

I need an attorney! How do I choose?



The search to find the right attorney can feel overwhelming and stressful, but like most daunting tasks breaking it down into smaller reasonable and logical steps will alleviate the pressure an individual can feel. First step away from any emotions you may be experiencing due to the legal situation you need assistance with and grab a pen and paper to make

notes about the following suggestions and questions when pursuing legal guidance.

Ask yourself what kind of lawyer do I need? What am I pursuing guidance in? Lawyers specialize in different areas such family law, real estate, guardianship, and other notable areas. First, determine the type of lawyer you need. Second get online to now search lawyers that specialize in this area. There are many valuable resources online to search ratings and information of lawyers such Avvo or other independent website. Browse the website of the lawyer's firm to read about his or her background, education, experience, and ratings. An imperative way to also search for a lawyer is utilizing referrals from other friends and professionals you may know. For example if you have a family law attorney friend and you need assistance for a criminal law case the other lawyer will have referrals to lawyers he or she knows. Resources also can include local and state bar associations.

Next after researching, meet several lawyers in person and be prepared by writing down questions that are significant to you and other people and information vital to your case. Be reasonable and prepared by trying to focus on the questions like an interview and not tell all your emotions and story to take up all time and become easily off topic. Don't be hesitant to ask about their education, credentials, billing and other valuable pieces of information to find the right lawyers to represent you. Feel out your comfort level with him or her

and trust. Take the time to do this with several lawyers and you will find a better fit for you and your case. Some attorneys may have consultation fees ranging from 25.00 to 100.00 and others may be free of charge. Remember a firm is a business and consulting is a part of this, so my advice is you also are prepared and treat it like a business and your matter will be handled more efficiently.

Finally one of the most important pieces of advice to remember is setting reasonable expectations. Most people do not speak with or use lawyers on a daily basis so they don't know what to expect. A lawyer is not a social worker, financial advisor, doctor, psychologist or realtor. The profession is based on providing appropriate representation, case law to support you and guide/counsel you on the matters at hand. They should not guarantee you all will be right and an accurate result. They should guide and provide you on all information and ways a case may be pursued winning or losses. I would think of it like a doctor giving you information about how a medication may affect you: this is best way it will help you to these may be potential negative side effects and changes that can alter your physical status. The doctor like the lawyer has a best sound expectation of a result, but cannot guarantee one due to the many moving parts law has. If they do guarantee this and say it is right and will happen, I would be hesitant to use them. Research more options and keep a clear and rationale mind.

Choosing a lawyer can be straightforward by taking it into your hands to think clearly and write down your options and what it is you need. To review, ask yourself what type of law I am pursuing, research online through the various resources, utilize referrals, meet multiple lawyers with prepared questions to feel out the best fit, and have reasonable expectations.

What Should I Ask in a Consultation?



In an initial consultation with an attorney set expectations with him or her, be prepared, and utilize your time efficiently. What should I ask? Here are some suggestions to ask no matter what type of lawyer or case you may need support with.

1. Communication

Communication like any relationship is vital to make everyone happy and understanding of expectations. Make an outline of how you and your lawyer will communicate. First and foremost ask your lawyer about how he or she will provide you with updates about your case and how this will be communicated, for example, by phone or e-mail and the time frame of expectation for updates, weekly, daily, or more. Ask and outline the time of day that works best for you both to meet or communicate on updates.

2. Staff working on my case

Many firms have several attorneys and associates that may assist in your case. Ask about how this works and different billing rates depending on the needs for substituting staff in a case.

3. What are the different possible outcomes with my case?

All outcomes of your case should be discussed so you are prepared and knowledgeable to each scenario. Don't be hesitant to ask all questions you may have and this will help you have more reasonable expectations for your case.

