COCHRAN & CHHABRA
LAW GROUP

2026 / MARYLAND DEFENSE TOOLKIT

The First 24 Hours

After a DUI stop, arrest or criminal charge in Maryland.

A calmer place to start.

Know what to say. Keep the right records. Prepare for a conversation with a Maryland defense lawyer.

+ A first-day action plan and police-encounter script card

+ Separate court and license guidance for DUI matters

+ Fillable incident notes, deadline tracker and consultation questions

The first 24 hours are an organizing framework, not a legal deadline. If more time has passed, start now. Immediate danger or a medical emergency: call 911.

Save this guide. Save 410.268.5515.

START HERE

Find your next step.

You do not have to read every page tonight. Start with the situation closest to yours.

05 I was stopped for DUI / DWI.
Keep every paper from the stop. Court and license issues can follow different paths.

07 I was arrested or charged.
Read your release conditions and every notice. Do not miss a listed appearance.

04 Police want to ask me questions.
Use the script card and seek case-specific legal advice.

08 Someone I love was arrested.
Focus on location, safe transport, paperwork and a lawyer.

12 I have a court notice or traffic ticket.
Record the date, court and instructions exactly as printed.

A Maryland firm. A practical starting point.

C&C is based in Annapolis and handles criminal and DUI defense across Maryland. Managing Member Mandeep S. Chhabra was selected to Maryland Super Lawyers for 2026. A complimentary consultation is available; ask about your immediate questions before deciding whether to hire the firm.

Need help with a current situation? Call 410.268.5515.

YOUR FIRST-DAY PLAN

Four priorities. One step at a time.

Use this sequence as a checklist when it is safe to do so. Follow actual paperwork and court orders over any general timeline.

1. **Get safe. Stay calm.**
   Address urgent medical needs. Follow lawful directions. Do not argue, flee or physically resist. Arrange a safe ride if you cannot lawfully or safely drive.

2. **Use clear words.**
   If questioned about what happened, clearly say that you are remaining silent and want a lawyer. Provide legally required identification and documents. See the script card on page 4.

3. **Keep the record intact.**
   Save notices, citations, messages, photos and receipts. Do not delete or edit evidence. When safe, write a factual timeline for discussion with counsel.

4. **Check dates. Ask for guidance.**
   Read release conditions and all court or MVA paperwork. Put each date in your calendar. Ask a lawyer which steps apply to you and how to share documents securely.

If more than 24 hours have passed

You can still get organized and ask for advice. Do not assume a missed date means there is nothing to do. Tell the lawyer exactly what document you received and when.

Make the call with your paperwork in front of you.

SAVE THIS SCRIPT CARD

Clear words.
Calm delivery.

For questions about an incident. These phrases do not cancel lawful directions or required identification duties.

"I am exercising my right to remain silent."

"I want a lawyer before answering questions about what happened."

"I do not consent to a search."

"Am I free to leave?"

Keep these limits with the card

Give legally required identification and documents. Do not lie, obstruct or physically resist. If you are not free to leave, do not walk away. Police may have lawful grounds to search without your consent or a warrant. Refusing consent does not guarantee that a search will stop.

Questioning and testing are different

Asking for a lawyer does not create an unlimited delay or veto over testing. DUI testing rules are separate; see pages 5-6. When counsel must be provided depends on the situation.

Save the number beside this card: 410.268.5515.

DUI / DWI: AT THE STOP

Know which test is being discussed.

People often use "breath test" to describe different things. That distinction matters.

First, handle the stop safely

Pull over safely. Keep your hands visible and follow lawful instructions. Provide required license, registration and insurance information. Do not guess or try to explain away what happened.

1. **Roadside physical tasks**

   Examples include the walk-and-turn and one-leg stand. These are not the same as a chemical breath or blood test. Ask what is being requested; do not use this guide as a universal instruction to refuse.

2. **Preliminary roadside breath screening**

   A preliminary breath test has its own Maryland rules. It is distinct from the formal chemical test used under the implied-consent law.

3. **Formal chemical testing**

   A requested breath or blood test under Maryland law can carry separate license consequences for a qualifying result or refusal. Review the advice-of-rights paperwork. Do not assume refusal avoids consequences.

Keep the details

Save all test and suspension documents. Later, tell your lawyer which tests were requested, which occurred, what you were told and whether there were medical or language issues. Do not rely on this PDF to make a real-time testing decision.

After the stop, ask for a review of the tests and paperwork.

DUI / DWI: AFTER THE STOP

One incident. Two sets of questions.

A criminal case and an MVA license matter may move separately. A court date does not resolve the license questions.

