

265—9.6 (16) Title guaranty program.

9.6(1) General. The division operates a program to offer guaranties of real property titles in the state through the issuance of title guaranty certificates. Title guaranty certificates may be issued by the division, by participating abstractors for the division pursuant to subrule 9.6(3), paragraph “f,” herein, or by participating attorneys pursuant to Iowa Code section 16.91(7).

9.6(2) Participating attorneys. An attorney licensed to practice law in the state of Iowa may participate in the title guaranty program upon approval by the division director of an application to the division and upon execution and acceptance by the division director of an attorney’s participation agreement.

a. Authority of participating attorney. A participating attorney is authorized to act as an agent of the division but only for the purposes and in the manner set forth in the attorney’s participation agreement, the Code of Iowa, these rules, manuals, requirements and any other written or oral instructions given by the division and in no other manner whatsoever. The authority of the participating attorney under the preceding sentence is not exclusive and is subject to the rights of the authority, of the division and of other participants, agents, or representatives of the division to transact the business of opining on titles to real estate or issuing commitments or certificates and is further subject to the right of the division to appoint other participants.

b. License. A participating attorney shall be licensed to practice law in the state of Iowa and shall be in good standing with the Iowa supreme court at all times while acting as an agent of the division.

c. Errors and omissions insurance. A participating attorney shall maintain errors and omissions insurance at all times while acting as an agent of the division, with such coverage and in such amounts as the division board may direct from time to time by resolution.

The division will inform the Iowa State Bar Association, the Iowa Land Title Association, and any person requesting such information of any proposed change in the amount of required errors and omissions insurance at least 30 days prior to the date of the meeting at which the matter will be considered. Interested parties may submit evidence or statements in support of or in opposition to the proposal in writing or by personal appearance before the division board.

d. Participation fees. A participating attorney shall pay participation fees in such amounts and at such times as the division board may set from time to time by resolution. Participation fees set by the division board are subject to the approval of the authority board.

The division will inform the Iowa State Bar Association, the Iowa Land Title Association, and any person requesting such information of any proposed change in the amount of attorney participation fees at least 30 days prior to the date of the meeting at which the matter will be considered. Interested parties may submit evidence or statements in support of or in opposition to the proposal in writing or by personal appearance before the division board.

e. Training. A participating attorney shall complete division forms and procedures training prior to issuing title guaranty certificates as an agent of the division.

f. Underwriting determinations. A participating attorney shall make all underwriting determinations prior to or at the closing. If the participating attorney does not attend the closing and is not available by telephone during the closing, all underwriting determinations must have been made by the participating attorney issuing the opinion, commitment or certificate prior to closing. For purposes of this rule, the term “underwriting determinations” includes, but is not limited to, insuring access, reviewing gap searches, possible judgments, survey matters (including encroachments), unreleased mortgages or other liens, and any other matters disclosed by the opinion, commitment or other sources of title information. A participating attorney who causes or allows an erroneous underwriting determination to be made by someone other than a member of the division’s legal staff or the participating attorney who issued the opinion, commitment or certificate shall be strictly liable to the division for loss or damage the division may suffer as a result of the erroneous underwriting determination.

A participating attorney shall make all underwriting determinations arising out of the issuance of an attorney title opinion or a title commitment using both:

- (1) Generally accepted and prudent title examining methods; and
- (2) Procedures implemented by the division and outlined in these rules, manuals, and guides and any other written or oral instructions or requirements given by the division.

Any underwriting determination about which there may be a bona fide difference of opinion among local lawyers and that is not specifically covered by materials provided by the division shall be approved by division legal staff.

g. Title files. A participating attorney shall maintain separate title files or maintain client files in such a manner that information pertaining to activities of the participating attorney as an agent and underwriter for the division are readily available to the division. A participating attorney shall maintain title files and the title portion of client files for a period of ten years after the effective date of the certificate or certificates.

h. Forms. The division will provide forms to a participating attorney for use in acting as an agent of the division. A participating attorney may not alter any form supplied by the division, or use a form supplied by another person or entity to bind the division, or otherwise bind the division to liability with a form, other writing or representation not supplied or authorized by the division.

