How to Choose a Car Accident Attorney

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

Start with the license

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 listing in a directory or a badge from a rating publisher reflects that publisher's selection, not a license check and not 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 lawyer should be comfortable with 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 resolve without a trial.

Understand the fee agreement

Many injury lawyers work on a contingency fee, a percentage of any recovery. ABA Model Rule 1.5(c), which many states have adopted 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 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 answers questions when the lawyer is in court, and how updates are usually sent. 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 consultation is more useful when the documents are available. Bring the crash report, or the report number if the report is not ready yet, along with photos of ***car accident lawyer*** 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.

What no lawyer can promise

Be 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, because ABA Model Rule 7.3 generally restricts lawyers from soliciting clients through live person-to-person contact. A car accident lawyer can explain which statute of limitations applies. This article is general information and not legal advice.