



Carolina Multiple Listing Services, Inc.

CHARLOTTE REGIONAL REALTOR® ASSOCIATION

What is a Virtual Office Web site (VOW)?

A Virtual Office Web site (VOW) is a Member Participant's Internet Web site, or a feature of a Member Participant's Web site, through which the Member Participant is capable of providing real-estate brokerage services to consumers.

- The Member Participant must first establish a broker-consumer relationship (as defined by state law).
- The VOW provides the consumer with the opportunity to search MLS listing information, subject to the Member Participant's oversight, supervision and accountability.

A VOW is different from [Internet Data Exchange \(IDX\)](#) in that a Member Participant operating a VOW can provide any listing information available in the MLS through the VOW that a broker or agent could provide in a brick-and-mortar office. In contrast, IDX is considered advertising and contains only limited MLS information from the MLS. On May 27, 2008, NAR and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) reached a favorable settlement, concluding a two-year DOJ investigation (followed by two-and-a-half years of litigation) regarding NAR's multiple listing policy as it pertained to the display of listings from the MLS on brokers' VOWs.

Important changes to the NAR MLS policies and model rules required all MLSs to adopt a VOW policy no later than Feb. 15, 2009.

Is CMLS in compliance with NAR policies? CMLS has complied with NAR policies relative to VOWs and has incorporated the VOW rules into Section 17 of the "[CMLS Rules and Regulations](#)."

The CMLS VOW program only applies to VOW Web sites that display listings obtained via the VOW data feed. VOW rules do not apply to IDX sites, the MLS system itself, print advertising or to Web sites displaying listings obtained from other sources. Print advertising and misuse of MLS data are governed by state regulations, the "[Realtor® Code of Ethics](#)" and the "[CMLS Rules and Regulations](#)."

How do I get started? As this program is new, members wishing to create a VOW are somewhat on their own. CMLS has adopted the rules and made arrangements to deliver data via FTP. Below are links to resources concerning VOWs.

[NAR-VOW Page](#) - This page on Realtor.org details the terms of the legal settlement,

and also provides links to the NAR policy, model rules, and frequently asked questions. As NAR changes its site frequently, please e-mail [Steve Byrd](#) if this link is no longer valid.

["CMLS Rules and Regulations"](#) - See Section 17 for details on CMLS requirements for operating a VOW.

[CMLS VOW Data Feed Contract](#) - Section 17.3 of the ["CMLS Rules and Regulations"](#) requires Member Participants intent on operating a VOW to notify the MLS of such intent, and Section 17.20 of the ["CMLS Rules and Regulations"](#) requires the Member Participant and its Affiliated VOW Partner (AVP) operating the VOW on behalf of the Member Participant to execute a license agreement.