

INDIANA BAR FOUNDATION

Mock Trial FAQs

Q: What is mock trial?

A: Mock Trial is a program for high school students that teaches the judicial branch of government and the legal system. Students learn to present arguments for both the prosecution and defense while acting as attorneys and witnesses. Students learn literacy skills, like reading, writing, speaking, and listening, while enhancing their “soft skills” like collaborative learning, leadership, and creative thinking.

Q: I want to start a mock trial team at my school. What do I do?

A: Great to hear! If you’re a student, you should talk to a teacher or administrator at your school to get them on board. If you’re a legal advisor, you should contact your local school to see how you can help them with the program. If you’re a teacher, you’ll need to gather a group of students interested in mock trial. Once you have your group, start working on trial basics, organizing your case theme, and preparing for the competition. The Indiana Bar Foundation will be here to support you and assist as needed.

Q: My students and I are struggling with startup. Who can help us?

A: We understand starting a new program is a hard task. Let us know your needs, and we will work to pair you with a mentor teacher or legal advisor to give practical advice and help get things going.

Q: How many students are on a mock trial team?

A: Each team will have 3 attorneys and 3 witnesses for each side of the case. You’ll need at least 6 students to be on the team with a maximum of 10 students. Depending on the size of your team, some or all students will have to play a role on both the prosecution and defense sides of the case. In addition, you’ll also need 1 person to be a timekeeper. A school can register more than one team.

Q: Are there costs?

A: The standard registration rate to compete is \$200 per team. The cost is reduced to \$100 for each team registered by a school that is either new to the mock trial program or has not participated in the past three years. For all teams, a \$50 late fee is added if you register after the deadline. This does not include auxiliary costs that a school might incur, such as transportation, food and drink, etc.

Q: How do I get the case?

A: The case will be released on the mock trial page of the Indiana Bar Foundation’s website in October. This is a free download.

Q: How do I register to participate in the mock trial competition?

A: Registration forms are posted on the Indiana Bar Foundation’s website in October. Each school will need to register, then each team from that school will also register. See the Foundation’s mock trial page for registration and drop deadlines.

Q: Where are the competitions held?

A: Four regional competitions are held around the state each February in Evansville, Hammond, Indianapolis, and South Bend. Your team will likely be assigned to the regional closest to you. The state competition is held in Indianapolis. See the Indiana Bar Foundation's website for competition dates.

Q: How do I advance from the regional competition to the state competition?

A: The regional competitions are open to any team that wants to participate. Twenty-four teams from across the state advance to the state competition. Twenty teams will advance directly from the regional competitions based on proportional representation (i.e. regional competitions with more teams receive more automatic bids to the state competition). The remaining four spots will be determined as wild card teams as selected by the mock trial committee. The committee may consider a variety of factors when choosing the wild cards, including team's overall record, total points, strength of opponents faced, strength of the regional competed, etc.

Q: I like this idea of mock trial, but do I need to compete?

A: No, but we will highly encourage you to try it. If you choose to run the mock trial in your classroom, we ask that you let us know so we can support you and your students. We are also interested in knowing how many schools use the case whether you choose to compete or not.

Q: How much time should my students and I spend on practice and preparation?

A: A simple question with a complicated answer... It varies. Some teams prepare as part of a class in school. Some teams prepare as an extracurricular activity a few days a week. Others may only have time to meet a few times a month. There is no right or wrong answer. You'll need to figure out what works best for you, your students, and your legal advisor(s), if any.

Q: I don't have a legal advisor. Do I need one?

A: While having a legal advisor isn't mandatory, most teachers appreciate assistance from volunteer attorneys. Often, the legal advisor is a local attorney from the community. The time commitment for the legal advisor varies and is worked out between the teacher and the attorney directly. If you're unable to find a legal advisor, contact the Indiana Bar Foundation and we will work to pair you with an attorney willing to help.

Q: I have a question about or found a discrepancy in the facts of the case and/or a witness statement. What do I do?

A: The Indiana Bar Foundation has a structure for posting updates to the case. Teachers and legal advisors – NOT students – may email the mock trial state coordinator (Tim Kalgreen: tkalgreen@inbf.org) with question(s) they would like clarified. Answers will be posted in two waves. See the mock trial webpage for the deadlines to submit questions.

Q: It's competition day and there's inclement weather in my part of the state. What do I do?

A: First and foremost, follow your school's policies on school trips/activities, as well as common sense. If your team cannot make it to the competition site, contact the Indiana Bar Foundation (tkalgreen@inbf.org; 317-608-6503) as soon as possible. A make up date is scheduled if the Indiana Bar Foundation determines a regional site must be cancelled.

Q: Do you offer any training or professional development?

A: At this time, nothing is scheduled, but this will be something that will be coming. Check the Indiana Bar Foundation's website for future mock trial trainings.