

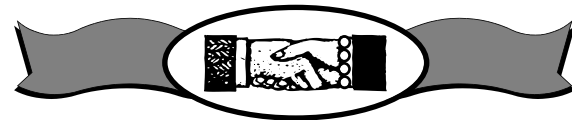
WHEN DO I NEED A LAWYER?

- Have I tried to resolve this matter by speaking directly with "the other side" and failed?
- Am I being threatened with legal action by some individual or situation?
- Do I need someone to champion my cause or speak for me?
- Have I been served with papers (summons, warrant, subpoena)?
- Does my opponent have a lawyer?
- Is the outcome worth the cost of hiring a lawyer?
- Am I involved in a legal matter of importance to me (buying or selling a home, signing a contract, starting a business, writing a will, etc.)?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you should consult a lawyer.

SOUTH CAROLINA BAR LAWYER REFERRAL SERVICE

Contact the South Carolina Bar Lawyer Referral Service from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Call 1 (800) 868-2284 (statewide) or (803) 799-7100 in Columbia and Lexington counties.



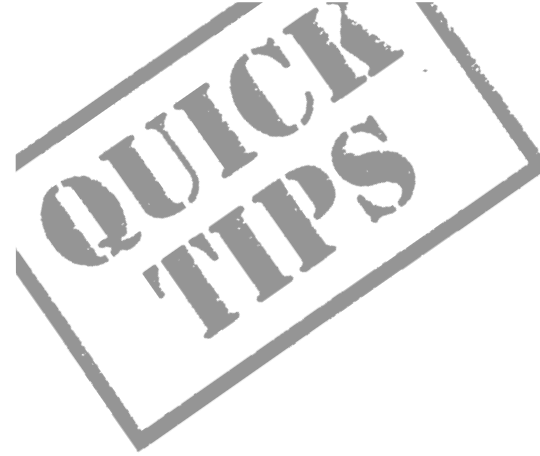
BETTER CLIENT RELATIONS

PROVIDED AS A PUBLIC SERVICE OF THE



SOUTH CAROLINA BAR

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CHOOSING THE RIGHT LAWYER



The South Carolina Bar knows it can be hard to find the right kind of lawyer to help you with your legal matters.

This brochure can help you with your search.

It is important to shop around to find the right lawyer. Ask friends, relatives or co-workers for the names of lawyers they have used.

You can also call the South Carolina Bar Lawyer Referral Service, which can give you the name of a lawyer who is willing to consult and advise you at a discounted rate of \$25 for the first 30 minute consultation (as of March 1996). If additional legal service is needed, the fee is something for you and your lawyer to agree on.

You may call the Lawyer Referral Service at 1-800-868-2284 (statewide) or (803) 799-7100 in Columbia and Lexington counties.

For criminal cases, each county in South Carolina has a Public Defender Office that provides free legal services for those who cannot afford a lawyer.

For people who can't afford to pay in other matters, you may want to contact the Legal Services office in your area. They can help with certain kinds of noncriminal cases.

FIRST MEETING

Once you've picked a lawyer, there are a couple of things you should think about before your first meeting.

- Think about your case or legal matter so that you are prepared to answer the lawyer's questions.
- Make note of the spelling of names, dates, and other information that the lawyer may need.
- Write down some basic questions for the lawyer. For example, "what is your experience in this area of the law?"
- Gather any written materials relating to your legal situation, such as traffic tickets, deeds, wills and letters from the opposing side.
- Expect to discuss the entire legal matter, not just those parts that make you look good. Without the whole picture, your lawyer cannot properly represent you.

Don't be afraid to ask the lawyer:

- What result should I expect in this legal matter? Is there a good chance I can get what I want or am I wasting my money?
- How long is it going to take to resolve this matter?
- Can we set up a payment schedule?
- Will I be billed for time we spend talking on the telephone? Does that rate include your staff and expenses? What is billable time?

If there is something that you are wondering about, ask.

FEE AGREEMENTS

It is important for you and your lawyer to agree on what you will pay for the services the lawyer will perform. This way, both of you will know what to expect as you work together on your case.

The basic ingredient in most fees lawyers charge is the amount of time spent on a particular problem. A lawyer's professional services differ from those of a doctor or a dentist: much of the work is done when the client is not present.

When you hire a lawyer, you are really hiring an entire law office to work for you. The fee you pay will depend on the time it takes to prepare your legal matter. This could also include the difficulty of the matter; the documents or pleadings that must be drafted; the number of letters, phone calls and interviews; the research; and the number and length of court appearances.

Often a lawyer will agree to represent you on a contingency fee basis. This means that the lawyer's fee is due only if a settlement or recovery is achieved; it is based on a percentage of the amount recovered, with the exception of certain expenses.

You should discuss the costs of legal services at your first meeting with the lawyer and reach an agreement. Do not hesitate to

discuss fees at any time. If you have questions regarding a bill, talk to your lawyer.

Ask for a written statement of the fees and costs involved as well as any other costs relating to the legal matter. When the matter is resolved, your lawyer should provide you with a written settlement statement that shows the total amount you paid and what it covered. This may include the lawyer's fee, other costs, any outstanding bills from physicians or hospitals, and any liens.

LEGAL FEES

The time for payment of legal fees depends on the type of legal service performed. Your lawyer may require you to pay a retainer and an advance on expenses before beginning work on the case. Many lawyers bill on a monthly basis.

Some lawyers may allow you to charge your legal fee or costs on a credit card. If you don't know if you will be able to pay on time, talk to your lawyer.

WORKING TOGETHER

Working closely with another person can sometimes be difficult. Add to that the tension of being involved in a legal matter and you have the potential for any number of crossed signals and misunderstandings.

To have a good working relationship with your lawyer, remember to:

- keep your lawyer informed of any new information that may be pertinent to your legal matter;
- ask questions when there is something you don't understand;
- maintain a realistic view of the progress and outcome of your legal matter;
- call your lawyer only as needed (when you have new information about your case), remembering that your lawyer may not be able to return your call immediately; and
- pay your bill.

Your lawyer is committed to treating you with respect and courtesy and to:

- charge a reasonable fee and explain in advance what that fee covers and when you will be billed;
- return your telephone calls promptly; and
- keep you informed and provide you with copies of important papers.

Most people who hire lawyers find that they are effective, honest and hardworking. By following some of these tips, and by communicating clearly, you should have a good experience with your lawyer.

