



Preparing for Divorce Attorney Consultations

Having multiple attorney consultations prior to filing for divorce, even if you pursue a divorce process route that doesn't involve hiring an attorney for yourself, can be an extremely worthwhile strategic action step.

Preparing for consultations is necessary, ensuring that the conversation is useful and not simply a sales pitch from the attorney. You want to use the time wisely, collecting information about your rights as well as the process, and also consider whether the attorney is the right fit for you and your situation.

Just like every marriage is different, every divorce is different. A referral from a friend or family member for a divorce attorney is not a guarantee that they are who you need or should work with. Approaching this step with intent and consideration can save you heartache and money in the long run.

What Does It Mean to Be a Good Fit?

A good fit for you will look different than a good fit for someone else. Often someone will be on the hunt for a “shark” attorney, but really what you need is someone who can communicate effectively, be strategic with your case, and help you efficiently navigate the legal system while pursuing the best possible outcome.

If an attorney promises you every single thing during a consultation, run in the other direction. No attorney can promise an outcome based upon a single conversation. However, they should be able to share examples of other cases they have worked on that share similarities to yours and explain how they handled the case, as well as the outcomes. An attorney who is “willing to fight every step of the way” may also end up driving up your legal bills unnecessarily. You need to choose wisely.

Questions to Ask During the Consultation-

Background

- How long have you been practicing divorce law, and how many cases per year do you typically work on?
- What is your overall approach to the divorce process?
- What is your ideal type of client?
- What types of clients do you find to be difficult with work with?
- What mistakes do you see people like me make in the beginning?



- Do you have experience with <insert your special circumstance here>?
i.e. business ownership, high conflict, personality disorders, alcohol abuse, etc
- Besides the typical litigation route, what creative ways have you found to settle a case?
- Do you have trial experience?
- Are you comfortable going to trial if needed?
- What steps do you usually take to avoid trial if possible?

Financial

- What is your hourly rate for court time and non-court time?
- What timeframe increments do you bill in?
- Who else on your team might be involved in this case? What is the rate for the additional team members?
- How much is your retainer? Can I pay the retainer in increments? Is any portion refundable if not used?
- What happens when the initial retainer fee is used up?

Communication

- Do you have the bandwidth to take on a new case at this time?
- How do you prefer to communicate?
- What is a typical response time I should expect when communicating with you?
- What is the best way for me to share information with you? Email? Text? Shared google doc?
- What mistakes have other clients made in communication that made things more difficult?



Information to Be Prepared to Share

- How many years you have been married.
- What county the marriage occurred in.
- Ages of children.
- Employment status of each spouse along with approximate total annual compensation.
- General overview of assets by category – approximate amount in retirement accounts per spouse, savings, checking, investments, real estate, etc.
- Brief synopsis of why you want to initiate a divorce.
- What you believe your spouse's reaction will be, and any concerning behaviors that could negatively impact you or any children.
- Goals (short term or long term) in regards to the marital home, custody/parenting time, decision making, child care, relocation, etc.
- What you consider to be the best case in the divorce process, and the worst case.
- Any fears of or examples you have related to mental, physical or emotional abuse of you or the children.
- Any historical substance abuse or mental health concerns for either spouse.