

ATTORNEY REFERRAL



prepared by
MOUNTAIN HOME AFB
GUNFIGHTER LEGAL OFFICE



INTRODUCTION

The Base Legal Office cannot represent you on legal matters of a personal and civil nature. Thus, it may be necessary for you to find, hire, and work with a civilian lawyer. This handout will assist you in finding a lawyer and assisting him/her in properly representing you.

HOW TO FIND A LAWYER

The best way to find a good lawyer is to check with friends, neighbors, co-workers, or relatives who have hired lawyers in the past. Recommendations from people you know will help in selecting a good, competent attorney. Unfortunately, the Legal Office cannot refer you to a lawyer or recommend particular lawyers.

The Idaho State Bar Lawyer Referral Service will refer you to attorneys living in your area who are able to handle your type of legal problem. (208) 334-4500 or isb.idaho.gov. The Idaho Bar Association also runs a pro bono program (free services) if you meet its income requirements.

Check the ads and listings in the yellow pages of any telephone directories under the heading "Attorneys." Another resource is Martindale-Hubbell's Lawyer Locator (www.martindale.com).

If you qualify, you can seek assistance from the Idaho Legal Aid Services. To qualify, you must meet certain low-income requirements. Legal Aid in Boise can be contacted at (208) 746-7541.

ATTORNEY FEES

Attorneys usually charge by one of three methods:

a. An **hourly rate** based on the number of hours devoted to the representation.

b. A **flat fee** to perform a certain task. These fees are usually assessed if the matter is routine or standard, but if complications that develop require additional work, an additional fee may be charged.

c. A **contingent fee** based on a percentage of any award or recovery received on your behalf. Contingent fees are usually charged in cases where people are attempting to recover damages for injuries received due to the acts of another person. Be sure to understand the percentage that the attorney is charging under a contingency fee arrangement. Also, you need to know if the fee is calculated before or after the expenses incurred in handling the matter are paid. You also need to know if you will be expected to reimburse the lawyer's expenses in the event there is no recovery on your behalf.

Be sure that there is a written fee arrangement between you and your lawyer in order to avoid any dispute as to what the fee is and how it is paid. This agreement protects both you and your lawyer.

THE INITIAL VISIT

The initial visit with a lawyer is an opportunity for you and the lawyer to get to know one another. Do not think that you have to hire the lawyer as a result of the visit. Some lawyers do not charge for the initial visit. All of the lawyers listed at the Idaho State Bar website have agreed to offer an initial 30 minute consultation for \$35. The following matters should be discussed during the initial interview:

1. A brief description of the legal problem and what it will take to handle or resolve the problem.
2. How much the lawyer will charge or how he will set his/her fee.
3. Whether a retainer is required. A retainer is an amount of money deposited with a lawyer against which the lawyer bills his/her services. It acts as a guarantee that the lawyer will get paid for his/her services.
4. How long it will take to conclude the legal matter. If the matter involves litigation, the lawyer may not be able to give you an accurate estimate of time.
5. The lawyer's experience in handling matters similar to yours and any

references of current or past clients that you can contact.

If you decide to hire the lawyer during the initial interview, you probably will spend additional time discussing the details of your legal problem.

HOW TO ASSIST YOUR LAWYER

The more you can do to assist your lawyer, the more efficient he/she will be. This will help minimize your legal costs. Organizing a summary of the facts and relevant names, addresses, and phone-numbers prior to the visit, and bringing all documents relating to the problem would be helpful. Be honest with your lawyer; tell all facts, both good and bad. The lawyer can assist you better if he/she knows the bad aspects of your situation in advance rather than be surprised by them at a later time. Let your lawyer know immediately if new information arises.

Arrive on time for your appointments or call his/her office if you anticipate being late or have to cancel an appointment.

Tell the attorney what you would like to accomplish. Set realistic goals and expectations. The lawyer will tell you whether your expectations can be realized. And, ask questions if you don't understand something.

*This handout is general in nature. It is not a substitute for legal advice from an attorney regarding individual situations.
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For additional information on this and other legal topics, see the Air Force Legal Assistance Website:
<https://aflegalassistance.law.af.mil>