How to Choose a Car Accident Lawyer

Hiring an auto accident lawyer is easier with a short list of questions. Some crashes involve one 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, regardless of the size of the claim.

Start with the license

Before any meeting, confirm 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 or a prediction of results. If the crash occurred out of state, ask whether the lawyer is licensed *caraccidentlawyers.wiki* there or plans to work with local counsel.

Ask about relevant experience

Ask how many car crash claims the lawyer handles, and of what kind. 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 taken car crash cases to trial, since trial experience can affect how a case is prepared, even though most claims resolve without a trial.

Fees and the written 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, such as filing fees, medical 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 will handle the case

Ask whether the car accident lawyer you meet will be the one handling the case, and how often to expect updates. 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.

Preparing for the consultation

A consultation is more useful when the documents are available. 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.

Warning signs

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, since ABA Model Rule 7.3 generally restricts live person-to-person solicitation by lawyers. A motor vehicle accident attorney can explain which statute of limitations applies. This is general information, not legal advice.