



Immigration Attorneys: Making the Right Choice

- It is strongly recommended that you find an attorney that is a member of the [American Immigration Lawyer's Association \(AILA\)](#). AILA membership indicates a focus on immigration law and a commitment to professional standards. You can use AILA's online directory to search for attorneys by both area of legal expertise and geographic location, helping you find someone who is not only qualified to handle your specific situation but also conveniently located. You can also search the [California State Bar web page](#) for a local attorney.
- Request a consultation. Most attorneys will offer a free or reduced-cost consultation. Use this consultation to answer the following questions:
 - Is the attorney's experience relevant to your specific situation? Have they handled cases similar to yours previously?
 - Is the attorney clear and easy to understand? Do they have a good grasp of your situation and a plan to move forward?
 - What is their fee structure? Do they charge hourly or a flat fee? Do they have an estimate of the total cost? Do they have an estimate of how much time it will take?
- Read client reviews on platforms like Avvo, Google, or Yelp to get an idea of the attorney's reputation.
- Always ensure you have a written contract in place, and take the time to review it carefully. Make sure you fully understand all terms and conditions before signing, and don't hesitate to ask questions about anything that seems unclear.
- If you are dealing with an immigration issue that may involve deportation, you will want to find an attorney that specializes in that area. Here is [a link](#) to the AILA website to a list of deportation specialists in California.
- If they are helping you with a criminal matter, they need to understand both criminal and immigration law, and the intersection of the two. You may wish to engage two attorneys: one criminal attorney and one immigration attorney.

If you are not satisfied with an attorney, don't be afraid to look elsewhere to find someone else that is a better fit for you. It's important to feel comfortable with the attorney that you hire.



Listed below are some suggested questions to ask when searching for an immigration attorney:

1. Does the attorney primarily practice in the area of immigration law?
2. Does the attorney primarily practice in specialty areas of immigration law?
3. How many years has the attorney been practicing immigration law?
4. What kind of experience does the attorney have with the specific type of case you have?
5. Is the attorney knowledgeable in student and scholar issues?
6. Is the attorney a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association? If not, is it very unlikely that s/he is actively practicing immigration law? You can find a referral to AILA Immigration attorneys on their website at <http://www.aila.org/>.
7. Will you be working directly with that attorney? Some will turn your case over to an associate or a legal assistant after the initial interview.
8. What is the attorney's honest appraisal of the likelihood of success with your case? Be wary of anyone who "guarantees" you success.
9. Does everything you know about this attorney tell you that this person is knowledgeable and competent to handle your specific type of case?
10. Does everything you know about this attorney tell you that this person is ethical and honest in relations with clients?
11. Are you comfortable with the attorney's style and personality?
12. Is there any initial consultation fee? Some attorneys have an hourly charge; others have a fixed fee, depending on the type of case. You may wish to meet with an attorney for a consultation only and/or hire the attorney to handle your case.
13. Are the fees comparable to other attorneys' fees? If not, why not? The lowest fees do not necessarily indicate the best deal. The highest fee does not necessarily indicate the best service.
14. If you still have questions about the attorney's background and qualifications, contact the California State Bar Association (www.calbar.ca.gov) for information about a particular attorney.