THE COURT CASE

What are the charges? What are the appearance instructions? What evidence will counsel review? What possible penalties or case options apply? Keep citations, charging papers and release conditions together.

THE LICENSE MATTER

What does the Order of Suspension say? Is a hearing request appropriate? Does an ignition interlock option apply? What driving restrictions are already in effect? Keep every MVA page and envelope.

10 days and 30 days do different things

For qualifying alcohol-test failure or refusal orders under §16-205.1, a written hearing request is generally due within 30 days of the order's issuance. Requesting within the earlier 10-day window matters to avoiding suspension before the hearing. Confirm the date, filing requirements and your driving status promptly with counsel; do not wait for a court date.

Before you drive

Do not infer permission to drive from a pending court case, a filed request or this guide. Check the actual license status, temporary permit, restrictions and instructions that apply to you.

Bring these to the call

Order of Suspension • temporary license/permit • advice-of-rights form • citations • any test paperwork. Keep copies of submissions and proof of delivery.

Have an Order of Suspension? Call with the document available.

ARREST OR CRIMINAL CHARGE

Start with the papers and the conditions.

A charge is an allegation. Your immediate job is to understand what you must do next and get advice about your options.

1. **Read each document**

   Keep the charging document, release order and all appearance notices. Record the case number, court, dates and stated conditions. Do not assume all notices refer to the same proceeding.

2. **Follow release conditions**

   Read restrictions on contact, travel, reporting and other conduct. If a condition is unclear, seek clarification promptly. Do not use another person to get around a contact restriction.

3. **Limit case discussion**

   Ask for a lawyer before answering incident-related questions. Do not discuss the facts with other people in custody or on recorded calls. Share practical information with family without telling the whole story.

4. **Prepare for counsel**

   Gather documents and a factual timeline. Note what you know and what you do not know. If you cannot afford counsel, ask about the Maryland Office of the Public Defender and its application process.

Still in custody?

A family member can help locate you, find counsel and collect logistics. That person should not investigate witnesses, negotiate with another party or assume a call is private.

Unsure what a condition means? Ask before acting.

FOR A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND

Be the calm point of contact.

Useful help is often practical: finding the person, preserving paperwork and making the next call.

HELP WITH THIS

Confirm the person's name and location. Find out what paperwork is available. Keep a list of known court dates. Arrange safe transport, childcare or other immediate needs when appropriate. Ask the firm how to share documents.

AVOID THIS

Do not post a public account of the incident. Do not delete messages or ask anyone to change a story. Do not contact witnesses or an alleged victim about the case. Do not bypass release or no-contact conditions.

A useful opening for the call

"I am calling to help someone who was arrested or charged in Maryland. Their location is ____. The papers list ____. The next date we know about is ____. What should we gather for a consultation?"

Protect the conversation

Do not assume jail calls, texts, family conversations or this worksheet are confidential or legally privileged. Ask the lawyer how the client should communicate and what information you should provide.

One manageable task

Keep one folder for papers and one list of dates. You do not need to solve the case tonight.

Calling for someone else? Start with location, paperwork and dates.

MISTAKES TO AVOID

Seven ways panic can complicate a case.

Pause before making a decision that cannot easily be undone.

01 **Explaining before getting advice.**
Use a clear request for counsel. Do not guess, invent details or lie.

02 **Posting your side online.**
Keep case details off social media, comments, messages to groups and public reviews.

03 **Deleting something embarrassing.**
Preserve messages, photos and files, including unfavorable material. Ask counsel how to retain it.

04 **Trying to "clear things up" with someone.**
Do not contact witnesses or an alleged victim about the case. Observe every contact restriction.

05 **Putting official mail aside.**
Open notices promptly. Record dates exactly and seek help with unclear instructions.

06 **Assuming court is the only issue.**
A DUI matter may also involve MVA proceedings and separate driving restrictions.

07 **Treating a form or fee as a formality.**
Ask about the effect of a plea, ticket payment, signature or waiver before you decide.

Before a case decision, ask what the consequences could be.

PRESERVE THE RECORD

Keep the original. Make a useful record.

You do not need to build your own defense. Give your lawyer reliable material to review.

GATHER WHAT ALREADY EXISTS

- [ ] Citations, charging papers and release conditions
- [ ] Court notices, MVA paperwork and envelopes
- [ ] Original photos, videos and available dashcam files
- [ ] Messages, emails, call logs and social-media material
- [ ] Receipts or records that may help establish times
- [ ] Names of possible witnesses and existing contact details
- [ ] Medical records or relevant testing information, if applicable
- [ ] A factual timeline with uncertainty clearly marked

Preserve; do not rewrite

Keep original files and their dates where possible. Do not alter, crop away context, delete unfavorable items or ask anyone to change evidence. If a file may disappear automatically, tell counsel promptly and ask how to preserve it.

