Questions to Ask Before Hiring an Auto Accident Lawyer

Picking a car accident attorney is easier with a short list of questions. Some crashes involve a single insurer and a modest property claim, while others bring serious injuries, several policies and disputed fault. These questions can make a first meeting more productive, whatever the size of the claim.

Check the license first

Before the first meeting, check the basics. Each state bar or licensing agency provides a way to confirm that a lawyer is licensed and in good standing, and many also publish disciplinary history. A directory listing or a rating badge reflects the publisher's own selection process, rather than a license check https://caraccidentlawyers.wiki/reference/claim-and-settlement/ or a prediction of results. If the crash occurred out of state, ask whether the lawyer is licensed there or plans to work with local counsel.

Experience with car crash claims

Ask how many car crash claims the lawyer handles, and of what kind. An auto accident attorney should be comfortable with insurance coverage questions, including uninsured motorist (UM) claims, PIP, MedPay and Medicare or health plan liens. Ask how the firm gathers evidence such as crash reports, dashcam video and event data recorder (EDR) downloads. Ask whether the lawyer has tried car crash cases before a jury, since trial experience can affect how a case is prepared, even though most claims settle.

Understand the fee agreement

Injury lawyers often handle these claims on a contingency fee, a percentage of any recovery. ABA Model Rule 1.5(c), which many states follow in some form, requires a contingent fee agreement to be in writing and signed by the client, and to explain how the fee is calculated and whether expenses come out before or after it. Ask who pays case costs if there is no recovery, including filing fees, record charges and deposition costs. Ask whether the percentage changes if a lawsuit is filed, and ask for a written closing statement at the end.

Who does the work

Ask whether the car accident lawyer you meet will be the one handling the case, and how often updates will come. Ask who will answer questions when the lawyer is unavailable, and whether updates come by phone, email or a client portal. ABA Model Rule 1.5(e) generally requires the client's written agreement before lawyers in different firms divide a fee, so any referral or co-counsel plan should be explained at the start.

Preparing for the consultation

A first meeting goes further when the paperwork is on the table. Bring the crash report, or the report number if the report is not ready yet, along with photos of the scene and the vehicles. Letters from insurers and any forms already signed are worth bringing too, since they show who has made contact and what has been agreed. Medical bills and proof of missed work help document the losses so far.

Red flags and realistic expectations

Be wary of anyone who promises a specific dollar amount at a first meeting. No lawyer can predict the outcome of a claim with certainty. Unsolicited in-person or phone approaches after a crash are another warning sign, because ABA Model Rule 7.3 generally restricts lawyers from soliciting clients through live person-to-person contact. An automobile accident lawyer should be able to explain the statute of limitations that applies. This article is general information and not legal advice.