Choosing a Car Accident Lawyer: Questions to Ask

Hiring an auto 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. These questions can make a first meeting more productive, regardless of the size of the claim.

Check the license first

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 there or plans to work with local counsel.

Questions about 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.

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 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, including filing fees, record charges and deposition costs. Ask whether the percentage changes if a lawsuit is filed, and ask for a written closing statement at the **car accident lawyers** end.

Communication and staffing

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 whether updates come by phone, email or a client portal. 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 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, 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 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 should be able to explain the statute of limitations that applies. This is general information, not legal advice.