

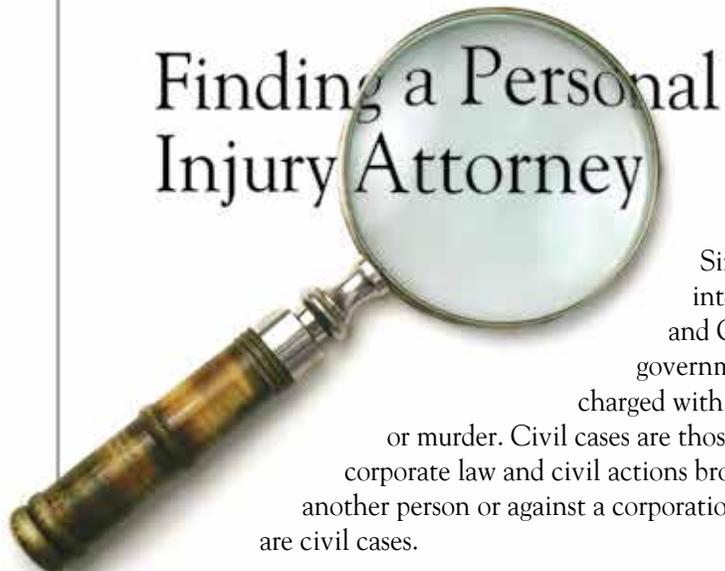


# Finding a Personal Injury Attorney

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THE  
**CORSON & JOHNSON**  
LAW FIRM

The Law and You  
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## Finding a Personal Injury Attorney

Simply stated, the law is divided into two major areas: Criminal and Civil. Criminal cases involve government prosecution of individuals charged with illegal conduct, such as robbery or murder. Civil cases are those dealing with family law, corporate law and civil actions brought by one individual against another person or against a corporation. Personal injury cases are civil cases.

### What is a personal injury attorney?

A couple of generations ago, an attorney was an attorney. One attorney did it all: wills, real estate, contracts, injuries, and sometimes criminal cases. Today, attorneys tend to emphasize a certain field of law. An attorney who specializes in cases involving injury or death caused by wrongful conduct or a defective product is a personal injury attorney. Attorneys in this field must have a good understanding of insurance law, medicine, investigations, evidence, and civil procedure.

Most attorneys who enter this field want to prevent needless injuries and suffering and to make sure that corporations and individuals take responsibility for their actions. An experienced personal injury attorney knows how to build your case, how to negotiate your case with the responsible parties or insurance companies and, if necessary, how to take your case to trial.

### What is a *plaintiff's* personal injury attorney?

If you are injured and seek justice, you are the plaintiff. You would be represented by a plaintiff's personal injury attorney. If you are the company on the other side of the case, you are the defendant, and the defense would be handled by an insurance defense attorney. Both kinds of attorneys may be called "trial attorneys," although that term is used more often for plaintiff's personal injury attorneys.

## Where to find an attorney you can trust.

One of the best ways to find a plaintiff's personal injury attorney is to ask an attorney you trust from other business or personal dealings. If you do not know any attorneys, ask your friends and family for names of attorneys they have dealt with. If an attorney has large Yellow Page ads or airs television commercials that promise a big settlement, that does not mean they are the best. Many of the most experienced attorneys do not need this type of promotion.

If an attorney refers you to a personal injury attorney, the referring attorney often receives a referral fee. The amount of this fee can be significant—often a quarter to a third of the fee received by the personal injury attorney who actually prosecutes your case. This gives the initial attorney an incentive to refer you to a good personal injury attorney. But if this possibility makes you uncomfortable, you shouldn't hesitate to ask if the attorney referring your case expects a referral fee.

## Legal Rating Services

**Best Lawyers in America** is widely regarded as the preeminent referral guide to the legal profession in the United States. It is compiled through surveys in which thousands of the top lawyers in the U.S. confidentially evaluate their professional peers. To check on an attorney, go to [www.bestlawyers.com](http://www.bestlawyers.com), and in the "Lawyer Search" box, type in the attorney's last name and his or her state.



**LexisNexis Martindale-Hubbell** ratings reflect the confidential opinions of members of the bar and judiciary. The best lawyers are rated "AV" by this rating system. The "A" means that their peers rate them as "very high to preeminent" on legal ability, and the "V" means that they are rated very high on ethical standards. To check on an attorney, go to [www.martindale.com](http://www.martindale.com), and enter the attorney's name in the "Lawyer Locator Basic Search."



