

Preparing to Meet With Your Attorney

Whether over a breach of contract or a car accident, an intellectual property claim or an acrimonious divorce, litigation is often the last resort for people who cannot otherwise settle a dispute. Although sometimes necessary, litigation can be an expensive and time-consuming process for all parties, plaintiffs and defendants. The process can be made easier, however, with thorough preparation prior to your initial meeting with your attorney.

Know the Details: In any litigation, a firm grasp on the relevant facts of your situation can be invaluable in the preparation of your case. To assist your attorney, consider preparing:

- A chronology of important or relevant events, dates and times
- A detailed, objective statement describing the specifics of your case (such as the details of an auto accident or the discussions prior to and during negotiation of a contract)
- A list of the names of people or companies that may be relevant to your case, including contact information
- A detailed description of any medical treatment you have received pertaining to your case, including the names of the treating physician(s) and the hospital or medical clinic at which you received treatment

Forewarned is Forearmed: Once discovery begins, your attorney will likely be asked by the opposing party to prepare and submit a wealth of documentary evidence. Supplying your attorney with the relevant documents initially can both save time — which will save you money — and help your attorney to anticipate any difficulties that may arise with your case. Depending on the nature of the claim, not all of the following will apply:

- Some form of identification, such as a drivers license, with your full name and current address
- Your Social Security card
- Your income tax filings — and those of your spouse, if married — for the previous five years
- Business tax returns, if relevant, for the previous five years
- Your three most recent pay stubs
- Deeds for any real property your own, including your primary residence, rental properties, vacation homes or farmsteads
- A copy of your marriage license and/or divorce order
- Any relevant employment materials, such as your employment contract, employee handbook or training materials
- A copy of any insurance policies you have relevant to your case, such as auto insurance or homeowner's insurance
- All relevant medical files and charts pertaining to your case

Of course, if you have received any legal documents pertaining to your case — such as a Summons or Complaint — you should also bring these to your initial meeting with your lawyer. Thorough preparation prior to your first meeting can both save time and help your attorney provide you with the best possible representation.