

**Q: Do I need a lawyer at all?**

A: Immigration - Immigration laws are complex and confusing. There are several agencies involved in the various aspects of immigration in the United States. The Department of Homeland Security is the agency overseeing the functions of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). USCIS is in charge of processing benefit applications such as immigration applications. CBP is in charge of our borders and controls entries and applications made at the borders. ICE is in charge of enforcement and will oversee the capturing and detention of immigrants who may not have a claim to remain in the United States.

In addition, the US Department of Labor (DOL) will oversee the processing of initial steps when an employer wants to bring a foreign worker to the United States. The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) which is under the US Department of Justice (DOJ) oversees all removal hearings for individuals who are being processed for deportation. Finally, the Department of State (DOS) oversees certain processing of approved applications for individuals abroad. This is simply a brief overview of all the possible agencies involved in any immigration case.

These agencies frequently view themselves as gatekeepers whose main task is to keep as many people out as possible rather than assisting qualified applicants in entering the US. Unfortunately, seemingly straightforward matters involving immigration issues can become nightmares for simple reasons such as the fact that immigration rules change frequently. Even if you intend to file an application on your own, you may wish to consult with an immigration lawyer before filing any documents. An immigration lawyer can definitely help you to understand all the options available to you.

**A: Divorce/Custody/family dispute** – going through a family dispute can be emotionally draining. The laws are aimed to reach a fair result, but hardly ever does it feel like it does. Whether you and your spouse or partner have reached an agreement, paperwork must be filed with the court in order to have a final enforceable judgment. This paperwork may seem overwhelming and depending on your case there are certain mandatory disclosures that must be made and filed with the court. An experienced family law attorney can help you navigate the emotional rollercoaster of your case and can be your best advocate.

Depending on your case, there are many steps before you see the finish line. For example, in many divorce cases you may need to conduct discovery to find out what assets or liabilities your spouse may have that you are not aware of, or you may have to hire experts to determine the value of certain assets. In a custody case, there may be a need for psychological experts or a minor's counsel to better assess what is the best interest of your children. A caring and knowledgeable attorney can walk you through the process.

Divorces can be not only emotional but expensive. Finding the right attorney with the experience and compassion to advocate for you can help you move to the next stage in your life with confidence and a peace of mind.

**Q: How do I find a lawyer I can trust?**

**A: First, do your research.** With the internet and social media, you can almost always find reviews and information on the lawyer you want to consult with. You want an attorney who has:

**Integrity**—a good attorney never makes guarantees, promises or case assessments that he or she knows are unrealistic or premature. The best any attorney can do in an initial consultation is to lay out an array of possible outcomes and give you a rough sense of the most likely outcome of your case.

**Compassion**—a good attorney recognizes that this is possibly the most difficult time of your life. In that sense, a good attorney should be sensitive to you as the case progresses.

**Communication skills**—a good attorney is an effective communicator, both as a listener and as a speaker. Good communication skills overlap with negotiation skills and advocacy, below.

You also want to make sure the lawyer has the experience you need. You can gage your attorney's experience by looking at the time they have been practicing, the cases they have handled, the reviews from prior clients, and the organizations they belong to. Finally, while all the above are important, there is one final question you should ask yourself before hiring an attorney. Are you comfortable with that attorney and are you confident in his or her abilities? If the answer is anything other than a resounding yes, you should keep looking. Your case is too important to entrust to someone who does not inspire your confidence. Come prepared to the initial consultation with your questions and concerns so you can determine if this is the lawyer for you.

**Q: What else should I ask a lawyer?**

A: You want to make sure the lawyer can explain your case to you in terms you can understand. Many individuals walk out of a consultation knowing "what" the lawyer tells them they can do, but not know "why". In other words, the lawyer speaks about doing this and that and charging this much, but you don't understand why this and that is needed. Here are some sample questions you can ask a lawyer to better understand your situation.

- Explain my case?
- What are my rights?
- What are the first steps?
- What is the likelihood of success?
- Are there any alternatives?
- What is the worst-case scenario and how would you prepare for it?
- What do you need from me?
- Who else will work on my case?
- How long will this take?
- How much will it cost me?
- Are there any other costs or fees?