

## **Finding a Good Personal Injury Attorney: Guidelines**

These are some general rules to follow and things to think about when seeking a personal injury lawyer. Remember, though, that these aren't hard and fast rules—exceptions abound, and you'll need to figure out what works best for you.

**1. Take a look at the Client Bill of Rights.** Figure out which ones (if not all of them) are important to you, and make sure you only hire a lawyer who agrees to abide by them.

**2. Find an expert.** Specialists beat generalists; that means you probably want a lawyer who specifically focuses on personal injury. It's fine if the lawyer is also involved with other side projects—but you probably shouldn't hire a lawyer who *only* does personal injury as a side project. Personal injury cases should be their specialty.

**3. Look for a lawyer who is a member of the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association (OTLA) and the American Association of Justice (AAJ, formerly ATLA).**

Membership in these organizations shows that your lawyer is proud of what he or she does, cares about justice, and is willing to put money and time towards the cause of justice in Oregon (OTLA) and the entire U.S.A. (AAJ). A serious lawyer should be a member of the Oregon State Bar, the Multnomah Bar Association, and at least a couple of other justice-related organizations as well. This shows that they are in the profession because they care about justice for all, and not just to make a buck.

**4. Ask around.** Getting a referral from someone you trust can be an excellent place to start when you're looking for a lawyer. But remember that the lawyer who did a divorce or reviewed a real estate deal for a friend is probably not a personal injury specialist.

**5. Find out about a lawyer's caseload.** If the "personal touch" is important to you, ask lawyers about how many cases they handle at a time. We prefer to spend more time on fewer cases, but that's not true for all lawyers, and if you're looking for considerable time and attention to be given to your case, you'll want to avoid the "bulk" lawyers. Note: if you have a small case, you may not have a choice here; it may be that only a "bulk" lawyer will take your case.

**6. Choose a lawyer who is licensed to practice law in Oregon.** An out-of-state lawyer can try to settle your Oregon case for you, but if they have to file a lawsuit, they will probably have to join up with an Oregon lawyer, and an out-of-state lawyer will not be as familiar with Oregon law.

**7. Make sure your lawyer is interested in educating you.**

**8. Interview more than one lawyer before you hire anyone.**

**9. Beware of lawyers who try to rush you into signing up.** Your lawyer should encourage you to take your time and make an informed decision.

**10. Meet with the actual attorney—not an assistant—before you hire them.**

These are some general words of advice for hiring a personal injury attorney, but remember that the best way to find an attorney that you'll be satisfied with is to know what you're looking for—that is, what your needs are, and what is important to you.