

Questions For Interviewing Divorce Attorneys and Financial Professionals

Choosing the right professionals to guide you through your divorce is one of the most important divorce-related decisions you'll make.

Be sure they are experienced in the area of divorce. These questions are meant to help you determine if a professional has the right background to handle your divorce. In addition, it's equally important you feel comfortable in your interactions.

Ask potential divorce attorneys and financial professionals some of the following when interviewing them:

1. What percent of your practice is devoted to divorce? How many cases currently?
2. In which counties do you practice and know the judges well?
3. How would you describe your style?
4. Do you have any specific niches? What are they?
5. What do you think about Mediation? Litigation? The collaborative law process? What percentage of each is your typical case load?
6. What is your experience in cases involving high conflict over parental responsibilities? High-net-worth families? Closely held businesses? (as appropriate)
7. Tell me about cases where a client had similar circumstances to mine. What was the best outcome? What was the worst? What do you think is most likely for me?
8. My spouse is using (attorney's name). Have you ever worked with, or against him/her? What is your relationship with him/her?
9. Based on the information I've given you, what approach do you think would work best for our family—mediation, collaborative divorce or traditional litigation?
10. Would others in your firm be working on my case? Who are they? What work will they do, and what are their backgrounds?
11. How do you prefer to communicate? How long will you take to return emails and phone calls? How do I reach you in an emergency? What do you consider an emergency?
12. What is your hourly rate? What is your shortest billing time period? What are the rates of the others working on my case? Will I be billed for time firm members brief each other? Can I make payments? Do you accept credit cards?
13. How do you work with other divorce professionals on the team?
14. How can I keep the cost of my divorce down? Are there tasks that I can do myself to reduce the amount you will charge?
15. Is a retainer required? If so, how much? How often do you bill?
16. Can you provide me with references?
17. For attorneys: Are you a member of the AAML, ABA, State Bar Association, IACP and/or AFCC?
18. For financial professionals: Are you a CDFA® professional, CFP® professional or CPA? Can you continue to work with me post divorce?
19. Why would you like my case?

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Create Your Empowerment Team



The professional expertise you need will differ according to complexity of your family's situation. A family who owns a business interest will have different needs than one with an executive and at home spouse. Many of your team members will handle multiple tasks, so you will not need all of these professionals. Rather, focus on making sure the functions they play are addressed. Be sure you understand the roles and develop the team you need for your specific situation.

- **Divorce Attorney** ensures all the legal requirements are met for the state to dissolve your marriage. Some also advise on tax, valuation, budget and other issues reducing the number of professionals needed.
- **Estate Planning Attorney** explains what happens if you're incapacitated or pass away.
- **Certified Public Accountant** identifies tax issues that need to be addressed and how you can minimize taxes.
- **Certified Divorce Financial Analyst (CDFA®)** addresses the unique tax and financial issues of a divorce while analyzing the short- and long-term financial impact of different divorce settlements.
- **Certified Financial Planner (CFP®)** advises on your overall financial health, budget and plan for future goals.
- **Actuary** calculates the current value of future pension payouts.
- **Certified Appraiser** values residential, business and commercial properties.
- **Banker / Mortgage Broker/Certified Divorce Lending Professional (CDLP)** advises on mortgage financing strategies in context of the legal, tax, credit and liquidity issues in divorce.
- **Certified Valuation Analyst (CVA)** determines the worth of a business interest.
- **Insurance Broker** advises on risk to health, auto, home, life and disability. In many cases, policies will be needed to secure future income.
- **Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE)** deals with complex financial situations where it is suspected that a spouse is hiding cash, dissipating assets on things outside the marriage or manipulating financial reports.
- **Child Specialist** helps create parenting plan to maintain the well-being of our children.
- **Divorce Coach** works in conjunction with your divorce attorney to support and motivate you during the tough times. Helps you get organized and prioritize; allowing you to make the best possible decisions for your future, based on your particular interest, needs and concerns, with the least amount of time and effort.
- **Therapist / Counselor.** A professional you see on a regular basis to help you navigate the emotional turmoil of divorce. This may be a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) or a mental health counselor. They all vary by level of education. Your children may need their own therapist. Make sure those you use are experienced in divorce and that you feel extremely comfortable with them. Last, but not least, always check to see if they accept your insurance.

Use the right person for the right role. Venting to your attorney can be costly, and he or she is not your best sounding board. A team of good professionals will help you focus on getting you, and your family, through the divorce process with the least amount of conflict and collateral damage as possible.