



CHOOSING A CONTRACTOR

CHECKLIST FOR HOMEOWNERS

The Advocacy Center (AC) is a statewide non-profit agency providing free legal services to senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

Before Choosing A Contractor:

- Shop around before hiring a contractor.
- Get at least three written bids on your project. By talking to more than one contractor you get far more information on which to base a decision. Ask for itemized bids so that you can check to be sure that everything you need repaired is included and the costs are reasonable.
- When requesting bids, provide all contractors with accurate information regarding the scope of work. Adding additional work to the original contract can increase your costs. Be sure to get written quotes for each additional project.
- Find out how busy your contractor is. Ask how long the contractor estimates the entire project will take. Ask when he or she can start.
- Check with the Contractors State License Board at 1-800-256-1392 or <http://www.lslbc.louisiana.gov/findcontractor.asp>. Ask if the contractor has a contractor's license. Check the status and disciplinary history of the license.
- Check out the contractor with your local building department, trade associations or unions, consumer protection agency, and the Better Business Bureau (BBB). The BBB/ Greater New Orleans Area can be reached at 504-581-6222 or <http://www.neworleans.bbb.org>. The BBB can give you information about whether businesses have registered and if complaints have been filed against businesses.
- Check if the contractor has liability and workman's compensation insurance. Ask the insurance company to send you a copy of the coverage.
- Get references for previous projects the contractor has done, and follow up with them. When speaking to the contractor's customers, ask questions such as:
 - Did the contractor keep the schedule and contract terms?
 - Were you pleased with the work and the way it was done?
 - Did the contractor willingly make any necessary corrections?
- If you are required to make a down payment, it should never be more than 10 percent of the project price or \$1,000, whichever is less.
- Make sure everything you and your contractor have agreed to is included in your written contract. Do not sign anything until you understand and agree with all terms. Be sure to consider the following items when negotiating a contract:
 - Will the contractor get any needed permits before the work starts?
 - Are the permit fees included in the contract?
 - Is there a schedule of payments? If there is, you should pay only as work is completed and not before. Schedules of payments are typically included in the bids.
- Ask your contractor about inconveniences that may occur, and plan accordingly.

Before the Contractor Begins Work:

- Put all changes or additions to your contract in writing to reduce the possibility of later dispute.
- Keep a job file. It should include:
 - The contract and any change orders
 - The plans and specifications
 - The bids and invoices
 - Cancelled checks
 - Lien release
 - Letters, notes and correspondence with your contractor
 - Pictures of the job in progress

During/After the Course of Work:

- Don't make the final payment until you are satisfied with the job.
- Make frequent inspections of the work, including a final walk-through with the contractor before final payment.
- If problems or disagreements occur, try first to negotiate with the contractor.
- If the issues with the contractor cannot be resolved or you feel the contractor is taking advantage of you, there are several resources that may be able to assist you.
 - The BBB/ Greater New Orleans Area can be reached at 504-581-6222 or <http://www.neworleans.bbb.org>. The BBB can help you to file a complaint against a business.
 - The State of Louisiana Office of the Attorney General can assist people to file a complaint against home improvement and construction companies. Call 1-800-351-4889 or visit <http://www.ag.state.la.us/Complaint.aspx> for more information.
 - WDSU Problem Solver Hotline (800) 416-NEWS (6397) for complaints in the Greater New Orleans area.
 - Southeast Louisiana Legal Services helps people who meet their income eligibility requirements. For more information call 877-521-6242. For contact information in other parts of the state, call or email the Advocacy Center.

For Assistance:

Call: TOLL-FREE 1-800-960-7705 (Voice) 1-866-935-7348 (TTY)

To request services in Vietnamese, call 1-800-960-7705, extension 153. Để đòi hỏi những công tác (dịch vụ) bằng tiếng Việt, xin gọi 1-800-960-7705, mở rộng 153.
For information in Spanish, please call 1-800-960-7705, ext. 152. Para información en español por favor llame 1-800-960-7705, ext.152

Write: 1010 Common Street, Suite 2600, New Orleans, LA 70112

Visit our website: www.advocacyla.org

AC has offices in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, and Shreveport