## Professional Organizations

There are many legal professional organizations, some of which have online directories of their membership. However, most legal organizations are open to all attorneys, and membership may mean only that the attorney has paid the membership fee.

**American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA)** is a select group of experienced and successful trial attorneys. ABOTA's purpose is the preservation of the civil jury trial. Experienced and successful trial attorneys are selected who display skill, civility, and integrity in upholding the civil justice system. You can check on an attorney's membership in ABOTA at [www.abota.org](http://www.abota.org) (click on "Chapters," then "Oregon" then "membership search").



**American College of Trial Lawyers (ACTL)** is considered by many to be the premier trial lawyer organization. It is composed of the best of both the plaintiff and defense trial bar from the United States and Canada. Fellowship in the College is by invitation, extended only after careful investigation, to those experienced trial lawyers who have demonstrated exceptional skill as advocates and whose professional careers have been marked by the highest standards of ethical conduct, professionalism and civility. You can check on ACTL membership at [www.actl.com](http://www.actl.com) (go to the "attorney directory" link).

**American Association for Justice (AAJ)** is a national association for attorneys who represent injured people. To check to see if an attorney is a member, go to [www.justice.org](http://www.justice.org), and click on "Find An Attorney."

**Oregon Trial Lawyers Association (OTLA)** is an Oregon association for attorneys who represent people. Like AAJ, OTLA provides many services to keep its members current, including continuing legal education programs, publications, references, networking, and on-line information. OTLA's directory is not public, but you can ask an attorney if he or she is a member.





## Referral Services

The Oregon State Bar offers a referral service to help people find attorneys. There are also commercial attorney referral services. Usually, any lawyer can list with a referral service, so you can't know just from the referral service if the attorney is well-qualified to handle your case.

## "Informational" Websites

There are a large number of websites on the internet which look informational, but in fact are owned by law firms, marketing, or brokerage companies. Be wary of any "injury information" site that lists law firms or offers attorney referrals, particularly if it does not clearly identify its sponsor. Commercial on-line directories typically list any attorney who pays the required fee.

## Lawyer Advertising: Consumer Beware

Beware of television, radio, internet, and Yellow Page ads that overpromise the results an attorney can deliver. Some advertisements are paid for by referral agencies, which collect large numbers of calls and then divide them up between attorneys who pay for that service. Even when the advertisements are paid for by a law firm, that firm may be more in the business of making referrals than actually representing people with personal injury cases. Yellow Pages are best used simply to find the phone number of a lawyer you learn about from another source. Similarly, the internet is best used to check the website of a attorney or law firm recommended to you by a trusted source.

Some of the best personal injury attorneys do little advertising. They get most of their cases through referrals from other attorneys, due to their reputations for getting good results.

## Finding the Right Attorney for You

At The Corson & Johnson Law Firm, we hope you'll find the right attorney if you need help with a personal injury or wrongful death claim. We may or may not be the right attorneys for you, but we'll be happy to talk with you. If we're not the right choice for you, often we can make a recommendation or referral to someone who might be.

## Making sure the law works for everyone.

The Corson & Johnson Law Firm specializes in representing people who have suffered severe injuries or death caused by defective products or wrongful conduct.

One of the important services we provide our clients in the difficult time following an accident or injury is our expertise and guidance through the complex judicial process. The more insight we can provide into the workings of the system, the better prepared our clients are for the challenges of the legal process. The attorneys of The Corson & Johnson Law Firm are dedicated both to making sure that their clients receive fair compensation, and also to working for changes—sometimes through new laws and regulations—that will prevent further injuries and deaths.

Both Don Corson and Lara Johnson are members of the American Association for Justice (AAJ) and the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association (OTLA), and are admitted to the Oregon state and federal courts.

Don is recognized by Best Lawyers in America in personal injury, medical negligence, and product liability law. He is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates, and a past President of OTLA. Don is rated “AV” by LexisNexis Martindale-Hubbell’s rating system.

Lara is on the OTLA Board of Directors and is also a member of Oregon Women Lawyers. She has written and lectured on nursing home neglect and abuse, and is also published on claims against government entities.

## Submit questions to The Law and You

The Law & You is a community service in Oregon, provided by The Corson & Johnson Law Firm. To hear the latest questions or to ask a question about how the law works or a specific case, visit [www.CorsonJohnsonLaw.com](http://www.CorsonJohnsonLaw.com).



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