Billing the time you spend talking a case through with a colleague

You and another timekeeper sit down and work out what to do next on a case. Can you bill it? Here is the simple version.

Short answer: yes. If you did real legal work, the work was needed, and your entry says what you actually did - you can bill it. The trick is in how you write it.

Two different questions

People mix these up. They are not the same thing.

CAN I BILL IT?

This is the ethics question. Was the work done? Was it needed? Is the description honest? If yes to all three, you can bill it.

WILL THE CLIENT PAY FOR IT?

This is a contract question. Some clients and insurance carriers have billing guidelines that limit "internal conferences." That is their choice about what they pay for - it does not make your work unethical.

So "the carrier won't pay for it" is a reason the bill might get cut. It is not a reason the work was wrong.

Why "conference" gets cut

Reviewers read "confer with associate" as two people chatting, and as the client paying for the same hour twice. Usually that is not what happened - you were analyzing the case and deciding what to do. But the entry only told them about the meeting, not the work.

The fix is to describe the work. That is what you are being paid for, and it is what the rules ask you to describe.

Bill your deliverable

Same meeting, three timekeepers, three different entries. Each person bills the part they are responsible for. That shows the reviewer three different jobs, not one job billed three times.

Partner Strategic direction	*"Strategize and evaluate issues surrounding Plaintiff's failure to respond to Defendant's discovery; determination and recommendation re motion strategy to advance client's position."*
Associate Your next legal step	*"Evaluate and strategize issues surrounding Plaintiff's failure to respond to Defendant's discovery in preparation for Defendant's Motion to Compel."*
Paralegal Your support task	*"Evaluate and strategize issues surrounding Plaintiff's failure to respond to Defendant's discovery in preparation for coordinating documentary evidence to support the Motion to Compel."*

None of these entries say "conference." They don't need to. An honest description of the work you did is what the rules require - who was in the room is not part of that.

Before and after

GETS CUT

"Confer with associate re: MSJ" - 0.5

Names the meeting. Hides the work.

BEST

"Analyze deficiencies in Plaintiff's responses to Interrogatories 4, 7 and 12 and RFPs 3-9; identify grounds for motion to compel and determine which responses to move on" - 0.5

Specific work, your own contribution, and it shows why the time was needed.

Three quick checks before you save the entry

1. **Did I describe the work, not the meeting?** Lead with what you analyzed, decided, or prepared.
2. **Am I billing only my own contribution?** Your deliverable, your time. Not a copy of someone else's entry.
3. **Does this client have a rule about internal conferences?** If the firm agreed to one, honor it at bill review - apply the rule, don't hide the meeting. The entry itself still describes the work.

Describe the work, not the meeting.
If a client has a rule about meetings, honor it - don't hide it.