

Seven Things to Know Before Hiring a Personal Injury Attorney

Introduction

If you have ever been injured in an accident, you know what a catastrophic experience it can be. In an instant, your entire world is turned upside down. Physically, there is the pain caused by the injuries, as well as the frustration caused by not being able to perform the simplest of daily tasks. Financially, there are mounting medical bills, as well as the inability to earn a living due to the injuries. Emotionally, there is a swirling mix of grief, bewilderment, anger and disbelief. This emotional pain can be just as bad, or worse, than the physical pain. It is a horrible situation and many accident victims find themselves struggling just to hold on.

There is a solution to all of these problems. The laws of the United States are set up to protect the victims of accidents. No one in this country is left unprotected. If your injury has been caused by someone else, then you may be entitled to compensation. This compensation can be for the physical pain you have suffered. It can be for any long term disability you endure. It can be for any lost wages you have suffered as a result of your injuries. Finally it can be for any emotional trauma you have experienced because of the accident. This compensation is your right as an American and one every accident victim needs to exercise.

An attorney who specializes in personal injury law is the key to you obtaining the compensation you deserve. At no charge, they will quickly and confidentially review the facts of your case and let you know the value of your injuries under the law. They will be your advocate throughout the entire litigation process, fighting for your rights and making sure that you get the amount of money you deserve. In many cases, they can negotiate a settlement for your injuries without ever stepping foot in a courtroom. The best thing is that your attorney will do all this for you without charging you a dime. Your personal injury attorney works for you on a contingency basis. This means that the only time they get paid is when you receive the compensation to which you're entitled.

Given the extent of your injuries and their impact on your life, it's important to choose a personal injury attorney who is the right fit for your needs. Here are seven things that you must know before hiring a personal injury attorney. Keep these things in mind when selecting an attorney and you will have taken a giant step towards achieving the restitution you deserve and returning your life to normal.

1. Do I Have A Case?

One of the biggest questions on any accident victim's mind is do I have a case? A lot of victims make the mistake of deciding they don't have a case without consulting a personal injury attorney. Many accident victims are reluctant to pursue compensation because they have decided, without cause, that the accident was partially their fault. They can also be intimidated, again without cause, by their perception of the legal system and its processes. The whole thing seems too scary, too big and downright impossible. They just wish the whole situation would go away or that it never happened.

A personal injury attorney specializes in the law of torts. This is a fancy name for injuries caused by the negligence of others. Because of this, a personal injury attorney is trained to see a potential case where the average person cannot. And all personal injury attorneys will provide you with a free initial consultation either on the phone or in their office. When you do take the step of consulting with an attorney, you will quickly find out how simple and relatively easy the process of pursuing your case can be.

The attorney will begin by consulting with you about the facts of your case. Anything you tell the attorney is confidential. In fact, all of your communications are protected by the attorney-client privilege. This means your attorney is prohibited from divulging any information about your case without your permission. Additionally, no one else can force your attorney to reveal what you have told them in confidence.

At the conclusion of your initial consultation, your attorney will likely be able to tell you whether you have a viable case, as well as the potential value of that case. In some cases, they will request copies of your medical records for the treatments you underwent because of your injuries. They may also obtain any other official reports of your accident, such as police accident reports. All of this will be done at no cost to you.

2. Can I Handle The Case On My Own Or Do I Need An Attorney?

Many accident victims often wonder if they actually need an attorney in order to obtain compensation for their injuries. The answer to that question is an emphatic "yes!" Have you ever heard the old saying, attributed to Abraham Lincoln, "He who represents themselves has a fool for a client."? There's a good reason why that saying has survived so long.

Part of the job of a personal injury attorney is to obtain the best result for their client with the least inconvenience to that client. This means that your personal injury attorney shoulders all this inconvenience and difficulty while, at the same time, shielding their client from the same. Should you decide to handle your own case, you'd quickly see how inconvenient, difficult and downright hostile the world of personal injury law can be.

Additionally, your lawyer has trained for years to become an expert in the intricacies of personal injury law. They know the ins and outs of this area of law and are prepared to utilize this knowledge to outmaneuver those who would try to deny you compensation. Should you decide to handle your own case, you would quickly find that it is you who is being outmaneuvered by these opponents. In fact, it is very likely that you would lose any chance at recovery.

3. What Exactly Will A Personal Injury Lawyer Do For Me?

First, and most importantly, a personal injury lawyer will work tirelessly to obtain the compensation that you deserve. They will do this by being your advocate both in court and without. They will use their knowledge of litigation procedures to insure that every document and statement that has bearing on your case sees the light of day. They will be by your side advising you and representing you should you ever have to appear in court or give a sworn statement. They will obtain all of your pertinent medical records and interview the physicians and specialists who have treated you. In some cases, they will refer you to additional practitioners for further medical opinion about your condition and prognosis and, if necessary, further treatment.

