



# Choosing the Right Attorney for Your Case

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THE  
**CORSON & JOHNSON**  
LAW FIRM

The Law and You  
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# The Right Attorney for You



## When should I seek the advice of an attorney?

It is important to start looking for an attorney as soon as the incident occurs so that an investigation can begin and important evidence not be lost. A personal injury attorney will then be able to help you to determine if you have a case and what will be needed to win.

Although time is important, finding the right attorney is even more important. You can interview several attorneys to find one who has successful experience in your type of case.

Hiring an attorney is a big step, and there is nothing wrong with consulting several personal injury attorneys to find the best one for you. Most personal injuries attorneys do not charge for the initial consultation.

You should also seek an attorney's advice before accepting any compensation from an insurance company, corporation, or individual. Many people will not take responsibility for their actions, and insurance companies profit from compensating injured persons as little as possible. Insurance companies and their attorneys know the governing law backwards and forwards, and they know that most non-attorneys have no real idea of their legal rights.

## Do personal injury attorneys specialize?

Some do. When you are seeking a personal injury attorney, look for one who has successfully handled cases like yours. For example, it takes extensive specialized knowledge by attorneys and their staff to successfully handle product liability or medical negligence cases. Some attorneys even have a staff nurse or a contract legal nurse consultant to help evaluate a case from a medical viewpoint. If you are looking for help with an auto collision case, workers compensation case, or any other injury case, you will want to hire a lawyer with detailed knowledge and experience in that specific area.

## What should I ask the attorney before I hire him or her?

The questions you should ask will vary with your case. Consider the following list as a starting point:

- What are your areas of practice?
- Have you handled cases like mine before? About how many? What were the outcomes?
- Will you be the only attorney who works on the case? If not, who else will work on it? Will you refer my case to another attorney? Will you associate with an attorney outside your firm? If so, why?
- How long will it likely take for my case to be resolved?
- Will you take my case on a contingent fee basis?
- Are there things I should do to improve my case, or to help you?
- How will you keep me informed about the progress of my case?
- If I contact your office with questions, how long will you take to return my call?
- If you are unavailable or on vacation, who can I speak with about my case?
- How often do you go to trial?
- If I am not happy with a settlement offer and you want to settle, or I am happy with the offer but you think we can win more at trial, what happens?
- Have you ever been disciplined, or been suspended from the practice of law? If so, why?
- What continuing legal education courses have you attended during the past few years? Have you taught any?
- What professional legal organizations do you belong to?
- Are you rated by any legal services?



Please note that, as desirable as references may be, it may not be possible for personal injury attorneys to give references from past clients, due to attorney-client confidentiality. However, sometimes clients give permission to be references, and you can always ask for references from other attorneys.

## Clients Bill of Rights

Every person represented by an Oregon attorney should have the right to expect that:

- An attorney will maintain client secrets and confidences, with rare exceptions such as to prevent crimes or substantial bodily harm.
- Any contingent fee agreement will be in writing, and will have a written explanation as required by law.
- An attorney will have the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness, and preparation reasonably necessary for the case.
- An attorney will inform his or her clients of the strengths and weaknesses of their cases.
- An attorney will inform clients about how their cases are going. Clients have the right to have phone calls returned promptly and to receive information necessary to permit them to make informed decisions.
- Clients are guaranteed the safeguarding of any property or money in the care of an attorney.
- Clients deserve respect and fair procedures from our judicial system.
- The attorney must be free of any conflict of interest.
- The attorney must adhere to the ethical rules of the Oregon State Bar, or face discipline for violations of the rules of professional conduct.



## How much does a personal injury attorney cost?

Personal injury attorneys almost always accept cases on a contingent fee basis, which means they will receive a percentage of the recovery as their fee. If the case is lost, they are not paid any fee for their time and services. With a contingent fee, the average citizen can afford to hire a highly qualified attorney to go up against the best lawyers for the big insurance companies and corporations. Attorney fees are different from litigation costs, and you may be responsible for certain costs to the extent of your ability to pay, even if you lose.

The amount of the contingent fee may vary from attorney to attorney. In most cases, the attorney fee will be between one-third and 40% of a personal injury recovery. This will be specified in a contract that you agree to in writing with your chosen attorney.

## Finding a Good Match

At The Corson & Johnson Law Firm, we hope you'll find the right attorney if you need help with a personal injury or wrongful death claim. We may or may not be the right attorneys for you, but we'll be happy to talk with you. If we're not the right choice for you, often we can make a recommendation or referral to someone who might be.

## Making sure the law works for everyone.

The Corson & Johnson Law Firm specializes in representing people who have suffered severe injuries or death caused by defective products or wrongful conduct.

One of the important services we provide our clients in the difficult time following an accident or injury is our expertise and guidance through the complex judicial process. The more insight we can provide into the workings of the system, the better prepared our clients are for the challenges of the legal process. The attorneys of The Corson & Johnson Law Firm are dedicated both to making sure that their clients receive fair compensation, and also to working for changes—sometimes through new laws and regulations—that will prevent further injuries and deaths.

Both Lara Johnson and Don Corson are members of the American Association for Justice (AAJ) and the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association (OTLA), and are admitted to the Oregon state and federal courts.

Lara is on the OTLA Board of Directors and is also a member of Oregon Women Lawyers. She has written and lectured on nursing home neglect and abuse, and is also published on claims against government entities.

Don is recognized by Best Lawyers in America in personal injury, medical negligence, and product liability law. He is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates, and a past President of OTLA. Don is rated “AV” by LexisNexis Martindale-Hubbell’s rating system.

## Submit questions to The Law and You

The Law & You is a community service in Oregon, provided by The Corson & Johnson Law Firm. To hear the latest questions or to ask a question about how the law works or a specific case, visit [www.CorsonJohnsonLaw.com](http://www.CorsonJohnsonLaw.com).



Attorneys Lara Johnson  
and Don Corson

T H E  
**CORSON & JOHNSON**  
L A W F I R M

101 East Broadway, Suite 303  
Eugene, OR 97401  
541-484-2525  
[www.CorsonJohnsonLaw.com](http://www.CorsonJohnsonLaw.com)