



10 THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN HIRING A LAWYER

1 WHAT IS THE LAWYER'S EXPERIENCE AND TRACK RECORD? ARE HIS OR HER CLIENTS SATISFIED WITH THE WORK? DOES THE LAWYER REGULARLY GO TO COURT OR TRY CASES, OR DOES THE LAWYER TRY TO JUST SETTLE CASES? HOW DOES THE LAWYER INVESTIGATE AND PREPARE CASES?

Hire a lawyer that is a good fit for you. While most cases do not go to trial, the lawyers that are willing to go to trial and have a reputation for trying cases generally get better settlement results. Of course, should a case go to trial or a hearing, you want to hire a lawyer who knows his or her way around the courtroom and is willing to fight.

2 IS THE LAWYER ACCESSIBLE? WHAT IS THE LAWYER'S POLICY ON STAFF VERSUS ATTORNEY CONTACT? IS THE FIRM AVAILABLE 24 HOURS 7 DAYS A WEEK?

Some lawyers only communicate with clients by mail and may only have their paralegals talk with clients on the phone. Other lawyers may communicate by email, text, social media or other modern methods. Some lawyers may use staff to talk to clients about some issues while making themselves available to talk to clients about others. Make sure that you and your lawyer are on the same page about how accessible the lawyer is.

3 IS THE FIRST CONSULTATION FREE? WHAT DOES THE LAWYER DO IN THE INITIAL MEETING?

Find out ahead of time how much you will need to bring, if anything, for an initial meeting with the lawyer. You want to leave the meeting with a plan of action and an understanding of how the law works in your case. Make sure the lawyer clearly understand your goals in your case and has explained whether the lawyer can meet them.

4 HOW IS THE LAWYER PAID?

If your case is a civil case, does the lawyer work on a contingency fee, meaning that they get paid a percentage of the money recovered, or does the lawyer bill by the hour? If your case is criminal, does the lawyer charge a flat fee, or does he or she bill by the hour? Because different lawyers handle payment different ways, you want to have a clear understanding of payment arrangements at the outset of the case.

5 DOES THE LAWYER INVOLVE THE CLIENT IN DECISION-MAKING?

Some lawyers, unfortunately, make decisions on their clients' behalf without talking with the client first. Hire a lawyer who understands that all major decision belongs to the client after listening to the lawyer's advice. Steer clear of lawyers who try to force clients to make decisions or take actions against their own judgment.

6 HOW QUICKLY WILL THE LAWYER TAKE ACTION ON THE CASE?

Make sure the lawyer is not going to sit on the case for a long time before doing something. If you need a court date or hearing immediately, can the lawyer get you one and is the lawyer available? Discuss with the lawyer how soon he or she will begin work on your case.

7 DOES THE LAWYER TAKE TIME TO THINK STRATEGICALLY AND TO PLAN HOW TO APPROACH YOUR CASE?

Ask the lawyer how he or she works to represent you. Does the lawyer regularly look at his or her cases to develop an action plan? How often will the lawyer look at your file or meet with you to discuss your case? Hire a lawyer who you feel will have the right approach to your case.

8 DOES THE ATTORNEY KNOW HIS OR HER WAY AROUND THE COURTROOM? HOW MANY CASES HAS HE OR SHE TRIED?

Going to trial is the strongest weapon a lawyer has in fighting for clients. Just like a nuclear bomb, this option must be exercised by someone who knows what they are doing and as a last resort. Statistics show that most cases are resolved without going to trial. However, rarely can someone predict at the beginning of a case how the case will resolve. Make sure that your lawyer has trial experience and is comfortable trying a case. You never know if you will wind up in front of a jury.

9 HOW DOES THE LAWYER UPDATE CLIENTS ON PROGRESS IN THEIR CASE?

Ask your prospective lawyer what methods he or she will in keeping you updated and involved in your case. Does the lawyer set regularly scheduled meetings with clients? When important events occur, will the lawyer tell you what's going on? It is important to know how the lawyer will prepare you for depositions, mediations, and even trial. A good result requires teamwork. Find out just how you will know what your lawyer is doing for you during your case.

10 IS YOUR LAWYER AGGRESSIVE? DOES HE OR SHE KNOW HOW TO FIGHT FOR YOU? DOES YOUR LAWYER "WORK SMART"?

Lawyers are bound by many rules: ethical, procedural, evidentiary, and others. All of these rules set a framework or boundaries for how a lawyer can pursue a case. Make sure that your lawyer knows how to work within, and around, these rules. Find out if your lawyer will use these rules to your advantage. A good lawyer will also tell you when these rules are not helpful to your case and how to decide what to do when they are not. Stay clear from lawyers who say they break rules or do not care what the rules are. The last thing you want to do is wind up in front of a judge with a lawyer who cannot present your case because he or she does not understand the rules. The most aggressive lawyer does not always equate to the best lawyer, either. It's more important to fight smart than to be aggressive just for the sake of being aggressive.

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS WHEN YOU ARE CONSIDERING
HIRING A LAWYER, PLEASE CALL ERIC STEVENSON OR CHRIS KLOTZ AT
(850) 444-0000, YOUR INITIAL CONSULTATION IS FREE**