A participating attorney who obtains serialized forms from the division must maintain a forms register, in a format approved or supplied by the division, in which the participating attorney shall enter a record of and show the disposition of all serialized forms. In addition, the participating attorney shall:

- (1) Return the original of any damaged, spoiled, or otherwise unusable serialized form to the division;
 - (2) Return the original of any unused serialized form to the division at the request of the division;
- and
- (3) Not transfer or attempt to transfer unissued serialized forms to another participant or other person or entity unless authorized in writing by the division.

If a participating attorney fails to comply with the requirements of this rule, in addition to the division's other rights and remedies, the division may refuse to supply any forms to the participating attorney until the participating attorney complies with the requirements of this rule to the satisfaction of the division.

The participating attorney shall be liable to the division for loss or damage sustained by the division by reason of the loss of, misuse of, or inability of the participating attorney to account for any form supplied by the division, or the failure of the participating attorney to comply with the requirements of this rule.

i. Certificate amount limitations. A participating attorney shall obtain the written authorization of the division's legal staff prior to issuing a commitment or certificate which exceeds such amounts as the division board may set from time to time by resolution. If any authorization required under this rule is not obtained through the act or omission of the participating attorney, the participating attorney shall be strictly liable to the division for any loss or damage resulting from issuance of the commitment or certificate.

9.6(3) Participating abstractors. An abstractor or abstracting concern may participate in the title guaranty program upon approval by the division director of an application to the division and upon execution and acceptance by the division director of an abstractor's participation agreement.

a. Authority of participating abstractor. A participating abstractor is authorized to act as an agent of the division but only for the purposes and in the manner set forth in the abstractor's participation agreement, the Code of Iowa, these rules, manuals, requirements and any other written or oral instructions given by the division and in no other manner whatsoever. The authority of the participating abstractor under the preceding sentence is not exclusive and is subject to the rights of the authority, of the division

and of other participating abstractors, agents, or representatives of the division to transact the business of abstracting, which includes but is not limited to any manner of title search or review of titles to real estate, and is further subject to the right of the division to appoint other participating abstractors.

b. Title plant. Participating abstractors shall own or lease, and maintain and use in the preparation of abstracts, an up-to-date abstract title plant including tract indices for real estate for each county in which abstracts are prepared for titles to real property guaranteed by the division. Each of the tract indices shall be designated to encompass a geographical area of not more than one block in the case of platted real estate, nor more than one section in the case of unplatted real estate. The tract indices shall include a reference to all of the instruments affecting real estate recorded in the office of the county recorder, and the tract indices shall commence not less than 40 years prior to the effective date of the abstractor's participation in the title guaranty program.

c. Exempt attorneys. Participating attorneys who have been providing abstract services continuously from November 12, 1986, to the date of application to be a participating abstractor, either personally or through persons under their supervision and control, shall be exempt from the requirement to own or lease a title plant. This exemption is a personal exemption of the individual participating attorney, is not transferable, and terminates at such time as the individual ceases providing abstracting services or upon the death or incapacity of the individual.

d. Errors and omissions insurance. A participating abstractor shall maintain errors and omissions insurance at all times while acting as an agent of the division, with such coverage and in such amounts as the division board may direct from time to time by resolution.

The division will inform the Iowa Land Title Association, the Iowa State Bar Association, and any person requesting such information of any proposed change in the amount of required errors and omissions insurance at least 30 days prior to the date of the meeting at which the matter will be considered. Interested parties may submit evidence or statements in support of or in opposition to the proposal in writing or by personal appearance before the division board.

e. Participation fees. A participating abstractor shall pay participation fees in such amounts and at such times as the division board may set from time to time by resolution. Participation fees set by the division board are subject to the approval of the authority board.

