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### HOW TO CHOOSE AN ATTORNEY FOR YOUR CRIMINAL CASE

You'll want an attorney who has a lot of experience doing criminal jury trials. A criminal case isn't for a civil litigator, estate attorney, or the family's all-purpose lawyer. It's a specialized area of the law.

#### Experience in Criminal Courts.

- Unethical criminal defense attorneys can be very deceptive when answering questions about wins and losses. In criminal law, victory is a fluid concept. An unethical attorney can use "spin" to claim to have won every case. More important than a tally of wins and losses is the kind of experience your attorney has. Find out what *kinds* of criminal cases your attorney has done.
- The goal of each case needs to be tailored to its unique circumstances. Your attorney shouldn't have a "one size fits all" attitude about the allegation you're facing.
- Your attorney has to understand police interrogation tactics and investigation methods and have a good knowledge of various forensic sciences.

#### Perspective and Professionalism.

- Ask yourself if this attorney can fairly assess the case, both *for* you and *against* you.
- Most defense attorneys began their careers as prosecutors. Some experience as a prosecutor will be helpful. The attorney needs to understand how a criminal investigation is conducted, how a prosecution is put together, and how crime victims feel and think.
- But too much experience as a prosecutor can lead an attorney to trust the government too much. Try to get a feel for whether the attorney is overly sympathetic to the government, the police, or the judicial system.
- On the other hand, a defense attorney who is a "true believer" usually can't see the case from the other side's point of view, and that can be deadly to your case. If your attorney puts a personal agenda ahead of your interests, outside the courtroom as well as inside, you'll be at risk of antagonize the judge, the jury, and the prosecution. It's also critically important that you avoid an attorney who picks fights with witnesses instead of trying to win them over to your side.

#### Trust.

- By the end of your first meeting, you need to have confidence in your attorney.
- You shouldn't trust an attorney who's afraid to be straight with you about the weaknesses of your situation. If there are holes in your story, your attorney needs to see them.
- Even if the attorney has a big reputation, has been on TV, and comes highly recommended, if you don't have a good feeling after your first meeting you need to find someone else.

THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR CHOOSING THE RIGHT ATTORNEY FOR YOUR CASE. IF YOU KNOW OF SOMEONE WHO COULD BENEFIT FROM THIS GUIDE, PLEASE FREE TO PASS THIS ALONG.