# **Finding an Attorney**

If you need an attorney to advise or represent you, ask friends and family for recommendations. You can also contact the Lawyer Referral Service of your state, county, or city bar association listed in your local phone directory.

Websites such as [abalawinfo.org](http://www.abalawinfo.org/) (American Bar Association), [uslaw.com](http://www.uslaw.com/), [thelaw.com](http://www.thelaw.com/),[freeadvice.com](http://www.freeadvice.com/), and [nolo.com](http://www.nolo.com/) can help you with answers to general legal questions.

**Tips For Choosing An Attorney**

Many lawyers who primarily serve individuals and families are general practitioners with experience in frequently needed legal services such as divorce and family matters; wills and probate; bankruptcy and debt problems; real estate; criminal and/or personal injury. Some have a narrower focus. Be sure the lawyer you are considering has experience in the area for which you are seeking help.

Once you've identified some candidates:

* Call each attorney on the telephone, describe your legal issue, and find out if he or she handles your situation.
* Ask if you will be charged for an initial consultation.
* Ask for an estimate of what is usually charged to handle your kind of case.
* Ask whether there are hourly charges or whether your attorney would accept a percentage of the settlement as a fee contingency.

The initial consultation is an opportunity for you and the lawyer to get to know each other. After listening to the description of your case, the lawyer should be able to outline your rights and liabilities, as well as alternative courses of action. The initial consultation is the lawyer's opportunity to explain what he or she can do for you and how much it will cost. You should not hesitate to ask about the attorney's experience in handling matters such as yours. Also, do not hesitate to ask about the lawyer's fees and the likely results. If you are considering going beyond the initial consultation and hiring the lawyer, request a written fee agreement before proceeding.

## What If You Can't Afford A Lawyer?

If you cannot afford a lawyer, you may qualify for free legal help from a Legal Aid or Legal Services Corporation (LSC) office. These offices generally offer legal assistance about such things as landlord-tenant relations, credit, utilities, family matters (e.g., divorce and adoption), foreclosure, home equity fraud, social security, welfare, unemployment, and workers' compensation. If the Legal Aid office in your area does not handle your type of case, it may refer you to other local, state or national organizations that can provide help. Additional resources may be found at [lawhelp.org](http://www.lawhelp.org/) or[freeadvice.com](http://www.freeadvice.com/).

To find the Legal Aid office nearest to you, check a local telephone directory or contact:

**[National Legal Aid and Defender Association](http://www.nlada.org/)**

1625 K Street, NW, 8th Floor

Washington, DC 20006

Phone: 202-452-0620

E-mail: info@nlada.org

To find the LSC office nearest you, check a local telephone directory or contact:

**[LSC Public Affairs](http://www.lsc.gov/)**

3333 K St., NW, 3rd Floor

Washington, DC 20007

Phone: 202-295-1500

Free assistance could also be available from a law school program where students, supervised by attorneys, handle a variety of legal matters. Some of these programs are open to all. Others limit their service to specific groups, such as senior citizens or low-income persons. Contact a law school in your area to find out if such a program is available.