

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW WHEN SELECTING A PERSONAL INJURY ATTORNEY

The three most important ingredients of a good personal injury attorney are competency, experience and integrity. **So how do you determine whether an attorney is qualified for a serious injury/wrongful death case?**

You start by asking important questions about the attorney's background:

- ❖ Where did the attorney attend undergraduate and graduate school? When did he or she obtain their law degree?
- ❖ What experience does the lawyer have in handling wrongful death and serious injury cases? How many years of experience do they have? How often do they go to court? and; How many cases have they handled of a similar type over the years?
- ❖ **How successful is the law firm in presenting cases to juries and/or reaching settlements favorable for their clients?** Do they practice in state and federal courts?
- ❖ Are the lawyers published in their fields of expertise? (This gives the consumer information about the background of the attorney. If the attorney publishes articles, speaks at seminars or otherwise demonstrates a level of competency and experience in his or her professional activities, this gives the consumer important information about the qualifications of their attorney.)
- ❖ How is the attorney rated by their peers? Are they invited to appear as speakers at seminars and do they otherwise participate in professional activities? (If so, this tends to indicate that the lawyer is respected by his or her peers and is asked to speak on topics of interest to professional organizations.)

- ❖ What is the background of the attorney by way of litigation experience? Are they capable of presenting cases to juries in the event the case cannot be settled? What kinds of cases have they tried over the past five years? With what results? How often do they go to court and try cases before a jury?
How many jury trials has the lawyer handled as lead trial attorney over the course of his/her career?
- ❖ Are the attorneys successful in protecting the rights of their clients on appeal, if there is an adverse ruling from a trial judge or a jury? How many of the firm cases are appealed and how successful are the lawyers on appeal? These questions typically can be answered by typing the name of the attorney and the law firm and looking for reported cases in the Georgia Court of Appeals or in the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals.
- ❖ What level of professionalism is exhibited by the attorney? (**The best way to determine this is a face to face consultation with the attorney.**) Are they professional in their demeanor? Do they appear knowledgeable? Do they appear competent? Do they appear trustworthy? (A face to face interview will allow the consumer to get the best available information on the attorney. At any such meeting, a copy of the Curriculum Vitae and/or resume of the attorney can also be requested, as can informational brochures about the firm's practice.)
- ❖ How experienced are the lawyer's partners? Will your case be staffed by one lawyer or two? (Most experienced personal injury lawyers will staff serious cases with two attorneys.)

There are many attorneys who claim to possess the essential characteristics of a reputable and competent personal injury lawyer. **Ask for references and consider the factors above.** The more serious the case, the more imperative it is that counsel possess competence, integrity and experience. These are the hallmark characteristics one needs in serious injury/wrongful death cases.