



Supreme Court of Illinois

July 2, 2020

SUPREME COURT TEMPORARILY AMENDS RULE TO ALLOW NEW LAW SCHOOL GRADUATES TO WORK AT PRIVATE FIRMS

Chief Justice Anne M. Burke and the Illinois Supreme Court announced today the amendment of Rule 711(g), which will temporarily expand the class of employers eligible to supervise new law school graduates to include private law firms and other for-profit entities.

The Illinois Supreme Court order temporarily amending Rule 711 to add paragraph (g) can be found [here](#) and the Application for Authorization to Perform Legal Services under Illinois Supreme Court Rules 711(g) is available [here](#).

“The Court understands the plight of recent law graduates and we want to provide an effective transition to them becoming practicing lawyers in these unprecedented times,” Supreme Court Justice Anne M. Burke said. “We appreciate the assistance provided by the law school deans and the Illinois State Bar Association in amending this rule to offer a measure of relief while also expanding access to justice and safeguarding the public.”

With the COVID-19 pandemic forcing the postponement of the bar examination in Illinois from July 28-29 to September 9-10, many law students face uncertainty about their financial situations. The average debt burden for law students is \$110,000, and many have suffered from financial consequences due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The deans of the nine Illinois law schools applaud the Court for implementing this revision to Rule 711,” said Darby Dickerson, Dean at UIC John Marshall Law School. “Our students are facing historic challenges, and this amendment will allow many of them to survive financially, continue their professional development, and help many citizens who need legal representation during these challenging times.”

While new graduates are already permitted to perform for legal aid bureaus and government agencies, the amendment to Rule 711(g) would allow new graduates working at law firms to appear in court and take and defend depositions, expanding the number of opportunities open to new graduates.

The changes to Rule 711(g) assure that graduates entering into private for-profit settings will receive appropriate supervision from experienced attorneys. Each covered graduate working for a law firm or other legal department or organization must be supervised by an attorney with at

least five years of practice experience and without pending disciplinary issues, among other requirements.

“The Rule’s requirements on supervision by an experienced member of the bar will help ensure the public receives quality and competent legal services from the covered graduates, but also that the graduates will have a positive introduction into the practice of law,” Illinois State Bar Association Immediate Past President David B. Sosin said.

The changes to Rule 711(g) will apply to December 2019 and all 2020 J.D. graduates of law schools accredited by the Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar of the American Bar Association (ABA), as well as J.D. graduates of ABA accredited law schools from prior years who have been serving as judicial law clerks since their graduation and who have not yet taken a bar examination in any jurisdiction but who have successfully completed all educational requirements to be eligible to take the Illinois bar examination. Applicants must have submitted an application to take the September 2020 or February 2021 Illinois bar examination.

The implementation of new Rule 711(g) is a short-term pilot program, and the Supreme Court will be able to assess a number of aspects to inform any further changes to 711, including its effect on access to justice, the bar exam success of participants, and the value of the post-graduate experience for graduates and supervising attorneys.

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