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# The 2026 Defense Toolkit

What to do when something goes wrong —  
before it gets worse.

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COCHRAN & CHHABRA LAW GROUP

Anchored in Annapolis. Focused on what matters.

# Read This First

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## **Most people do not think about legal risk until they are already in it.**

Panic leads to bad decisions and worse outcomes. Things often work themselves out — but not without the right information at the right moment. This guide gives you a calm, clear first step.

It is not legal advice. It is a framework — built by attorneys who handle these cases every day — so you know what to do, what not to do, and when to call.

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### **Say Less.**

You are not required to explain yourself. Silence is a constitutional right — not a sign of guilt. Use it.

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### **Document Everything.**

Names, times, locations, photos, messages, paperwork. Save it before it disappears. Digital evidence vanishes fast.

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### **Call Early.**

The sooner you speak to a lawyer, the more options you have. Waiting costs leverage. Early guidance prevents worse outcomes.

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*"Keep this somewhere easy to find.  
The next 24 hours matter most."*

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# If This Happens — Do This

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Three situations where your first moves matter most.

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## **DUI Stop**

- Pull over safely and keep your hands visible on the steering wheel.
- Provide license, registration, and insurance when asked.
- Do not volunteer additional information beyond what is required.
- Know the difference between field sobriety tests and chemical testing.
- Stay calm. Do not argue. Do not flee. Anything you say will be noted.

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## **Arrest**

- Do not resist, even if you believe the arrest is unfair.
- Say clearly: "I am exercising my right to remain silent."
- Ask for a lawyer before answering any questions.
- Do not consent to a search unless compelled by a warrant.
- Remember the names and badge numbers of the officers involved.

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## **Accident or Injury**

- Call 911 if anyone is hurt. Safety comes first.
- Do not admit fault at the scene — not to police, not to the other party.
- Document everything: photos, witness info, officer names, report numbers.
- Do not give a recorded statement to any insurance company without counsel.
- Seek medical attention promptly — even for what seems minor.

# What Not to Say

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The fastest way to make things worse is to start explaining. Use plain restraint. These are the mistakes people make every day.

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## **Do not admit fault.**

Not at the scene. Not to police. Not to insurance. Not casually. Anything resembling an admission becomes part of the record.

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## **Do not guess.**

If you are unsure of something, say less. Guessing under pressure becomes a statement on the record.

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## **Do not post online.**

Social media posts, stories, check-ins, and comments can become evidence faster than people realize. Silence is free.

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## **Do not keep talking.**

Explaining rarely helps in the moment. It often hands over details that can later be used against you in ways you did not expect.

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*"Good legal outcomes start with what you did not say — not what you did."*

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# Your Constitutional Rights

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Whether you are pulled over, approached by law enforcement, or arrested, you have constitutional rights that protect you. Understanding them is the first step in any defense.

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## **The Right to Remain Silent**

You are not required to answer questions beyond providing your name and identification during a lawful stop. Anything you say can and will be used against you in court. Invoke this right clearly and calmly.

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## **The Right to an Attorney**

You have the right to speak with an attorney before answering any questions. If you cannot afford one, the court will appoint one. Do not waive this right under pressure.

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## **The Right Against Unreasonable Search**

Law enforcement generally needs a warrant or your consent to search your vehicle, home, or person. You are allowed to decline a search. Say: "I do not consent to a search."

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## **The Right to Know the Charges**

You have the right to be informed of what you are being charged with. Ask clearly and remember the answer.

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## **The Right to Due Process**

You cannot be punished without a fair legal proceeding. This includes the right to a trial, the right to present evidence, and the right to confront witnesses against you.

# The First 24 Hours

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**The next 24 hours can change the trajectory of a case. What you do — and what you do not do — matters more than most people realize.**

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## DO THIS

- Exercise your right to remain silent.
- Ask for a lawyer before answering questions.
- Write down everything you remember as soon as possible.
- Save photos, messages, receipts, and relevant documents.
- Keep every court notice and piece of paperwork organized.
- Tell one trusted person what happened.

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## AVOID THIS

- Do not consent to a search if asked.
- Do not discuss the case with others in custody.
- Do not contact witnesses or the other party.
- Do not post anything on social media.
- Do not ignore court dates or legal notices.
- Do not assume it will go away on its own.

# When to Call a Lawyer

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Not every situation needs a lawyer. The ones that do usually become obvious fast.

You were charged, arrested, or questioned.

**Call.**

There are injuries, insurance issues, or blame being assigned.

**Call.**

You received legal documents, a court date, or official notice.

**Call.**

Someone is threatening legal action against you.

**Call.**

You are not sure what applies to you or what to say next.

**Call.**

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*"Early guidance does not create a problem.  
It prevents a worse one."*

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## Quick Defense Checklist

Write down what happened while the details are still fresh.

Save photos, videos, texts, emails, and receipts.

Do not delete any digital evidence — even unfavorable material.

Obtain a copy of the police report when available.

Note the names and badge numbers of everyone involved.

Do not sign anything you do not fully understand.

Contact an attorney before your court date.

Bring all documents and evidence to your consultation.

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# Need Help Now?

Things can always get worse before they get better. But they don't have to.

If you or someone you know is facing criminal charges, a DUI, or any legal situation in Maryland — one conversation can change everything.

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*Free consultations. Always confidential.*

Available 24/7. Call today.

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