

**TIP 9**

# 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](http://www.peoples-law.org/referrals) or use the Maryland State Bar Association's directory of members at: [www.msba.org](http://www.msba.org).
- Check the Client Protection Fund at [www.mdcourts.gov/cpf](http://www.mdcourts.gov/cpf) and the Attorney Grievance Commission at: [www.mdcourts.gov/attygrievance](http://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](http://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.



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