A private worksheet is not automatically privileged

Store notes securely. Do not circulate them or upload sensitive case details to a public form. Ask your lawyer how to prepare and share your account.

Ask the firm for a secure way to share records.

FILLABLE WORKSHEET

Your incident record.

Write facts while they are fresh. Use "not sure" where appropriate. Save a copy locally and ask counsel how to share it securely.

Date and approximate time

Location

Agency / officer / badge, if known

Case / citation / report number

What happened, in sequence (include what you are unsure about)

Tests requested or performed / papers received

Potential witnesses and existing contact information

Evidence saved and where it is stored

Keep this secure

This worksheet does not itself create confidentiality or attorney-client privilege. Do not send it through an unsecured public form.

Bring this record to your consultation.

FILLABLE WORKSHEET

Your dates and documents.

Copy information from each notice. This organizer does not calculate deadlines or replace court or MVA instructions.

ENTRY 01 / COURT, MVA OR ANOTHER OBLIGATION

Date / time / deadline

Court or agency / required action

Notice issued / received; source; confirmation or filing proof

ENTRY 02 / COURT, MVA OR ANOTHER OBLIGATION

Date / time / deadline

Court or agency / required action

Notice issued / received; source; confirmation or filing proof

ENTRY 03 / COURT, MVA OR ANOTHER OBLIGATION

Date / time / deadline

Court or agency / required action

Notice issued / received; source; confirmation or filing proof

Confirm the instructions; act on uncertainty

Confirm the court or agency, location or remote instructions, required action and delivery method. Keep filing copies and confirmation. If a date may have passed, tell counsel what notice you received, when, and what you have done. Do not wait for another notice or rely on an online listing for every instruction.

Have a date you do not understand? Call with the notice in hand.

WHAT MAY HAPPEN NEXT

The path depends on the case.

Some cases begin with an arrest; others begin with a citation, summons or another charging document. These are orientation points, not a fixed sequence.

01

Charges and initial processing

Read the charging papers. If arrested, an initial appearance generally involves a District Court commissioner, with judicial review in some circumstances.

02

Release and required appearances

Conditions and notices tell you what to do next. A court may review release or detention. Keep every notice, even if dates change.

03

Additional hearings, where applicable

A preliminary hearing or arraignment may apply depending on the charge, court and procedural route. These do not occur in every case.

04

Evidence and preparation

Counsel reviews available evidence, investigates relevant issues and considers motions, negotiation and trial preparation.

05

Resolution and obligations

A matter may end through dismissal, a plea or a trial. Sentencing, probation, license issues or other obligations may follow, depending on the outcome.

Ask about both the next step and the reason

A useful case update answers: What is scheduled? What decisions are due? What should I gather? What must I avoid? An outcome in someone else's case does not predict yours.

Ask: "What stage is my case at, and what comes next?"

MARYLAND: PLAIN-ENGLISH BASICS

Understand the words. Ask about the impact.

These terms help you ask better questions. They do not determine what will happen in your case.

DUI / DWI

DUI generally refers to driving under the influence; DWI refers to driving while impaired. Maryland has different statutory offenses. A BAC number alone does not resolve every charge or consequence.

Points

Points are separate from a fine and may affect driving privileges. The specific offense and outcome matter. Do not assume paying a ticket ends every consequence.

Probation before judgment (PBJ)

PBJ is a particular disposition, not a dismissal or a promise of no consequences. DUI/DWI PBJ can still involve ignition interlock and other requirements.

Expungement

Expungement concerns removal of eligible court and police records. Eligibility, waiting periods and exceptions depend on the charge and disposition; it is not automatic.

Why this guide does not quote a single penalty

Possible consequences may include jail, fines, probation, points and driving restrictions. Offense type, prior history, facts and applicable law matter. Ask counsel for a current assessment of the specific charge, including any separate license consequences.

Ask which consequences apply to your exact charge and history.

QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK FIRST

A few answers before the call.

A short guide can help you get oriented. It cannot evaluate evidence or choose a legal strategy for you.

01

"It is my first charge. Does that make it minor?"

A first charge can still have serious consequences. Ask about the exact offense, your record and any license, work or other concerns relevant to you.

02

"Can I just pay the traffic ticket?"

Read whether it is payable or requires an appearance. Paying a payable Maryland traffic ticket is a guilty plea; points or other consequences may follow. Ask before choosing. Camera and toll notices have different rules.

03

"Should I explain my side to police first?"

Seek advice before answering questions about the incident. Do not lie or obstruct. Required identification, lawful instructions and testing rules are separate issues.

