

Ten Questions to Ask an Elder Law Attorney



Elder law attorneys cover a wide variety of legal areas, potentially including guardianship, long-term care planning, knowledge of government benefit programs, powers of attorney, estate planning, advance medical directives, elder abuse issues, tax law, retirement and pensions, asset protection, trust planning and contract law.

The American Bar Association (the governing professional association for lawyers in the United States) has approved the National Elder Law Foundation (NELF.org) as the only certifying organization for Elder Law Attorneys in the U.S. At this time, there are just over 400 Certified Elder Law Attorneys (CELAs) nationwide.

Other attorneys also cover some or all aspects of elder law, but you may need to do some research to identify one who meets your needs. Start by asking your Seniors Real Estate Specialist® (SRES) and other trusted professionals in your community (your family attorney, your financial planner, etc.) for recommendations. You may also want to consult the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys' online directory (NAELA.org) which includes over 4,000 members specializing in various elder law topics.

Once a potential attorney(s) has been identified, request an appointment(s) to learn more about their services and ask questions:

1. **Why do I need an elder law attorney?**
2. **How many years have you focused your practice on elder law issues?**
3. **Why did you choose elder law?**
4. **How many clients have you had in the past five years with needs similar to mine?**
5. **What was the most challenging aspect of those cases and what were the outcomes?**
6. **What percentage of your annual caseload involves elder law issues?**
7. **What elder law issues do you handle most often? Least often?**
8. **Are you accredited by the VA to handle Veteran's claims and how many do you file annually?**
9. **What are your fees? (Be sure to get a fee schedule in writing.)**
10. **Can you provide references?**

Since elder law attorneys need to be knowledgeable and experienced in multiple areas of the law, you should choose a lawyer who has been in business for several years and has gained experience in all the areas you need now and may need in the future.

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