The division will inform the Iowa Land Title Association, the Iowa State Bar Association, and any person requesting such information of any proposed change in the amount of abstractor participation fees at least 30 days prior to the date of the meeting at which the matter will be considered. Interested parties may submit evidence or statements in support of or in opposition to the proposal in writing or by personal appearance before the division board.

f. Issuing title guaranty. A participating abstractor may be authorized pursuant to a written contract with the division director to issue a title guaranty commitment or certificate for the division when the participating attorney who prepares the opinion allows issuance by the participating abstractor. Written contractual approval by the division director for division issuance will be based upon the completion of a division request form by a participating abstractor and the attachment of all disclosures required by the division. A participating abstractor authorized to process a title guaranty commitment or certificate must comply with the Code of Iowa, these rules, manuals, requirements, and any other written or oral instructions given by the division and in no other manner whatsoever. The rights of the participating abstractor under the preceding sentence are not exclusive and are subject to the rights of the authority, the division and of other participants of the division to issue commitments or certificates and are further subject to the right of the division to appoint other participants. A participating abstractor's right to process commitments and certificates is a privilege for the convenience of the division and may be terminated pursuant to the written contract with the division.

g. Training. A participating abstractor authorized to process title guaranty commitments and certificates for division issuance shall complete division forms and procedures training prior to processing title guaranty commitments and certificates for division issuance.

h. Title files. A participating abstractor authorized to process title guaranty commitments and certificates for division issuance shall maintain separate title files or maintain client files in such a manner that information pertaining to the preparation of the commitments and certificates and all underwriting determinations made by the participating attorney as an agent and underwriter for the division are readily available for review by the division. A participating abstractor shall maintain title files and the title portion of client files for a period of ten years after the effective date of the certificate or certificates.

i. Forms. The division may provide forms to a participating abstractor for use in processing commitments and certificates for division issuance. The participating abstractor may not alter any form supplied by the division, or use a form supplied by another person or entity to bind the division, or otherwise bind the division to liability with a form, other writing or representation not supplied or authorized by the division. A participating abstractor who obtains serialized forms from the division must maintain a forms register, in a format approved or supplied by the division, in which the participating abstractor shall enter a record of and show the disposition of all serialized forms. In addition, the participating abstractor shall:

(1) Return the original of any damaged, spoiled, or otherwise unusable serialized form to the division;

(2) Return the original of any unused serialized form to the division at the request of the division;

(3) Not transfer or attempt to transfer unissued serialized forms to another participant or other person or entity unless authorized in writing by the division.

If the participating abstractor fails to comply with the requirements of this rule, in addition to the division's other rights and remedies, the division may refuse to supply any forms to the participating abstractor and, upon written request from the division, the participating abstractor must deliver immediately all division forms and pending title guaranty files to the division.

The participating abstractor shall be liable to the division for loss or damage sustained by the division by reason of the loss of, misuse of, or inability of the participating abstractor to account for any form supplied by the division or by reason of the failure of the participating abstractor to comply with the requirements of this rule.

9.6(4) Abstract of title.

a. Preparation. An abstract of title shall be brought up to date and certified by a participating abstractor prior to the issuance of a title guaranty certificate.

b. Compliance. All abstracts of title shall be prepared and conducted in compliance with division procedures in effect at the time of the updating of the abstract. A participating abstractor shall retain a written or electronic copy of each abstract of title prepared for a title guaranty certificate and shall provide such copy to the division upon request.

9.6(5) Attorney title opinion. All attorney title opinions shall be prepared and issued in compliance with division procedures in effect at the time of issue. A participating attorney shall retain a written or electronic copy of each attorney title opinion and shall provide such copy to the division upon request. Participating attorneys who are issuing agents for the division may issue a commitment as the preliminary attorney title opinion and the title guaranty certificate as the final attorney title opinion in compliance with division procedures in effect at the time of issue.

9.6(6) Participant's interest in property. No participant shall prepare an abstract of title or issue attorney title opinions, commitments, or certificates upon property in which the participant has an interest without prior authorization of the division.