They will establish your earning history, both what you've earned in the past and, if applicable, what earnings you will lose in the future due to your injuries. They will negotiate a settlement for your case that is commensurate with your losses and, should that settlement be insufficient, they will obtain compensation for your injuries in the courtroom itself. In short, they will fight for your rights and get you the money you deserve. Finally, they will do all of this without asking you to pay a single cent up front. They will only get paid when they have made sure that you have been paid appropriately for your injuries.

4. Is It Worth The Cost Of Hiring A Personal Injury Lawyer?

Oftentimes, the victim of an accident will wonder whether the cost of hiring a personal injury attorney is worth it. The answer to that question depends on how much full compensation for your injuries is worth to you. A victim who is not represented by an attorney is, very often, a victim who never gets restitution for the losses they have suffered. So, can you afford a personal injury attorney? Well, in reality, you can't afford not to have a personal injury attorney. Let's face it. The money to compensate you for your injuries is not coming from the person or entity that caused you harm. This money is actually in the hands of the insurance company that provided risk protection to these parties. Insurance companies don't remain profitable by handing out money to every person who claims they were injured, no matter how legitimate those claims might be. Your personal injury attorney has years of experience dealing with the insurance industry, their claims adjusters and lawyers. They know how the system works and they know how to use the rules of that system to your advantage. Your lawyer will work to compel the insurer to pay you just compensation for your injuries. Without a lawyer you run a very real risk of ending up with nothing.

5. How Should I Go About Finding A Personal Injury Lawyer?

Many times an accident victim will decide they need to hire an attorney, but have absolutely no idea how to go about finding a lawyer who is right for their needs. This can be a real problem, since a victim who is not represented by a lawyer often foregoes compensation for their injuries. Luckily, finding a competent personal injury lawyer isn't as hard as it seems.

One of the best places to start looking for a lawyer is to go online and use the Google, Bing or Yahoo search engines to find a personal injury attorney. Simply type in your city, the term personal injury attorney (or lawyer) and you will be presented with many local attorneys that handle a wide variety of personal injury claims. Spend some time looking over several of their websites for as much information as possible about their experience and areas of practice. Then take it one step further by doing a search for their specific business name in order to find any reviews that are online regarding their performance. Use this information to your advantage. Compile a list of likely candidates, call their offices and schedule an appointment.

Before the day of your appointment with the lawyers you have selected, write down some questions you'd like the lawyer to answer prior to hiring them. Inquire about things like years in practice, prior personal injury experience, and amount of judgments and settlements obtained. Remember, the more information you have about a given lawyer, the easier it will be to select the right lawyer for you.

On the day of the appointment, use your time with the lawyer wisely. Answer their questions about your accident and injuries as accurately as possible. Don't forget to have them answer the questions you previously prepared. Above all, be honest with the lawyer about your expectations in regard to your case, as well as what you expect from them.

After your appointment, listen to your instincts. Did the lawyer seem like someone you could work with? Did they inspire confidence? Most importantly, do they seem like someone who could bring your case to a successful conclusion? If so, your job is done and that is the attorney you should hire.

6. How Do I Choose The Right Personal Injury Lawyer For My Situation?

The answer to this question largely depends on your injuries and how and where they occurred. In some cases, if the injury occurred in another state, then you will need to find a lawyer licensed to practice law in that state. This is because the law requires a lawsuit to be brought in the place where the alleged injuries occurred.

Another consideration is how your injuries occurred. If you suffered injury while undergoing treatment in a hospital or at the hands of a physician then your case is one of medical malpractice. Medical malpractice is a specialized area within personal injury law and, oftentimes, requires an attorney versed in this area of law to bring the case to a successful conclusion.

On the other hand, if your injury occurred while you were at work, your case may fall under your state's worker compensation laws. If this is the case, you will require an attorney who specializes in worker's compensation cases. In any event, during an initial interview, all personal injury attorneys will tell you if your case falls into one of these specialized areas and will refer you to an attorney who practices in this area in the event they themselves do not.

7. Can I Still Pursue Compensation If I was Partially at Fault for My Injuries?

Definitely. Even if you were partially at fault for your injuries, you can still receive compensation. In personal injury law this situation is known as contributory negligence. What will happen in such a case is that your total compensation will be reduced by the percentage of fault that you were responsible for. This number will be determined through settlement or at trial. Your personal injury attorney will be able to advise you as to the likely value of your case during your initial interview.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a personal injury attorney is your best bet if you desire to receive full compensation for your injuries. They will fight for your rights and will not rest until you get the monies you deserve. They are your advocate, your advisor and your counsellor at law. They will stick with you during a very difficult time in your life and see you through to a better tomorrow. Best of all, they will not charge you a dime unless, and until, you receive satisfaction. If you have been injured in an accident, you need to contact a personal injury attorney today.