A Basic checklist for Closing a Practice.

- ✓ Determine a target closing date and a date to stop taking new engagements.
- ✓ Inventory open client files to determine status and actions to be taken.
- ✓ Discuss extended reporting or tail coverage with your professional liability carrier well in advance of your target date so you can understand your options and the cost.
- ✓ Inform your staff in person and in writing. Give a simple, truthful reason for the closure.
- ✓ Inform your clients in person if able, but certainly in writing.
- ✓ Complete all matters where that can be accomplished.
- ✓ For litigation matters than cannot be completed, discuss with the client their options to obtain new counsel and follow up that discussion in writing. You may need to assist your clients by requesting extensions of time and resetting of hearings when possible.
- ✓ If a client is obtaining new counsel, be certain an order allowing your withdrawal or a substitution of counsel is accomplished.
- ✓ Make certain the client has been advised in writing of impending statutes of limitations and all other deadlines.
- ✓ Notify former clients from recent years that you are closing your practice, reminding them of your file destruction policy and letting them know where their files will be stored between the closing and the ultimate destruction date.
- ✓ Hopefully you have already returned all original documents, such as original wills and contracts to former clients, along with any copies of documents they might need as a part of your normal file closing process. But if not, now is the time to do so.
- ✓ You likely want to obtain a Post Office box and notify the Post Office to forward mail to that address after your office is closed. Check the box weekly at first and then monthly. Send change of address notices in response as warranted. Calendar when the mail forwarding expires as you may wish to renew it.
- ✓ Notify the OBA of new contact information soon after closure.
- ✓ Close your IOLTA trust account properly. A checklist for doing so is available from the Oklahoma Bar Foundation and from the MAP resource page noted above.
- ✓ Inform other professionals of the closure including court officials and those who have provided services to your firm. If time is an issue, this may be done via postcards or email.
- ✓ Notify landlords, utilities and other vendors who provide services to you. It is a good idea to review incoming mail for several months in advance for those who should be added to this list.
- ✓ Appropriately cancel memberships, internet service and other subscriptions.
- ✓ Prepare last time records and send out final bills. These should also include the Post Office Box address for those who may not remit timely.
- ✓ Prepare disposition of office furniture and other office property. Computers and hard drives should not be transferred to third parties unless you are confident in your ability to permanently erase all data.
- ✓ Your phone number is a valuable asset and may be transferred or sold to another law firm. This allows them to communicate that this office has been closed to those who were not informed and call the number.

- ✓ Law books are bulky and have little resale value, especially if not updated. Ask other lawyers in your community if there is a new lawyer might appreciate them as a gift.
- ✓ An announcement on your website about the office closure is appropriate at some point. (Note: if you allow the website domain name to expire simply by not paying the renewal fee, it can be bought by someone else. Due to recent examples of fraud, it may be advisable to continue renewing old domain names even after you have discontinued the website.)
- ✓ Your email can be configured to automatically respond with a message about the office closure and that should be left operational for some time. Some small firm lawyers may decide to keep the “office” email account as a personal email account. Retirement may also be a good time to “start over” with a new email address. A Microsoft 365 subscription may be a good, secure option then.
- ✓ Hopefully, you have already utilized a password manager that you will keep for personal use. If not, a list of passwords should be prepared and securely stored physically (i.e. not on a computer.)
- ✓ If you practice in a smaller community that has a local newspaper, consider placing a notice of the closing in it. This could be beneficial to some former clients. This can be considered when a lawyer unexpectedly dies.
- ✓ Cancel the law firm merchant account used for credit card processing, along with law firm credit cards as appropriate.