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## Attorney Interview Questionnaire

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### Introduction

It is time for homework. You should ask the attorney, when you are scheduling to meet, whether they have any information, reports, or a website, that you can use to learn more about his/her qualifications and practice before you walk into the door.

An attorney who takes his/her time to answer these questions is very likely to personally attend to you and your case as it develops. You should also leave the interview not feeling pressured to sign an Attorney-Client Agreement

If an attorney contacted you directly without being asked to, and you are reading this because you are thinking of calling him/her, please know Georgia Rules of Ethics 7.3 prohibits a lawyer from directly contacting you in the first 30 days after your accident. Plus, why would a successful, respected attorney chase a case like that?

### The Attorney's Background & Experience

- Do you handle any types of cases other than *personal injury*? Personal injury law, despite the number of attorneys who say they can do it, is complicated. Yes, most attorneys can get by with just knowing the bare minimum, but the law changes every day as new cases are decided and new laws created. Personal injury attorneys must also be experts at dealing with insurance, from finding all the available insurance, to knowing how insurance adjusters operate.
- Did you have a career prior to becoming a lawyer? Most lawyers go straight from college to law school. But some of the best attorneys I have met had substantial careers before becoming a lawyer and can bring a vast amount of non-legal experience into a case.
- Have you ever been arrested? Shouldn't you know if your attorney has ever been accused of breaking the law?
- Are you computer savvy? Technology is critical to your case, especially the smaller the lawyer's firm. A modern law office must be organized and the easiest, most efficient, way to accomplish

this is with technology. It also provides you (the client) with e-mail contact, instant messaging, etc. to communicate with your attorney.

- How many trials have you done? How many juries have you picked?
- Have you ever had a Bar complaint filed against you?

## **Communication Skills & Case Handling**

- Who will be handling my case day-to-day? In other words, who are you going to have to call when you have a question about your case? Because I only take a select number of cases each year, I personally work on every case. You will find that the larger the law firm and the more cases they handle, the more likely it is that a paralegal (a legal assistant who does more than a secretary) or junior attorneys are handling your case. If you want to make doubly sure, ask who will be attending depositions and in court for motions. These are typically the two time consuming tasks that attorneys send junior attorneys to attend.
- Do you take phone calls after normal business hours?
- How often do you update me on the status of my case?
- How many cases do you handle?
- How do you feel about teaching your clients the law?
- Can you communicate everything with me by email instead of by letters?
- Do you outsource any of your work?
- What will you be doing in my case?

## **Trick Questions**

- Do you have doctors you can refer me to or who will treat me on a lien (i.e. without paying up front)? While some attorneys keep lists of doctors who will treat you on a lien and refer you to those doctors, I do not do this because of one extremely important reason - CREDIBILITY. As a former insurance defense attorney, I always asked personal injury victims who referred them to what doctors and how was it being paid for. I would then depose the doctors under oath and find out how much of their business/patients/money were coming from the plaintiff's attorney. The result was almost always that the plaintiff's attorney, the doctor, and ultimately the person who was injured lost all credibility in front of a jury. Be forewarned.
- Why do you want to represent me? Or, why is my case worth your time and effort?
- Can you give me the names of some other attorneys to get a second opinion? Why should the attorney be afraid of losing your case?
- How long will my case take? This is only a trick question if they respond by saying something like a couple of months. This means they do not try cases. If an attorney tries cases, he/she will tell you at least a year to a year and a half.

## Miscellaneous Questions

- What new changes in case law or the Georgia statutes affect my case?
- What do you love most about being a lawyer?
- What makes a good attorney in your opinion?
- What is your biggest concern about my case so far?
- What records should I keep and how do you recommend I organize them? We send our clients, in our initial letter, instructions on what to keep and what to pay attention to as they recover from their injuries.
- What do you include in your costs (i.e. the money you are going to owe in addition to the contingency fee)? Some attorneys charge for everything from making copies to postage.