

New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
2004 Domestic Violence Handbook

How To Find An Attorney

If you are ineligible for a court appointed attorney, and you are able to hire an attorney, these are some questions you should ask before you decide whether or not to hire him or her:

- How much do you charge by the hour? For a first meeting or consultation?
- What is your minimum fee for my kind of case?
- What is covered by your fee?
- How many court appearances are included?
- What is your rate for appearance in court?
- Do you have a written agreement that I can sign and a copy of it for me to keep?
- Are you willing to help me get necessary court Orders, such as custody, visitation and/or protective Orders?
- Will you seek changes in final Orders and judgments if new circumstances justify the changes?
- Are you willing to assist me if my abuser violates a custody or protective Order? What are your fees in those circumstances?
- Do you charge for time spent when I telephone you or when you respond to letters I send?

Also ask:

- Are you willing to talk and coordinate with a domestic violence advocate?
- What should I do to help you with my case?
- What do you expect of me?

- What papers, documents and witnesses should I get for you?
- What do you think are my chances for success in court?

From the very beginning you should feel comfortable when you talk to your lawyer and be sure that she or he understands your situation and knows how to help. If you do not have confidence in the first lawyer you speak with, you have every right to go to another one. Your local domestic violence program may be able to refer you to a lawyer.