How to Choose a Car Accident Lawyer

Picking a car accident attorney goes better with a few clear questions. Some crashes involve a single 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, whatever the size of the claim.

Confirm the license and record

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, 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.

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 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.

Fees and the written agreement

Injury lawyers often handle these claims 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 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. 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 first meeting goes further when the paperwork is on the table. Bring the police report, or at least the report number, together with photos caraccidentlawyers.wiki 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 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 should be able to explain the statute of limitations that applies. This is general information, not legal advice.