

The 5 Biggest Mistakes to Avoid Before Hiring a Personal Injury Attorney:

1) *Not checking the attorney's experience and specialization.*

Attorneys today are more like medical doctors in that their experience usually concentrates on specific areas of law. Just as you wouldn't visit an ear, nose & throat doctor for a broken leg, you don't want to hire a real estate attorney for your personal injury case. Some attorneys do well outside their area of expertise, but many don't know the nuances in other areas of the law. You must be certain the personal injury attorney you retain is knowledgeable in this area of the law. Interview the attorney and get referrals from the attorney you are considering and speak with them (go to the library, online, or call the local bar association).

2) *Choosing any attorney on the referral of a friend.*

Unless the friend or relative had the same type of case as you, do not choose any attorney simply because a friend or relative used the firm. Your friend or relative may have had a different legal situation compared to yours, requiring different skills, to be efficiently represented. Discuss the facts relating to your case with the attorney.

3) *Making sure you will not be "passed around".*

Make certain the attorney you meet with will be the same lawyer you deal with most of the time and get clear confirmation of just how many people will be working on your case. (How many lawyers, paralegals, etc.) You want to make sure you know and are comfortable with all the people working on your case, that you will receive appropriate and timely communication with your attorney and staff, and that you will not be passed around to a recent law school graduate or a host of paralegals. Make sure to discuss how available the attorney and case manager will be so that you are aware of your case status.

4) *Hiring an attorney because of a large yellow pages ad or TV commercial.*

These "large advertising" firms are many times paid for by referral agencies whose only job is to sift through the numerous leads that flow into a call center. These referral agencies collect advertising fees from many firms, and then divide the leads between participating attorneys. This is the most impersonal and dangerous way to choose a personal injury lawyer. Furthermore, this type of legal advertising typically results in many phone calls and emails rather than personal service. This does not bode well for a situation as important as choosing a personal injury lawyer. The need to meet in person, to get to know your lawyer, the staff and the environment he or she works in is valuable time spent that can help you make the right decision. If you are injured to the point that travel is out of the question, a reputable personal injury attorney should offer to meet you in your home, hospital, or wherever you choose.

5) *Hiring the first attorney you speak with.*

Talking to attorneys can be quite intimidating for many people, but you must give yourself a chance to interview the attorney before making your final decision. See what the firm has to offer, ask about success stories, make sure you are comfortable with the attorney staff you meet, and that you are comfortable in the office environment. Ask directly how long it takes to get a phone call or email returned. When you call in, do you get a live person or a voicemail recording? Tailoring an experienced attorney to your personality is important, as many personal injury cases take weeks or months to be resolved.

A Quick Checklist for Choosing the Right Personal Injury Attorney:

- Only choose a lawyer with extensive personal injury experience
- Choose a lawyer with many good testimonials
- Choose a lawyer that has the time and resources to successfully represent your case
- Choose a lawyer that is expert in negotiating with insurance companies and gathering evidence
- Choose a lawyer who will meet with you personally for a free consultation
- Choose a lawyer you are comfortable speaking with
- Choose a lawyer who can explain the time line of any injury case
- Choose a lawyer whose philosophy of settlement versus litigation is similar to yours

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