

Lisa's Suggestions for Selecting an Attorney

Divorce is costly – emotionally and financially. There is only one legal ground for divorce in Colorado: that your marriage is irretrievably broken. You should not start the process until you are certain.

If you have exhausted all other options and decide to pursue legal separation or divorce, you need to select the attorney that is right for you. There are many qualified family law attorneys. You are the only one who can decide which one is the right choice for you. It is usually advisable to schedule more than one initial consultation so that you can compare the information you receive.

The following are my suggestions for making that choice.

A. Referral sources

1. Friends, family or co-workers. Caution: This is your case and probably is very different than anyone else's.
2. Referrals from other trusted professionals (e.g. attorneys, counselors, financial professionals)
3. [El Paso County Bar Association Web Site](#)
4. [Martindale Hubbell](#) - a nationwide attorney rating service available on the Internet or at the public library.

B. Credentials

1. Does attorney specialize in divorce?
2. Is the attorney familiar with the issues in your case? Has the attorney had prior cases with similar issues? (e.g. parenting disputes, business valuation or military retirement issues)
3. How long has the attorney been practicing in the family law area?
4. Does the attorney have special training regarding different dispute resolution options and does the lawyer adequately explain all of your dispute resolution options?
5. Does the attorney have a solid working relationship with other attorneys in the community? This is important if you want an attorney to help you solve problems, not cause problems due to poor relationships within the legal community.

C. “The Right Fit”

1. Does the attorney fit your particular needs and goals for your divorce? For example, how involved do you want to be in your case? Do you want an attorney who handles the case with little or no input from you? Do you want an attorney who will guide you in the process of setting and achieving goals that you establish or do you want an attorney who directs you as to how best to proceed and speaks on your behalf?
2. Do you feel comfortable confiding in this person?
3. Are your questions being answered?
4. Does your attorney care about you as an individual?

D. Accessibility and Responsiveness

1. Will the attorney be available when you need him or her? How quickly will phone calls or emails be returned? How long does it take to get an appointment or phone conference with the attorney?
2. Will agreements and other documents be drafted in a timely fashion?
3. Will you receive copies of all documents and be completely updated regarding your case?
4. What work will be completed by the attorney and what work will be completed by staff?

E. Fees

1. Cost of consultation.
2. Cost of representation. Most attorneys establish a retainer amount at the initial consultation after they know more about your case. The amount of the retainer varies based on the complexity of the case, the level of conflict between the spouses, the time involved as well as the skill and experience level of the attorney.
3. Have fees been explained to you in a manner that you understand? Do they seem reasonable and fair?
4. When are the fees to be paid? In most cases all or substantial portions of the fees are paid at the beginning of the case.
5. What is the office billing policy? Will you receive a detailed statement every month?
6. Does the lawyer believe that other professionals will be needed for your case and if so, what additional fees should you expect?