

How To Select A Qualified Lawyer

The purpose of this letter is to assist and empower persons who have been subjected to serious injury or the death of a loved one to be able to select and hire the most qualified attorney possible for these types of cases.

In the United States, people with injuries, or whose family members have been killed, may retain an attorney on a contingent fee agreement. This means that the attorney does not receive any fee or payment unless money is recovered and the attorney fee is paid as a percentage of the amount recovered. What this means in reality is that people with cases involving serious injury or wrongful death have the absolute ability to hire the best and most qualified attorney specializing in these type cases, and this is a crucial right that is all too often underestimated.

As consumers, we all know how to evaluate and purchase things like cars, refrigerators, houses, and the like, but when it comes to hiring professionals like lawyers; we are often at a loss.

What You Have The Right To Ask About

This letter and the corresponding checklist will take some of the mystery out of hiring an attorney, and hopefully make it easier for you to make this important decision. As a consumer of legal services, you have the absolute right, in the initial interview, to ask the attorney various questions about his or her background and work in the field of complex civil damage suits arising out of catastrophic injury or wrongful death. Remember, you are the employer, and you are doing the hiring, and you should not be afraid to ask questions. The results of your lawsuit will probably have an important and long term impact on some aspects of the quality of your life and the more qualified your lawyer is, the better your result is likely to be. I would suggest that at the initial interview with an attorney, you take with you a checklist and follow that in questioning the attorney about education, experience, and competence in handling cases similar to yours. Don't be afraid to let him or her know you are using a checklist and, in fact, make notations as to what the answers are. The following questions are suggested:

1. How many cases similar to mine have you been involved with as the principal or lead attorney over the past three years?
2. What types of cases do you handle, and what percentage of your practice is devoted to cases and injuries similar to mine?
3. What were the results in terms of settlements or verdicts for the last five cases you have handled involving injuries similar to mine?
4. How many cases similar to mine have you ever tried as lead counsel to a verdict, and what was your highest verdict?
5. Have you ever tried a case similar to mine and obtained a jury verdict with a very substantial offer of settlement on the table? (If so, what was the highest amount offered prior to the verdict, and what was the amount of the verdict?)
6. What types of cases have you tried this year and what was the result of each case?
7. Would you and your law firm be able and willing to spend, in advance, as much as \$50,000.00 in the investigation, preparation, and presentation of my case, if necessary?
8. Please tell me what professional organizations you belong to. (Are you a member of the

American Board of Trial Lawyers?.)

9. Would you mind telling me the size of your law firm in terms of the number of lawyers and the number of support personnel you have? I would also like to know what support personnel you have who would specifically be working with you on my case.
10. What experts do you expect you will be hiring to assist you with the analysis and presentation of my case?
 - A. Accident reconstruction experts?
 - B. Vocational economic analysts?
 - C. Biomechanical engineer?
 - D. Life care and planning specialist?
 - E. Highway and traffic design expert?
 - F. Human factors expert?
 - G. Trucking industry expert? or
 - H. Any other expert you believe would be of help for the presentation of my case?

When selecting an attorney, you must make sure not only that the attorney is well-qualified to represent you, but that, and maybe even more importantly, the attorney and the law firm have the experience and expertise to evaluate your case properly and the conviction to try that case to a jury verdict in the event the defendants are unwilling to pay the full value of your case. Every case involving death or personal injury has a finite value and that finite value is what a jury will give as an award for the case when it is properly prepared and tried before that jury. Many settlement efforts are at best a guess or projection of what a jury will do. You can be assured that defense attorneys and the insurance companies know which lawyers will try major, complex personal injury or wrongful death lawsuits and which lawyers will not. They also know which lawyers obtain large verdicts in those types of cases.

Every person who has been seriously injured or who has a claim for the wrongful death of a loved one deserves not only to be treated with respect and dignity but, more importantly, they deserve to have lawyers who have the knowledge, experience, and commitment to demand absolute and total justice for their clients.

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Please use this checklist to evaluate the competence of any lawyer you Interview to determine which lawyer would be best to handle your claim.

Yours very truly,

W. Carl Reynolds

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