Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Car Accident Attorney

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 involve 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 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 also publish disciplinary history. A directory listing or a rating badge reflects the publisher's own selection process, not a license check and not 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 taken car crash cases to trial, because trial experience can shape how a case is prepared, even though most claims settle.

Read the fee agreement closely

Many 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 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 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 to expect updates. Ask who answers questions when the lawyer caraccidentlawyers.wiki 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.

What to bring to the first meeting

A consultation is more useful when the documents are available. Bring the police report, or at least the report number, 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 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 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 car accident lawyer can explain which statute of limitations applies. This article is general information and not legal advice.