Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Car Accident Attorney

Choosing a car accident lawyer goes better with a few clear questions. Some crashes involve one 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, regardless of the size of the claim.

Confirm the license and record

Before the first meeting, check the basics. Every state bar or licensing agency offers a way to check that a lawyer is licensed and in good standing, and many publish public discipline records. A listing in a directory or a badge from a rating publisher reflects that publisher's selection, 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.

Ask about relevant experience

Ask how many car crash claims the lawyer handles and what kinds. An auto accident attorney should be comfortable with insurance coverage questions, such as uninsured motorist (UM) claims, PIP and MedPay, and liens from health plans or Medicare. 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 resolve without a trial.

Read the fee agreement closely

Many injury lawyers work on a contingency fee, meaning 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 https://caraccidentlawyers.wiki/directory/metro-atlanta-law-firms/ fee. Ask who pays case costs if there is no recovery, including filing fees, record charges and deposition costs. Ask whether the percentage rises if a lawsuit is filed, and ask for a written closing statement at the end.

Who does the work

Ask whether the car crash attorney at the consultation will handle the case personally, and how often updates will come. Ask who will answer questions when the lawyer is unavailable, 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 consultation is more useful when the documents are available. Bring the crash report, or the report number if the report is not ready yet, together with photos of the vehicles and the scene. 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 pay stubs help show the losses so far.

Warning signs

Be wary of anyone who promises a specific dollar amount at a first meeting. No lawyer can know the outcome of a claim in advance. Unsolicited calls or visits 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 can explain which statute of limitations applies. This article is general information and not legal advice.