

Your Right to an Attorney

You have been charged with a criminal offense. Before you can plead guilty or not guilty to this charge, you must be informed that you have the right to an attorney. If you cannot afford an attorney and if you meet certain income guidelines, an attorney will be appointed to represent you, if you so choose. If you do not meet the eligibility guidelines to have an attorney appointed to represent you, you still have the right to an attorney to represent you on the charge; however, the attorney must be retained at your own expense.

Although you do have the constitutional right to represent yourself and proceed without an attorney, you should be informed of the following:

- Self-representation can be dangerous and you have the right to have the assistance of a lawyer at all stages of the proceedings, and if you cannot afford a lawyer, a lawyer may be appointed to represent you.
- Criminal defense is a technical area of the law and you will be expected to know and follow the law.
- There may be certain factual, legal, or other defenses to the charge you are facing and if you choose to proceed without the services of a licensed attorney, you may not be aware of certain defenses.
- There may be issues related to the conduct of trial or a guilty plea that could arise in the future that you may not be aware of and it would be your attorney's responsibility to be aware of those issues and how to properly address them before the Court, and, if necessary, preserve the issues for appellate review. You will be held to the same standard whether you appear with an attorney or you represent yourself.
- There may be collateral consequences of a conviction or plea that you are not aware of, including, but not limited to, increased penalties, suspension of your driver's license, and the restriction of the right to possess firearms and/or ammunition, or deportation.
- If you exercise your right to proceed without the services of an attorney, you are responsible for complying with all applicable rules of court, including rules of evidence, procedural rules, and proper behavior before the Judge and/or Jury.

Because of the above factors, Ms. Hall recommends, at minimum, a consultation to determine how to proceed in your case.

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