association and holds a J.D. from Drake University Law School. His mission is to help attorneys build safer, more resilient practices in a rapidly evolving legal environment.




**Contact Information:**

Mark Bassingthwaighte, Esq.
ALPS Insurance Agency
111 N. Higgins Ave, Suite 600
Missoula, MT 59802
(T) 800.367.2577 | (D) 406.523.3859
mbass@alpsinsurance.com
www.alpsinsurance.com

Occasionally a lawyer will reach out to ask what should be included in a letter notifying active clients, whose matters cannot be completed in time, that the lawyer is closing her practice. Here's the guidance I typically share.

## Key Information Every Closing-Your-Practice Letter Should Include:

- Inform clients of any relevant deadlines or time-sensitive issues
- Explain how and where they can obtain their file
- Advise them to hire a new attorney as soon as possible
- Clearly outline the current status of their matter
- Identify what still needs to be done
- Explain the legal consequences of failing to follow through

It's critically important to ensure clients are fully informed about what is happening and what steps they must take next.

## Additional Best Practices for Client Notification Letters:

After covering the essentials, I also recommend:

- Offering to help clients find a new attorney by providing a few names or the number for a local lawyer-referral service
- Including your file-retention policy
- Providing post-closure contact information in case clients need their file later, and
- Sending a follow-up letter with a full accounting of trust funds and any outstanding fees.

These steps help ensure a smooth transition and reduce the risk of misunderstandings or complaints.

## Sample Closing-Your-Practice Letter Template

Below is sample language you can adapt to write your own letter:

{Date}
Re: {Identify the specific matter}

Dear {Client Name},
Due to {Identify the reason, if appropriate}, I will be closing my law practice effective {Date}. As a result, my representation of you will conclude on that date. Because I will be unable to complete your matter before leaving the practice of law, I recommend that you immediately retain another lawyer who can see your matter through completion.

While you are free to select any lawyer you choose, I would be happy to provide you with a few names of local attorneys who practice in the relevant area of law. Our State Bar Association also operates a lawyer-referral service. If you wish to contact them, their number is {Insert number}.

In light of {Insert the current status of the matter, including any deadlines or critical information}, it is imperative that you hire a new lawyer without delay. Given that {Set forth what still needs to be done}, failure to do so could result in {State the legal ramifications}. Once you have retained new counsel, please provide me with written authorization to transfer your file to your new lawyer. If you prefer, you may pick up your file from my office and deliver it personally.

I {or insert the name of the lawyer or firm who will} will continue to store my copy of your closed file for {List period} years. After that time, I {or name of lawyer or firm} will destroy my copy unless you notify me in writing within the next 30 days that you do not wish it to be destroyed. If I receive such notice, I will attempt to make alternative arrangements that better meet your needs. If you ever need a copy of your closed file before it is destroyed, you may reach me {or name of lawyer or firm storing the file} at {Insert number}.

Within the next {Number} weeks, I will provide you with a full accounting of any trust-account funds still in my possession, as well as a statement of any outstanding fees. You may continue to reach me at my current office address and phone number until {Date}. After that time, my contact information will be: {List name, address, phone, and/or email}. It has been a pleasure to be of service to you. Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,