

Seven questions before hiring a lawyer

Personal injury, wrongful death, maritime and Jones Act cases

A consultation checklist from Brian Beckcom, VB Attorneys

Lawyer / firm: _____ Date: _____

Use one copy per consultation. Write down names, examples and unanswered questions.

1. Who will lead my case, and what will that lawyer personally do?

Ask who handles strategy, key depositions, negotiations and trial, and whom you can call.

2. What experience do you have with cases like mine?

Request recent examples, the lawyer's role, and relevant trials. For a vessel injury, ask about Jones Act experience.

3. What credentials and results can I verify?

Check board certification and bar status. Ask for public case names or court records where available.

4. What does your current workload mean for my case?

Ask how the team staffs the work, how often you will hear from them, and what happens if your lawyer is unavailable.

5. What do you need to investigate, and what concerns you?

Listen for evidence to preserve, facts still missing, potential defenses and a reason the firm might decline the case.

6. What would I receive after fees, costs and other deductions?

Request the written agreement and a worked example. Ask about cost responsibility if there is no recovery.

7. How will you help me decide whether to settle or go to trial?

Ask how the lawyer explains evidence, uncertainty, timing, trial risks and the client's settlement decision.

Before signing

Keep a copy of the fee agreement. Confirm the lead lawyer, scope of work, fee calculation and expenses. Ask for anything you do not understand to be explained before you decide.

Verify Brian's TBLS certification: tbls.org/profile/24012268

Full guide: vbattorneys.com/news-insights/

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General information. Your case and written engagement agreement determine the advice and terms that apply.