



NATIONAL CENTER FOR LESBIAN RIGHTS

How to Pick an Attorney

Picking an attorney can be difficult if you have not worked with an attorney before, or do not often work with attorneys.

If possible, you should look for an attorney that you are comfortable working with. The attorney should understand the legal issues you face, and be LGBT-friendly. You should also find out ahead of time what the attorney will charge you for their services and how they will handle disagreements and conflicts between you.

You can also get some general guidance on selecting an attorney from the American Bar Association:

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/resources/public-information/how-do-i-know-if-a-lawyer-is-right-for-me/

Most states have a state bar, which licenses attorneys and keeps records about whether an attorney has faced any disciplinary action. The state bar usually also has up to date contact information for all attorneys allowed to practice law in that state. You may be able to look up the discipline record of any attorney you are considering hiring, if you have their full name or bar number.

For example, the California State Bar has an attorney search here:

<http://members.calbar.ca.gov/fal/membersearch/quicksearch>

On the next page, NCLR has provided a list of questions you can ask any attorneys you are thinking of working with. If you can, you should interview a number of attorneys before you decide who to hire.

If you need help finding an attorney in your state, or have questions about anything in this guide, contact NCLR at www.ncrights.org/gethelp or 1.800.528.6257

A List of Questions for LGBTQ+ Clients to Ask Potential Attorneys

1. How many LGBTQ+ clients have you represented before? (Or be more specific and ask how many transgender clients, or how many gay clients they have represented before)
2. How many LGBTQ+ clients have you represented with the legal issue that I have (e.g., adoption, employment discrimination, medical malpractice, insurance, divorce)?
3. How many years have you been practicing law? How many years have you been practicing this particular area of law?
4. How will fees work? Do you charge by the hour, by the case, or something else? Can you provide an estimate of the total fees for my case?
5. Can you reduce fees if some of the work is done by junior associates, paralegals, or other non-lawyer staff?
6. Can you reduce fees if I do some of the preparation work (e.g., filling out forms, gathering documents, drafting personal statements)?
7. **(If relevant)** - Can you charge a reduced fee or any kind of sliding scale for low income clients or people with limited means like me?
8. How can I best help you in representing me? What kind of participation will you need from me?
9. How often can I expect updates from you about my case?
10. What will you do if we disagree about how to handle my case? How have you resolved conflicts and disagreements with clients before?

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