

Working with your lawyer

This fact sheet offers tips to help you to develop and maintain a positive and productive relationship with your lawyer.

INFORMATION FOR CONSUMERS

Before your first meeting

- Check the cost of the initial consultation and how long it will take.
- Check that the lawyer has experience or specialises in the area of your legal matter.
- Write down the details of your legal problem; what happened, when it happened and who was involved.
- Make copies of any documents that may be relevant to your legal matter.
- Write down the questions you want to ask the lawyer.
- Write down the outcome you hope to achieve in your matter.
- If you feel it would be helpful, arrange for a friend, relative or support person to go with you to the first meeting.
- Arrange for an interpreter to be available, if you need one.

At the first meeting with your lawyer

- Ask about costs (or legal aid if you need financial assistance).
- Take notes of what is said to you.
- Give your lawyer a copy of the notes you have prepared and the documents you have copied.
- Respond clearly to the questions your lawyer asks you.
- Ask your lawyer questions if you don't understand something or want to know what you need to do.
- Ask your lawyer for a definition of any legal terms that you do not understand.
- Ask your lawyer what options exist to deal with your legal matter.

- Tell your lawyer of any concerns you have about your personal safety.
- Ask your lawyer what happens next and how long it may take to deal with your legal matter.

Ongoing considerations

- Take notes of what your lawyer tells you.
- Keep these notes and all letters and documents your lawyer sends to you together in a file or folder.
- Tell your lawyer if any of your personal details change.
- Ask your lawyer questions if you don't understand what has happened or what will happen next.
- If the legal problem involves a court case ask your lawyer what it means to agree to 'settle' your legal matter instead of going to court (as well as what this means for legal costs).
- Ask your lawyer if costs are likely to increase from the original estimate.

If you have a problem with your lawyer

- Raise your concerns directly with your lawyer or your lawyer's managing partner.
- Change lawyers (please note however, the lawyer can retain your file until his/her legal costs are paid).
- If you are unable to resolve the matter, contact the Victorian Legal Services Commissioner to discuss your concerns.

Further information

Contact the Victorian Legal Services Commissioner

Tel: 03 9679 8001

Email: admin@lsbc.vic.gov.au