Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Car Accident Attorney

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, regardless of the size of the claim.

Start with the license

Before any meeting, confirm the basics. Every state bar or licensing agency offers a way to check that a lawyer is licensed and in good standing, and many publish public discipline records. 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.

Experience with car crash claims

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 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

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 have adopted 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 covers 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 about the written closing statement at the end of the case.

Communication and staffing

Ask whether the car accident lawyer you meet will Car Accident Lawyers Wiki be the one handling the case, 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.

Documents worth bringing

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. Insurance letters, claim numbers and any forms already signed matter as well, 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.

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