Michael Schafle: A Guide to Understanding Your Legal Options

When someone faces a serious health issue like mesothelioma, the weight of the diagnosis can be overwhelming. Medical bills pile up, treatment decisions need to be made quickly, and families often struggle to keep their footing. During these times, having a lawyer who understands both the law and the human side of the case can make a real difference. That is why many people in Arkansas and across the country have turned to Michael Schafle for help.

Mesothelioma is a cancer caused mainly by asbestos exposure. It can take decades for symptoms to appear, which means many people who are diagnosed today were exposed to asbestos years ago, often without knowing it. The companies that made or used asbestos products often knew about the risks but did not warn workers or the public. Legal claims help victims recover compensation for medical costs, lost income, and pain and suffering. But finding the right lawyer is not always straightforward.

What Sets a Good Mesothelioma Lawyer Apart

Not every personal injury lawyer handles mesothelioma cases well. These claims are more complex than a typical slip-and-fall or car accident case. The evidence often involves decades-old work histories, medical records, and product identification. A lawyer needs to know how to trace asbestos exposure back to specific manufacturers, suppliers, or employers. They also need to understand how different types of asbestos affect the body, and how to work with medical experts who can testify about the diagnosis.

Michael Schafle has built a practice focused on this kind of work. His experience includes handling cases for people who worked in shipyards, construction sites, factories, power plants, and other industrial settings where asbestos was common. He also takes on cases for spouses and children who were exposed secondhand, for example through asbestos fibers brought home on work clothes. This kind of nuance matters because the legal strategy in a secondhand exposure case looks different from a direct workplace exposure case.

Why Local Knowledge Matters

Another layer is the geographic one. Asbestos laws vary from state to state, and even within states, court procedures can differ. Arkansas has its own statutes of limitations and filing rules. A lawyer who practices regularly in Arkansas courts will know the judges, the clerks, the local rules, and the tendencies of juries. That local knowledge can speed up a case and avoid procedural missteps that could hurt a claim.

Michael Schafle works out of Arkansas and handles cases from across the state. He knows the local medical facilities where clients get diagnosed, the industrial sites where exposure happened, and the legal landscape of Arkansas courts. For a family in Little Rock or Fayetteville or Jonesboro, that means they are not just another file number in a big out-of-state firm. They get a lawyer who understands their community and can meet them face to face when needed.

The Process of Building a Strong Case

Building a mesothelioma case takes time and careful investigation. The first step is usually a detailed interview with the client and family members. The goal is to identify every possible source of asbestos exposure. That could mean a job at a specific plant, a military assignment, a home renovation project, or even a parent who worked with asbestos and brought dust home. It is not uncommon for a client to recall exposure from thirty or forty years ago, and those details need to be documented.

Once the exposure history is clear, the legal team works to identify the companies that made or sold the asbestos products. This is where product identification becomes critical. Many asbestos products looked similar, and records from decades ago can be hard to find. Lawyers like Michael Schafle rely on old photographs, corporate records, union records, and testimony from coworkers to piece together the chain of responsibility.

Medical evidence is another pillar of the case. The diagnosis must be confirmed by a qualified doctor, and the link between the asbestos exposure and the illness must be established. This often involves pulmonologists, oncologists, and industrial hygienists who can explain how asbestos fibers cause cellular damage. A good lawyer will have a network of trusted medical experts who can provide clear, credible testimony.

Compensation and What It Covers

Mesothelioma lawsuits typically seek compensation for several types of damages. Medical expenses are usually the largest category. Treatment for mesothelioma can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, and insurance does not always cover everything. Lost wages and loss of future earning capacity are also common claims. If the client can no longer work, the family may need that income replaced. Pain and suffering damages account for the physical and emotional toll of the disease. And in some cases, punitive damages are sought if the defendant acted with gross negligence.

Most mesothelioma cases settle before trial. Settlements can be faster and less stressful for the family, and they avoid the uncertainty of a jury verdict. But a good lawyer needs to be ready

to go to trial if the settlement offer is too low. That readiness often pushes settlement amounts higher because defendants know the lawyer will fight for a full recovery.

Finding the Right Fit

Choosing a lawyer for a mesothelioma case is a personal decision. It is important to talk to a few attorneys before signing anything. Ask about their experience with asbestos cases, their track record, and how they handle communication with clients. Some firms assign a paralegal or case manager to handle most of the contact, while others have the lawyer stay directly involved. Find out what works best for your family.

Many mesothelioma lawyers, including Michael Schafle, offer free initial consultations. They will review the facts of the case, explain the legal options, and give an honest assessment of what to expect. There is no pressure to sign up on the spot. The consultation is a chance for the family to ask questions and see if the lawyer feels like a good fit.

What to Expect During the Case

Once a lawyer is retained, the case moves through several stages. The investigation phase can last a few months while evidence is gathered. Then the lawsuit is filed, and the discovery phase begins. During discovery, both sides exchange documents and take depositions. Depositions are sworn testimony given by witnesses, including the client if they are well enough. The lawyer will prepare the client for deposition and be present during the questioning.

After discovery, the case may go to mediation or settlement negotiations. If a settlement is reached, the case ends and the client receives compensation. If not, the case goes to trial. Mesothelioma trials usually last a week or two. The jury hears testimony from medical experts, product identification witnesses, and sometimes from the client or family members. The lawyer presents the evidence and argues for a fair verdict.

Throughout the process, the lawyer should keep the client informed about key developments. Some cases move quickly, especially if the client is in poor health. Many courts will expedite mesothelioma cases because of the seriousness of the illness. A lawyer who understands these expedited procedures can make sure the case moves as fast as possible while still building a strong claim.

Practical Considerations for Families

Legal fees are a concern for many families. Most mesothelioma lawyers work on a contingency fee basis. That means they only get paid if the client recovers money. The fee is a percentage of the settlement or verdict, typically between 33% and 40%. The client pays nothing upfront, and the lawyer covers the costs of filing fees, expert witnesses, and other

expenses. If the case loses, the client owes nothing. This arrangement makes it possible for families to pursue justice without worrying about out-of-pocket legal costs.

Another practical point is the statute of limitations. Every state has a deadline for filing a mesothelioma lawsuit. In Arkansas, the deadline is generally three years from the date the disease was discovered or should have been discovered. Missing that deadline can mean losing the right to sue forever. That is why it is important to contact a lawyer as soon as a diagnosis is confirmed. The clock starts ticking from the diagnosis date, not from the date of exposure.

Support Beyond the Lawsuit

Legal representation is only one part of the picture. Families dealing with mesothelioma also need emotional support, medical guidance, and sometimes help with financial planning. Many law firms offer referrals to support groups, home health services, and financial counselors. A lawyer with experience in this area can help connect families with resources that ease the burden.

Michael Schafle and his team take a holistic approach. They understand that a lawsuit is not just about money. It is about holding responsible parties accountable and securing a future for the family after the client is gone. That bigger picture shapes how they handle each case, from the first phone call to the final resolution.

If you or someone you love has been diagnosed with mesothelioma, you do not have to face the legal system alone. Talk to a lawyer who knows this area of law and who will treat your family with respect. Take the time to ask questions, understand the process, and make a decision that feels right for your situation.