Time and Billing Checklist

• Put your fee agreement in writing, and explain how expenses will be paid. Consider adding in the letter that withdrawal may occur for nonpayment.
• Consider a cloud service for tracking time and billing.

Tracking Time
• Track all time, even if time is unbilled later.
  ♦ Whether hourly, contingent, shared fee arrangement or retainer, record your time.
• Record contemporaneously, if possible.
  ♦ Use mobile apps to capture time on the run.
• If unable to record time contemporaneously, email yourself time entries.
• Include complete description of services rendered.
• Get a thesaurus.
  ♦ Avoid saying “research,” consider analyzing instead.
• Tell a story of your service through time entries.
• Avoid billing large amounts of time with long narratives.
• Don’t charge for clerical time, five minute phone calls or calls about your bill.
• Avoid abbreviations and legalese.
• Document everything – best evidence in the event of a dispute.

Billing
• Bill regularly and accurately (not three months after work performed).
• Consider sending bill before trial or mediation to foster productive settlement discussion.
• Keep accurate records about expenses and costs (filing fees, expert witness fees, mailing costs, deposition costs, etc.)
• Account to client regularly regarding funds in trust.
• Resolve slow or no payment quickly.
  ♦ If you need to part ways for nonpayment, do so before bill gets too high.
• Send bill to the right person.
• Don’t charge for inquiries regarding your bill.
• Consider not charging for copies or messenger services.
• Don’t send a bill when client is unaware that you have done anything in the case.
• Consider discounted bills when appropriate, indicating value of the services that you are discounting or comping.
• Put a due date on your bill.
• Consider LSBA Fee Dispute Arbitration program to resolve disputes about fees.