How to Choose a Car Accident Attorney

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. The questions below can make a first consultation more useful, whatever the size of the claim.

Check the license first

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 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 happened in another state, ask whether the lawyer is licensed there or will 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, 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) **Car Accident Lawyers Wiki** downloads. Ask whether the lawyer *car accident lawyer* has tried car crash cases before a jury, because trial experience can shape how a case is prepared, even though most claims settle.

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 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, 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.

Communication and staffing

Ask whether the car crash attorney at the consultation will handle the case personally, and how often to expect updates. Ask who answers questions when the lawyer is in court, 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.

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 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 in-person or phone approaches 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 can explain which statute of limitations applies. This is general information, not legal advice.