

10 TIPS FOR HIRING A LAWYER

1 Experience

How long has the attorney been practicing law? Does the attorney practice only criminal defense, or do they juggle multiple practice areas? You want to make sure that your attorney has a passion for criminal defense work. When an attorney juggles multiple practice areas, it's hard for them to really know the ins and outs of all criminal cases. What that attorney might have a basic gist of or understanding of, another attorney may have mastered. You need someone dedicated to the practice of criminal defense work spending 100% of their time working on your case.

2 Location

Having an attorney local to courthouses is critical. Most of the criminal law, in terms of getting the best offers for clients, is based on personal relationships. When your attorney knows the local judges, your cases get handled faster and with more care. When they know the Das, there isn't a need to play games because the working relationship is already there. Knowing the court procedures is crucial because if the attorney does not know how cases are handled in the individual courtrooms and courthouses, it reflects poorly on them, and your case loses credibility.

3 Familiarity with cases like yours

Any attorney can tell you they handle criminal cases, but it matters the substance of what they have handled too. Any attorney could handle a DUI case, but what if you have

a complex welfare fraud case or a serious sex case? Those require special care and knowledge that not all attorneys have. You want your attorney to know what they are doing from the beginning, not scrambling to research the moment you leave their office.

4 Are you hiring a Legal Mill?

Many big firms cite their team of attorneys or how many years of experience they have, but after you hire them, things change. You could hear a law partner tell you they have 35+ years of experience, but after hiring them, get assigned to an attorney fresh out of law school. In many of those situations, the experienced person never sees your case the moment you make a payment to them. So, after spending an hour explaining your story to one attorney, your case is dumped on some other attorney's desk that you have no comfort in, and have never spoken to before.

Also, when hiring bigger firms, fully expect to have a different attorney every court hearing. In many big firms, the goal is to retain as many cases as possible. This means that your attorney, through no fault of their own, will be rushing from court to court, or having someone cover your hearing because the bosses need them to handle a higher paying client case. Those attorneys are therefore at the mercy of their bosses every day. Make sure you check who will actually handle your case, and don't buy into years of experience from someone who won't ever see your case. Find someone you have comfort with, and who will handle your case from the first call to case resolution.

5 Read Reviews Online

See what other clients have said about the law firm. Some places like avvo.com or others you can see misleading reviews and endorsements from other attorneys that should be ignored. Read what people say. Does the attorney seem to care? Are they only after your money? What did they do to help another client with their case? Read these carefully, sift through the fake or paid for reviews and see what this law firm is about.

6 Do you feel like you can trust this Attorney with you or your loved one's freedom?

When speaking to the attorney, do they seem to know about the case before even speaking to you? Do you think they did any research before you even met with them? If so, does the attorney seem to know about the charges against you or your loved one, and how he or she would handle the case? This is important information, because if you feel comfortable with the attorney, then you can trust them with such an important case. If they are only concerned about money, and not even listening to the facts of the case, then you can never really know the quality of the service you will be provided. You need someone you can rely on to take on such an important task? Whether your case is a first time DUI offense, or a Murder case, all cases should matter to the attorney, and be treated that way. You don't want to feel like your case doesn't matter, so you need to trust the attorney will take care of your case, just like they do with all of their others.

7 Communication

How easy are you able to get ahold of your attorney, and how quickly do they respond to your calls or messages? Every client knows that they are not the only case an attorney handles, but they also know that it should not take 2-3 days to get a simple response back from them unless the attorney is on vacation. If the attorney is able to text, or email quickly, then you should be able to have that communication, even if they cannot call you because they are in Court or in a meeting. You need to know you can reach your attorney, and that they will get back to you within a reasonable time to ease whatever concerns you may have. No attorney is working 24 hours a day, but consider how quickly they get back to you as an indicator of when your case gets more serious, how soon will you know what your fate can be?

8 Is your Attorney able to easily listen, and explain?

Attorneys speak another language most of the time. So it is important to have an attorney have the time and patience to tell you or your loved ones what is going on, in English. You want them to be able to explain, use examples, and relate to you as they speak so you can always be on the same page. Most issues in criminal cases come from a lack of communication and a lack of understanding.

In addition, the more information the attorney is able to explain to you, the more likely they know what they are talking about. If they are easily able to breakdown a person's case for them, it means they've likely handled many cases like yours before, which should impart confidence in choosing that attorney to handle your case.

9 Are consultations free?

It isn't a deal-breaker for an attorney to charge a consultation fee. However, if the entire purpose of the meeting is for the attorney to charge you \$100 for a meeting on a case they don't even handle, then you can see where the firm's priorities are. It isn't simply just the consultation fee, but if money is the first object, then that ultimately is the only purpose they care that you are meeting with them in their office.

You want to focus on how quickly they speak about money when you talk to them. If they care to listen, and assess your case, before giving you price quotes, then you have someone who actually cares about your case, and not just the money they will make off of you. So charging a consultation fee should never be a deal-breaker, but you should always be cautious whether this is just the trailer for a movie of their services which is all about money.

10 Pricing

Lawyers aren't free, that is the obvious fact. Many times people will want an attorney to handle their criminal case, but cannot afford one and are forced to have a Public Defender handle their case. There's nothing wrong with that happening, but you do lose the opportunity to find someone you are comfortable with to handle your case for you.

In addition, just because an attorney charges a lot for a case versus another attorney, it doesn't mean they are better. It could be the opposite; the higher charging attorney may not have a clue how to handle a serious Sex case, so they throw high numbers at you to justify their time in having to research the law to assist you. Or it could be a high fee quote to scare you away. The reverse is also true, if someone is charging so much lower than others, it could be a new attorney, or an attorney just starting their own law practice who is just looking for cases to pay bills. This could be helpful, but you have to consider their experience and know that sometimes, you do get what you pay for.

This is why it's so important to review the previous tips before deciding on your attorney. If the price is too high where you cannot afford them, or too low and therefore too good to be true, refer back to the previous 1-9 tips to see where and how you feel about them before hiring. If you feel comfortable with them and they seem to know what they are doing, and the price fits your budget, then you have a winner there. Just don't let numbers determine the quality of the service the attorney may provide, and let your research dictate that for yourself.

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