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# Looking For A Lawyer: The Truth About Attorney Finder Websites & Directories

What You Should Know About  
Lawyer Referral Services



## Washington Accident Books & Reports

A Public Information Service for the Citizens of Washington State



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## LOOKING FOR A LAWYER

### *THE TRUTH ABOUT ATTORNEY FINDER WEBSITES & DIRECTORIES*

Are you looking for a lawyer? Using the internet to find one? Beware of websites that say they will help you locate, evaluate, and choose a lawyer. These sites are not always what they appear to be. They are not a public service. More often than not these sites are simply paid advertising spots.

There are two basic categories of lawyer finder websites. They are “directory sites” and “referral sites”.

#### **Directory Sites**

The directory sites are basically an online version of the yellow pages where attorneys have paid for a listing in the directory. Typically, the more money that is paid by the attorney the bigger the ad. More money also means a higher rank in the directory, the more times the ad will be presented, etc. The directory offers listings and search criteria and you pick the lawyer to contact.

#### **Referral Sites**

Referral sites gather your information (name, number, case specifics, etc.) and then send it to an attorney who will contact you. The attorney has also paid for this service. The difference is that the attorney is paying to get a case lead. When you fill out the online form by giving information about your case, the information is given to the next lawyer on the list. With referral sites, the lawyer is often paying to get a certain number of leads per month. Rather than being routed to the attorney that can best meet your needs you are simply put in touch with the next attorney in line.

Whether the attorney is listed in a directory or referral site, in both cases the attorney is paying for advertising. This is important to understand because the attorney may not have

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much, if any, experience in the area of law that pertains to your case. Many times the attorney who pays for this type of advertising may not have even taken your type of case all the way to trial. Sometimes out-of-state attorneys will use a directory or referral site to gather leads and then refer them to an in-state attorney in exchange for a referral fee or broker fee.

Also, beware of those websites that claim that the attorney has been “prescreened” or that the attorney “belongs in their network”. This just means that the lawyer was able to pay the advertising fee. The term “prescreened attorney” usually means that the company that operates the website has verified that the attorney is licensed to practice law, but not necessarily that the attorney is experienced to handle your type of case.

#### **Referral Firms**

There is actually a subcategory of the referral site. I call them “referral firms”. These are sites that appear to promote a lawyer or a law firm. But behind the scenes these sites are just another type of referral site where the attorney has paid a hefty fee to be promoted. You might have seen some television spots for these lawyers or firms. Again, they take your call or your incoming email and then route it to someone or some firm that is next on the list to get leads. Many times the attorney is not even licensed to practice law in your state. In some cases they associate with a local firm—but it still is not the firm that you thought you were contacting or hiring.

Some of the key phrases that indicate that you are looking at a directory or referral site are as follows:

- free lawyer finder services
- helps you easily find a lawyer in your area based on location and specialty
- find a lawyer near you
- law firm directories
- access to information, news, articles and attorney profiles -find, research, screen and

contact a lawyer

- review lawyer profiles and information about individual law firms to identify the best lawyer to fit your needs

The sites include: Lawyers.com, Attorneys.com, FindLaw.com, LawInfo.com, Legal-Match.com, AttorneyLocate.com and many, many others.

**You are the only person who should be choosing a lawyer to represent you.** Legal matters, especially personal injury cases, can sometimes (not always) take years to resolve. When you pick a lawyer you are choosing to build a long-term attorney-client relationship with someone who will speak on your behalf. Do not make a hasty decision while visiting a website late one night.

Do your homework, visit websites, read articles, review resumes, watch videos, talk to friends, talk other family members and, most importantly, meet with several lawyers in their offices. Ask them questions about their experience, track record, etc. Listen to what they have to say and judge for yourself.

Good luck finding the right attorney for you.

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*Protecting the Legal Rights of*  
**Injury Victims & Their Families**



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