Choosing a car accident lawyer Car Accident Lawyer: Questions to Ask

Picking a car accident attorney is easier with a short list of 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.

Check the license first

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 publish public discipline records. 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 occurred out of state, ask whether the lawyer is licensed there or plans to 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 taken car crash cases to trial, because trial experience can shape how a case is prepared, even though most claims settle.

Read the fee agreement closely

Many injury lawyers work 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 pays case costs if there is no recovery, such as filing fees, medical record charges and deposition costs. Ask whether the percentage changes 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 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 of the vehicles and the scene. Letters from insurers and any forms already signed are worth bringing too, because they show what has already been said and signed. Medical bills and pay stubs help show the losses so far.

Red flags and realistic expectations

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, since ABA Model Rule 7.3 generally restricts live person-to-person solicitation by lawyers. A motor vehicle accident attorney should be able to explain the statute of limitations that applies. This is **car accident claim** general information, not legal advice.