

How to Be a Great Client Without Annoying your Attorney or Doctors

By Shannon D. Rolan, Esq.

A helpful and cooperative client is a happy client, and it makes for a happy lawyer. These clients do what we ask. They comply with the doctor's orders and they are courteous to everyone involved. On the other hand, there is another kind of client: the client who hangs up and calls back repeatedly—many times a day, leaving multiple messages, tying up the switchboard, etc. This is the same client who asks for an update on a case where he or she has yet to hire us.

Clients sometimes don't realize they are being annoying, and annoying your doctor or your lawyer can be dangerous to your claim. Why? If your lawyer is talking to you every day, they can't be working on your claim. It is simple. If they are on the phone with you discussing all the "what if" questions you have, then they can't be contacting the Employer/Insurer or their attorney. They can't be processing and reviewing medical records, serving and answering discovery or arranging for Independent Medical Examinations.

There will be times when you and your lawyer need to communicate in writing, over the phone or in person; however, daily communications ARE NOT NECESSARY. Usually, an attorney won't have an update on your claim for the first 30 days. This is because the law allows the Employer/Insurer to take 30 days to respond to any document request. Many times your lawyer will not know anything new about your case during the first 30 days, but that doesn't mean they have not worked on your file. If you don't hear from your attorney, it is because nothing new has happened or they don't have an update yet. Remember lawyers are paid to get hard to get you results.

If you annoy your doctor, he or she can and will refuse to continue treating you. The doctor won't do you any favors and this will be well documented in your file so no other doctor may be willing to help you.

So how are you supposed to know how much contact is too much? Here is a list of rules for how to be a great client:



- 1) Don't call daily your lawyer.
- 2) Don't be rude to the receptionist, secretary or paralegal. Remember these assistants are the lawyers' life blood for getting work done. If they are unhappy, then the lawyer will be unhappy. Don't do it.
- 3) DO what your lawyer asks and do it in a timely manner. Show up for depositions, doctor appointments. Answer the discovery! Return signed authorizations.
- 4) DON'T show up at court without speaking to your lawyer or to the paralegal or secretary for your lawyer. We will NEVER ask you to show up without discussing pertinent information with you first. Don't presume things are going forward without confirming it.
- 5) DON'T show up at our law office unannounced and demanding to see your attorney. Our schedules are planned out days, weeks and even months in advance. If you want to meet with your lawyer, make an appointment in advance.
- 6) Do what your doctor asks you to do. Go to all appointments. Do your physical therapy. Don't fail to show up just because you didn't feel like it.
- 7) Don't ever call the judge or the adjuster on your file. This contact must go through your lawyer. You are NEVER authorized to contact a judge directly. It is unethical to do so.
- 8) Finally, don't make big decisions without discussing them with your lawyer. If you are contemplating moving to another state, quitting your job, or refusing medical care, please talk to us first. We can help guide you through the decision to minimize the financial impact on your claim. We can't do anything to help you if you leave us in the dark and then tell us afterwards.

We want this to be a learning experience. For those who have never had a lawyer before, you don't realize that there is a process to the system. We don't get paid unless we get results, so please give us the ability to get you the best results possible.