

Guidelines for Clients

Your relationship with our office is a partnership. We are committed to providing you the best legal services possible. Here are some guidelines to help us meet your goals and minimize your legal fees down.

General

- ❖ Maintain a file with all the correspondence, court pleadings, and mailings from our office.
- ❖ Communicate with the other party via email, text message or other traceable means and keep records of visitation and payments.
- ❖ Always feel free to raise any questions you may have about our services and fees. The sooner problems are addressed, the quicker they can be resolved.
- ❖ Sadness, anxiety, frustration, depression and anger are all common emotions experienced by our clients at one time or another, and we understand that divorce and custody disputes can be stressful and emotionally devastating. Expressing these feelings can be helpful to you and to us as we prepare your case and work towards achieving the legal results you want. However, we are not trained psychologists and we urge you to seek psychological or pastoral counseling if you are experiencing serious emotional distress. We will then be able to focus our efforts on your legal needs and your ability to make sound decisions will be enhanced.
- ❖ Act as if a Judge is watching your actions, reading your text messages and emails and listening to your conversations, anything can be used in court.
- ❖ Do not say anything negative about opposing party in front of your children, destroy any statements, emails or other documents while the case is pending or live with anyone (other than family members) while your case is pending.
- ❖ Be careful about your use of any social networking site or app. Do not post anything on the social media relating to the case. Even if you are not friends with the other party on any social media site, your private posts could be downloaded and forwarded to the other party by anyone you are connected with on social media.
- ❖ Make sure you are aware of the privacy settings for any of your social media and be aware that anyone, including the other party, can view your posts and pictures if you do not have the proper privacy settings.
- ❖ Be forthcoming with your attorney and keep your attorney informed of important events as they happen in your case. Your attorney can most effectively represent you with full knowledge of all the facts and circumstances concerning your case. If unfavorable or damaging information comes to light in the later stages of the litigation, it almost certainly will have an adverse impact on the resolution of your case. Please follow your attorney's advice. You have retained this attorney because you think he or she has the experience and expertise needed to obtain a positive outcome for you as efficiently and economically as possible.

In-office and telephone conferences

- ❖ Bring with you to our office any records or documents that may be relevant to the purpose of your conference with the attorney or paralegal or that we have asked you to bring. You may not have access to every document or record, such as bank and credit card statements, but many such documents are available on the internet and can be downloaded.
- ❖ Prepare a list of your questions so you won't forget to discuss an important matter which may require another conference or telephone call shortly thereafter.
- ❖ Arrange for childcare before you come to the office. We do not have facilities to properly watch children and your conferences with us will be more productive if you are not distracted. Additionally, it is our goal to assist you in shielding your children from your case as much as possible.

Your Paralegal

One of our paralegals will be assigned to work with you and your attorney. S/he or she will be knowledgeable about your case, readily available, and able to answer many of your questions or have quick access to the attorney to obtain answers. In case of an emergency, your paralegal will facilitate contact with your attorney immediately.

Your paralegal will forward to you, by email or regular mail, various items that require your attention, such as correspondence from opposing counsel, drafts of letters and legal documents for your review before filling or submission to opposing counsel or the court, and notices of hearings or trial. Your prompt response will help move your case to closure and save repeated emails and phone calls to you. Emails from you to our office should be copied to your attorney and paralegal so that both will be up to date.

One of the most important tasks that you and your paralegal will be working on is the preparation of your domestic relations financial affidavit and responses to discovery, which includes information concerning your income, assets, living expenses, debts and issues relating to the children. Your cooperation in providing the needed information to your paralegal will result in a complete and accurate responses and documents and save costs.

Discovery

During your court case, we will have an opportunity to ask questions in writing (interrogatories), and request copies of documents and records relating to your case from the other party (requests for production of documents). This discovery process will help you and your attorney assess settlement possibilities and prepare for a hearing or trial if necessary. Let your attorney or paralegal know if there are important topics of inquiry that should be included in the interrogatories and requests for production of documents to the opposing party.

The opposing party may also serve interrogatories and a request for production of documents upon you. Your paralegal will give you direction as to what portions of the discovery you will need to provide preliminary responses for and which documents or records you will need to locate. Although this can be annoying and time-consuming, your cooperation and effort in compiling and organizing the responses can substantially reduce the time that your attorney and paralegal must extend. Also, incomplete or inaccurate responses will likely cause additional discovery or the filing of a motion to compel discovery by opposing counsel, which will create more work for your attorney and paralegal as well as delay the completion of your case. It may also subject you to sanctions or an award of attorney's fees to the other party, if you fail to answer completely or accurately.

Affidavits

If a temporary hearing is scheduled in your case, only one witness other than yourself may testify in person on your behalf at the hearing. However, we can submit to the court as evidence written affidavits from persons who have knowledge of your case. We may ask you to prepare a list of potential witnesses, including contact information and a brief summary of the information they can provide. We will then work with you on selecting the persons who may be able to offer helpful affidavits and discuss the most efficient and cost-effective way to obtain affidavits. In many cases, she can provide you written instructions and forms so that you yourself can contact potential witnesses and obtain the affidavits.

Mediation

Mediation is often the most efficient and effect method to resolve a case without the risk, expense and stress of a jury or bench trial. Mediation is often required before a Judge will permit the case to go to trial. Mediation is a process that allows the parties to try to settle issues related to their case. The parties, their attorneys, and a mediator are present during mediation. The mediator is a neutral person who provides the parties with a neutral opinion about the case. A mediator also presents the parties with ideas for possible resolutions of the case as well as his or her opinion about what he or expects a judge or jury may decide should the case not settle. By examining the parties' cases and providing creative settlement options, the mediator often helps the parties to resolve the matter without further litigation in court. Your attorney will provide additional explanation about how mediation works, the costs involved, and the process of preparing for mediation.

Court

In most cases, whether contested or uncontested, you will need to go to court for at least one hearing. Depending on the Judge and the circumstances, it may be possible to finalize the case by simply submitting a Motion to Court and avoid appearing in Court all together.