

# NEWS RELEASE

Arizona Supreme Court  
Administrative Office of the Courts



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## **Arizona Promotes Access to Justice by Accepting Applications for Newly Authorized Alternative Business Structures**

PHOENIX – The Arizona Supreme Court announces the beginning of its revolutionary approach to providing legal services in Arizona. As Chief Justice Robert Brutinel noted in August when the Court voted unanimously to approve innovations in the delivery of legal services, “The Court’s goal is to improve access to justice and to encourage innovation in the delivery of legal services. The work of the task force adopted by the Court will make it possible for more people to access affordable legal services and for more individuals and families to get legal advice and help. These new rules will promote business innovation in providing legal services at affordable prices.”

One of the innovations adopted by the Court is allowing the delivery of legal services through Alternative Business Structures. An Alternative Business Structure, or ABS, is a business entity that includes nonlawyers who have an economic interest or decision-making authority in a firm that provides legal services under Arizona Supreme Court Rules 31 and 31.1(c). The purpose of the ABS program is “rooted in the idea that entrepreneurial lawyers and nonlawyers would pilot a range of different business forms” that will ultimately improve access to justice and the delivery of legal services. Alternative Business Structures were authorized by eliminating court rule ER 5.4, the rule barring nonlawyers from fee sharing and barring nonlawyers from having an economic interest in a law firm. The regulatory framework addressing this change requires approved businesses to be licensed by the Court and to maintain compliance with standards to achieve specific objectives, including:

- Protecting and promoting the public interest
- Promoting access to legal services
- Advancing the administration of justice and rule of law
- Encouraging an independent, strong, diverse, and effective legal profession
- Promoting and maintaining adherence to professional principles

In part, the innovation opportunities created by these changes are intended to improve access to justice and to make access to legal documents and legal representation available to more members of the public. At the same time, the changes must maintain the professional independence of lawyers and protect the public from unethical and unprofessional conduct.

States around the nation are considering similar reforms to allow for more innovation and to make legal services more affordable while protecting the public. Those states will be watching how Alternative Business Structures develop and perform in Arizona.

For information on applying for licensure as an Alternative Business Structure, FAQs, the Supreme Court Task Force report, the Court's recent order and more, see the Arizona Supreme Court Certification and Licensing webpage at <https://www.azcourts.gov/Licensing-Regulation/Alternative-Business-Structure>.

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