How to Choose a Car Accident Attorney

Hiring an auto accident lawyer goes better with a few clear questions. Some crashes involve a single insurer and a modest property claim, while others involve serious injuries, several policies and disputed fault. The questions below can make a first consultation more useful, whatever the size of the claim.

Confirm the license and record

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 publish public discipline records. A directory listing or a rating badge reflects the publisher's own selection process, rather than a license check or a prediction of results. If the crash happened in another state, ask whether the lawyer is licensed there or will work with local counsel.

Experience with car crash claims

Ask how many car crash claims the lawyer handles and what kinds. 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 collects evidence like crash reports, dashcam video and event data recorder (EDR) downloads. Ask whether the lawyer has tried car crash cases before a jury, because trial experience can shape how a case is prepared, even though most claims settle.

Read the fee agreement closely

Many car accident lawyer injury lawyers work 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 state how the fee is calculated and whether expenses are deducted before or after the fee. Ask who covers case costs if there is no recovery, such as filing fees, medical 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 will handle the case

Ask whether the car crash attorney at the consultation will handle the case personally, and how often updates will come. Ask who answers questions when the lawyer is in court, and how updates are usually sent. If the firm plans to refer the case or bring in co-counsel, ABA Model Rule 1.5(e) generally requires the client's agreement, confirmed in writing, before lawyers in different firms divide a fee.

Documents worth bringing

A first meeting goes further when the paperwork is on the table. Bring the police report, or at least the report number, together with photos of the vehicles and the scene. Letters from insurers and any forms already signed are worth bringing too, because they show what has already been said and signed. Medical bills and pay stubs help show the losses so far.

What no lawyer can promise

Be caraccidentlawyers.wiki cautious of anyone who promises a dollar figure at the first meeting. No lawyer can predict the outcome of a claim with certainty. Unsolicited calls or visits after a crash are another warning sign, since ABA Model Rule 7.3 generally restricts live person-to-person solicitation by lawyers. An automobile accident lawyer should be able to explain the statute of limitations that applies. This article is general information and not legal advice.