04

"Am I hiring the firm by downloading or calling?"

No. Downloading, contacting the firm or requesting a consultation does not by itself create an attorney-client relationship. Ask what is needed to establish representation.

If the incident also involved a collision

Attend to safety and injuries, call 911 when needed, and meet applicable stop, information-exchange and reporting duties. Preserve photos and records. Ask about statements to insurers and any policy duties; do not assume you can ignore your own insurer.

Write down the question that is keeping you up tonight.

YOUR FIRST CONVERSATION

Know what to expect when you reach out.

A complimentary consultation is a chance to discuss your situation and the next questions to address.

1. **Start with logistics**

   Say whether you are calling for yourself or someone else. Have the county, document type and next listed date available. Ask how to share sensitive records before sending them.

2. **Discuss what matters next**

   Use the conversation to ask about immediate steps, potential deadlines and what information counsel needs. A review depends on the facts and documents available.

3. **Understand the arrangement**

   Ask who would handle your case, how communication works, what fees apply and what is required to establish representation. Decide after those questions are addressed.

About Cochran & Chhabra

Based in Annapolis, serving clients across Maryland. Mandeep S. Chhabra: Maryland Super Lawyers selection, 2026; The Daily Record Managing Partners honoree, 2026. English, Spanish, Punjabi and Hindi are listed by the firm. Ask about language availability when you contact the team.

Every case is different

Recognition is not a guarantee of results. A form submission or phone call does not itself create an attorney-client relationship.

Request a complimentary consultation at cclaw.group/#consult.

FILLABLE WORKSHEET

Ask better questions. Leave with clarity.

Bring this page to a consultation with any Maryland defense attorney.

What needs attention first, and what deadlines apply?

Have you handled this type of case in this court or county?

Who will handle the work and keep me informed?

What evidence or documents should I preserve or provide?

What fees, expenses and scope of work should I understand?

What options and possible consequences should we discuss?

My agreed next step / who will do it / by when

A useful follow-up

Ask about any court and license issues separately. Confirm what you must do even while you are deciding whether to hire counsel.

Start with your most time-sensitive question.

READY FOR THE NEXT STEP

Make the first conversation useful.

You do not need perfect notes or every answer. Bring what you have and identify what is missing.

HAVE THESE NEARBY, IF AVAILABLE

- [ ] Your best contact number and a safe way to reach you
- [ ] County, court or agency listed on your papers
- [ ] Case or citation number and the exact charge wording
- [ ] The next listed date and a copy of the notice
- [ ] Release conditions or contact restrictions
- [ ] Any MVA order, temporary permit or testing paperwork
- [ ] Your incident record and evidence-location list
- [ ] Your two most important questions

You can start here

"I need guidance about a Maryland [DUI / arrest / charge / ticket]. I have [documents]. The next date listed is [date, or not sure]. What do you need from me to arrange a consultation?"

If you are not ready to call

Save the number, gather the papers and keep every listed obligation. Waiting to hire someone does not stop a court or agency deadline.

Ready to talk? Call 410.268.5515.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Useful guidance. Clear limits.

Prepared September 18, 2026, from C&C's existing 2026 Maryland Defense Toolkit and the sources below.

How to use it

This is general educational information, not legal advice. Laws, procedures and individual circumstances can change. Your notices, orders and case-specific legal advice control. Downloading or contacting the firm does not by itself create an attorney-client relationship.

About the first 24 hours

The title describes a practical organizing period. It is not a universal legal deadline or a reason to delay action. If a date may have passed, seek advice promptly.

SELECTED SOURCES

C&C: attorneys, services and contact >

Maryland Courts: criminal cases >

Maryland Courts: traffic cases >

Maryland law: Transportation §16-205.1 >

Maryland law: Transportation §21-902 >

Maryland law: Transportation §16-404.1 >

Attorney reviewed

Reviewed and approved by Mandeep Chhabra, Managing Member, Cochran & Chhabra Law Group, October 2026.

For advice about your circumstances, contact a Maryland lawyer.

COCHRAN & CHHABRA
LAW GROUP

YOUR NEXT STEP

Let's talk about your next step.

Facing a DUI, an arrest or a criminal charge in Maryland? Start with the papers you have and the question you need answered.

CALL THE FIRM

410.268.5515

REQUEST A COMPLIMENTARY CONSULTATION

cclaw.group/#consult

116 B Cathedral Street
Annapolis, MD 21401
info@cclaw.group

Scan to request a consultation

Your documents. Your next listed date. Your most urgent question. If you are calling for someone else, tell us that at the start.

No attorney-client relationship is formed solely by downloading this guide, submitting a form or calling. Prior results and recognition do not guarantee a similar outcome. For immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911.