Hiring & Working With Your Lawyer

Most people only deal with a lawyer a few times in their lives. Here are some tips on how to hire and then work with a lawyer.

Find a lawyer

▪ You don’t have to hire the first person you meet.
▪ To find a lawyer referral service, go to www.peoples-law.org/referrals or use the Maryland State Bar Association’s directory of members at: www.msba.org.
▪ Check the Client Protection Fund at www.mdcourts.gov/cpf and the Attorney Grievance Commission at: www.mdcourts.gov/attygrievance to ensure the lawyer is licensed to practice in Maryland and is in good standing.
▪ Ask the lawyer questions about his or her experience, rate of pay and communication style.

Discuss payment with the lawyer. Get the fee agreement in writing.

▪ Hourly Fee: The lawyer is paid an amount agreed upon up front. You may have to pay a retainer.
▪ Contingency Fee: No upfront cost. The lawyer takes a portion of what you win or part of the settlement.
▪ Flat Fee: The lawyer is paid one fee for the case. You may have to pay the fee up front.

If you can’t afford a lawyer:

▪ Try to find reduced-cost or free legal help. For more information about legal services in Maryland, visit: www.peoples-law.org/directory.
▪ Shop around. You may be able to negotiate a reduced rate with a private lawyer.
▪ Consider solving your problem outside of court through settlement or mediation.
▪ Consider limited scope representation.

How to work with your lawyer:

▪ You and your lawyer are a team. If you want to play an active role in your case, tell your lawyer.
▪ Gather information about your case in advance and give it to your lawyer in an organized way.
▪ Use your time wisely. Lawyers bill for time spent working on your case including returning emails and phone calls.