

# TIPS FOR WORKING WITH YOUR ATTORNEY

**Start by contacting your local or state Bar Association and asking:**

- How do I find out if a lawyer has a license in this State?
- How do I find out if a lawyer has been disciplined in this State?

## **Maryland**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Email</b>
520 W. Fayette St. Baltimore, MD 21201	(410) 685-7878 (800) 492-1964	info@msba.org

## **Washington D.C.**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Phone</b>
901 4th St, NW Washington, D.C. 20001	(202) 737-4700 (877) 333-2227

## **Virginia**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Phone</b>
1111 East Main St, Suite 700 Richmond, VA 23219-0026	(804) 775-0500 (800) 828-1120

**OR**

**Verify your attorney's status on their state Bar Association website:**

## **Maryland**

<https://mdcourts.gov/attysearch>

## **Washington D.C.**

<https://my.dcbar.org/memberdirectory>

## **Virginia**

[https://vsb.org/Site/Shared\\_Content/Directory/va-lawyer-directory.aspx](https://vsb.org/Site/Shared_Content/Directory/va-lawyer-directory.aspx)

You can also view USCIS's List of Recognized Organizations and Accredited Representatives at the website below.

<https://www.justice.gov/eoir/recognized-organizations-and-accredited-representatives-roster-state-and-city>



**An attorney with a US law license or an accredited representative can give you legal advice on U.S. immigration law.**

# TIPS FOR WORKING WITH YOUR ATTORNEY



## Do NOT take legal advice from:

**A paralegal, a “legal specialist”  
or a “notario”**

**Someone licensed to practice  
law in a different country**

Legal work at a low cost from the above could equal a big cost of losing your case.

**\*Note:** Do not feel pressured to sign immediately.  
The agreement should be provided in a language that you can read.

## Attorneys should provide:

- An honest appraisal of the likelihood of the case’s success
- Prompt disclosure of alternative ways to resolve a matter
- Copies of court documents and letters
- A satisfactory explanation of your case’s status at your request
- Adequate and prompt attention to your case
- Reasonable and timely bills and descriptions of expenses

## What you should be doing for your attorney:

- Disclose all information and background on your case. The attorney needs details to be able to represent you
- Come to meetings prepared (bring a list of questions, your documents, a notepad to take notes, etc.)
- Make copies of everything you give your attorney. Get copies of everything that is filed with the court
- Understand the fee agreement
- Communicate with your attorney. Clearly tell your attorney what you want and expect, and discuss any concerns with them promptly. You have the right to know what is happening with your case, including due dates and court dates.



## DOJ Recognition & Accreditation

An accredited representative can do all the same things as a lawyer: help fill out immigration applications, collect evidence, and present cases to immigration judges.

## Protect Your Money

- Ask the attorney if they will be putting your paid money in an attorney trust account (escrow) where it will be safe until it is earned.
- Get a receipt for each payment you make to the attorney.
- An attorney's fee should be reasonable under any circumstances. What is reasonable at the beginning of representation may not be reasonable later.
- Be cautious when a lawyer indicates that their fee is "nonrefundable."
- Ask how frequently you will receive bills or invoices. You should review bills frequently and ask questions immediately if something does not make sense.



**If the attorney puts the money directly into an operating account, they are taking the money before it is earned, and it may be harder for you to get a refund.**



### **Don't Forget to:**

- Advocate for yourself
- Ask questions and expect answers
- Hire an attorney OR an accredited rep.
  - Use resources available to you

## How to Handle Problems With Your Attorney

- If something is not clear, ask them to explain it in a different way or in writing and explain why you are concerned. Also, ask for an accounting of fees and a refund.
- If you feel communication is inadequate, tell the attorney and say you need better communication from them in order to continue the relationship.
- If the matter cannot be resolved, you can:
  1. Fire your current attorney in writing and hire a new one
  2. Try to get a refund by asking for one directly, filing suit in court, or contacting your local fee dispute resolution group.
- If you believe your attorney has broken ethical rules, you can contact your state Attorney Grievance Commission/ Disciplinary Counsel.

## If you experience:

### **Unprofessional Behavior**

Contact the Attorney Grievance Commission/ Disciplinary Counsel in the state the attorney is licensed

### **A Fee Dispute**

Contact the Attorney Fee Dispute Resolution Committee in the state the attorney is licensed