

TIP 9

Tips for Hiring a Lawyer

Most people only deal with a lawyer a few times in their lives. Make sure the lawyer you select is right for you and that you understand how you will pay your lawyer.

Choosing a Lawyer

- Before you hire a lawyer, you will likely have an initial meeting to discuss your case. You want to determine the price and if the lawyer can accomplish your goals.
- You can meet with more than one lawyer to compare their services and prices.
- Consider asking a few questions when you meet with each lawyer. For example:
 - What types of cases does the lawyer normally handle?
 - How does the lawyer predict that things will go in your case?
 - What legal options do you have?
 - Has the lawyer handled a case like yours recently?
 - How have cases like yours turned out?
 - Will an associate or law clerk do a lot of the work?
 - What hourly rate will you pay?
 - If someone else works on the case, like a law clerk, what is their rate?
 - How often will you be billed?
 - How often will the lawyer update you? Will you receive updates by phone, email, or in person?

Watch the Video



Paying a Lawyer

- There are three types of legal fee arrangements:
 - hourly,
 - contingency, and
 - flat rate.
- When you hire a lawyer, you will sign a retainer agreement. This is a contract stating what the lawyer will do for you and how much they will charge for it.
- Most lawyers bill hourly. If you have a maximum amount you can spend, tell your lawyer.
- Contingency fee means the lawyer will take part of the amount awarded to you at trial or received through settlement.
- Many contingency fee agreements state the lawyer will get one-third of the amount.
- Be aware that contingency fee contracts may also state that you are additionally responsible for other fees.
- Flat fee agreements may ask you to pay the full amount up front. The lawyer must place that payment in an escrow account. The lawyer will draw from it as they complete their work.



Maryland Court Help

Free. Online. In Person. By Phone.

Resources

- Watch the videos *Finding Legal Help in a Civil Case* and *Finding Legal Help in a Criminal Case* at mdcourts.gov/reference/gettingstartedvideolibrary for information on finding a lawyer.
- You can get free legal help at the [Maryland Court Help Center](http://mdcourts.gov/helpcenter) at 410-260-1392, or at mdcourts.gov/helpcenter.
- View the full Court Help Video Library on the Maryland Judiciary's website at mdcourts.gov/reference/videolibrary.