Choosing a Car Accident Lawyer: Questions to Ask

Choosing a car accident lawyer 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.

Start with the license

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, not a license check and not 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 what kinds. An auto accident attorney should be comfortable with insurance 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 taken car crash cases to trial, since caraccidentlawyers.wiki trial experience can affect how a case is prepared, even though most claims resolve without a trial.

Fees and the written 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 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.

Communication and staffing

Ask whether the car accident lawyer you meet will be the one handling the case, and how often updates will come. Ask who answers questions when the lawyer is in court, 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.

What to bring to the first meeting

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, together with photos of the vehicles and the scene. Insurance letters, claim numbers and any forms already signed matter as well, because they show what has already been said and signed. 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 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 motor vehicle accident attorney should be able to explain the statute of limitations that applies. This is general information, not legal advice.