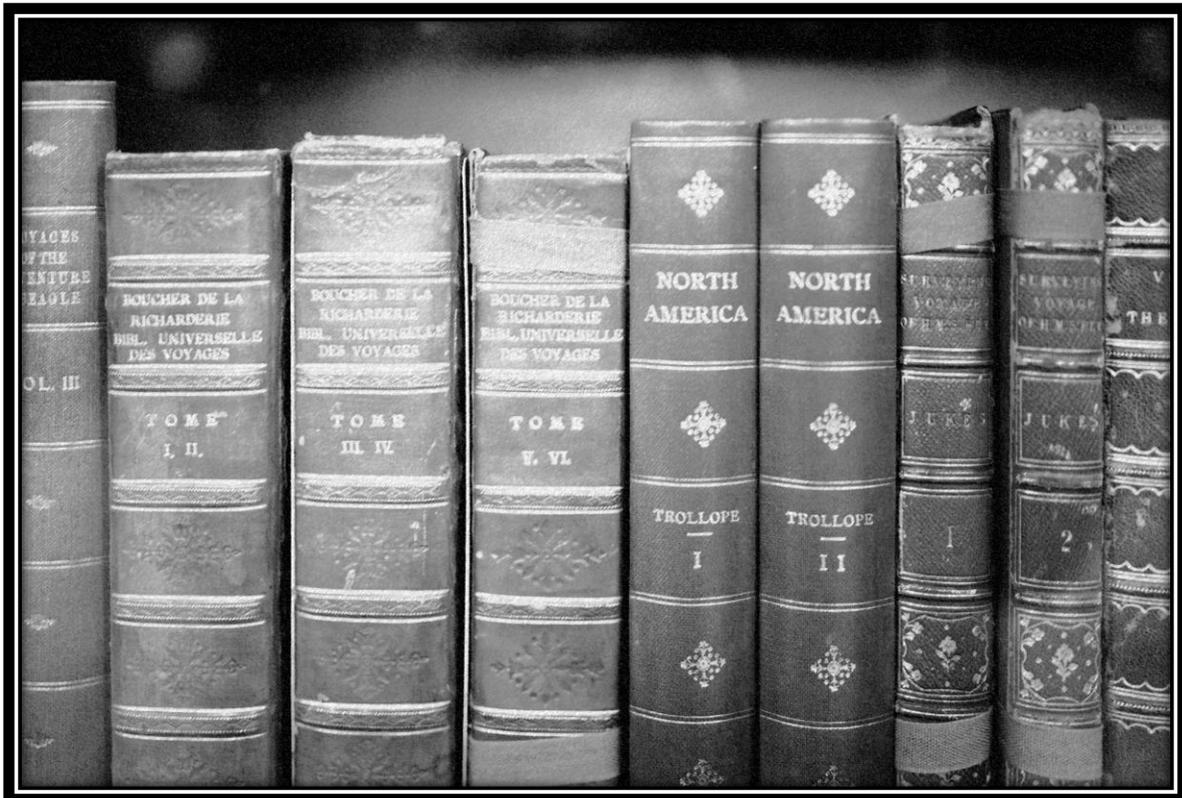
4. Expectations for the Time Frame of My Case

Ask about expectations of how long your case may take and factors affecting the progress such as judges and docket times to will again set up a more reasonable expectation for you and your attorney.

5. What happens if I am not happy with your work? Can I fire you?

This is a professional relationship with mutual understanding you are about to engage with your attorney and self and responsibility for both parties. Set up the understanding and expectations at the beginning including billing disputes, how the professional relationship can be terminated, and be flexible and practical. You can ask for this in writing and both parties engaging in the mutual understanding can sign.

SEE CHECK LIST ON NEXT PAGE



CHECKLIST

- Research lawyers**
- Find a Lawyer that practices in the legal area you need help**
- Prepare questions about your case**
- Meet with the lawyer in person**
- Ask questions about:**
 - Communication**
 - Staff working on my case**
 - Different possible outcomes with my case?**
 - Expectations for the Time Frame of My Case**
 - What happens if I am not happy with your work? Can I fire you?**
 - How often do you invoice clients?**

NOTES FROM MEETING:
