

Preparing to Meet With a Criminal Defense Attorney

Finding a Criminal Lawyer

Your best chance at a favorable outcome in your criminal case is being represented by an attorney who has extensive experience in representing people in circumstances similar to yours. There are a lot of criminal defense lawyers in practice, and not all of them will be suitable to your needs. In order to find the best attorney for you, here are few things to consider in your search:

- Find out as best you can what percentage of an attorney's caseload mirrors your kind of case. Certain types of crimes may require a more specialized attorney. For example, you may want to find an attorney that deals primarily with drug offenses, white-collar crime, or juvenile justice.
- Ask for personal references from the attorney. While these may not be completely objective, talking to another of the attorney's clients may give you a better sense as to whether a lawyer is a good fit for you.
- Figure out the attorney's rates. Some lawyers will ask for a flat fee up front, while others will work on an hourly basis. A lawyer with a great reputation in a certain area will likely charge more. Depending on the severity of the crime and what's at stake, you may decide it is worth it to pay the extra money.

Your First Meeting

When meeting with a lawyer for the first time, try and present him or her with as much information as possible. Here are some things to remember:

Bring any and all documentation you have pertaining to your arrest. This might include:

- Warrants or police documentation of items seized
- Charging documents
- Bail papers
- Dates and times of future appearances
- A police report, if you can get one
- Your driver's license or ID
- Any records of prior arrests or convictions

TELL THE TRUTH. There is no point in lying to your attorney. No matter how good an attorney is, he cannot represent you well if he doesn't have all the facts. Once you have retained a lawyer, anything you tell him or her is protected by attorney-client privilege. This means that your attorney cannot be compelled to divulge your personal information unless he or she feels that withholding something would put either you or someone else in imminent danger.

Don't worry about giving your attorney too much information. Bring anything you can think of that might be relevant.

Being involved in the criminal justice system can be very scary for the average person. Finding a criminal defense attorney that you trust and then arming him or her with as much information about your case as possible is the best thing you can do to make your case go smoothly.



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