



Stony Brook  
University

# Tips for Finding a Lawyer

## Do I Really Need a Lawyer?

Maybe, maybe not. Before contacting a lawyer regarding an immigration issue:

- Speak with your Visa & Immigration Services adviser.
- Visit the US Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) website ([www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)) where you will find answers to many of your questions.

## How Do I Find the Name of a Lawyer?

There are many ways to find lawyers:

- **American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)** website ([www.aialawyer.com](http://www.aialawyer.com)) click Immigration Lawyer Referral Service.
- Call your local bar association lawyer referral service. In Suffolk County, contact the **Suffolk Bar Association Referral Service** at (631) 234-5577 or visit [www.scba.org](http://www.scba.org).
- Consult a law directory, such as **Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory**, which gives a brief biography of lawyers practicing in the New York area.
- Search the **American Bar Association's (ABA)** clickable map of State & Local Bar Associations ([www.americanbar.org](http://www.americanbar.org)).

## How Do I Choose a Lawyer?

Before choosing a lawyer, call the offices of the lawyers on your list, briefly explain your legal problem and ask:

- Are you specialized and/or experienced in my type of problem?
- Do you charge a flat rate or hourly fee for this type of work?
- Can you give me an estimate of the cost?
- Can you estimate the amount of time it will take?

## How Should I Make My Decision to Hire a Lawyer?

Consider the following factors before agreeing to hire a lawyer:

- Can you communicate effectively with the lawyer? Was the lawyer clear and easy to understand?
- Are the fees reasonable in comparison with other lawyers' charges?
- Did the lawyer give clear explanations of how he or she will let you know about progress in your case?
- If you are not satisfied with this lawyer, do not hire him or her. Look elsewhere for legal help.

Before you finally sign a contract with a lawyer, read it carefully. Make sure you understand it. Everything you and the lawyer agreed to should be in writing.

## What if I Have a Problem With My Lawyer?

If you have a problem with your lawyer, you should discuss it with him or her. Try to work out any problems. If you cannot agree on a solution, you may wish to contact the New York State Bar Association.

**DISCLAIMER:** The information contained in this handout is provided by Visa and Immigration Services as a service solely to the international students of Stony Brook University. We make no claims, promises or guarantees about the accuracy, completeness, or adequacy of the information contained in this handout. As legal advice must be tailored to the specific circumstances of each case, and laws are constantly changing, nothing provided herein should be considered legal advice or used as a substitute for the advice of competent counsel.