

What to Bring to your Divorce Consultation

So you made the first step and reached out to a divorce attorney, and now you are preparing for your first meeting. You might not know what you need to bring or what will be expected of you. Here's a basic guide to what to and what not to bring.

WHAT TO BRING:

- **Intake form.** At our office, when we schedule consultations, we send an email with our intake form. This form will cover only the basics: your name and contact information, your spouse's name, marriage information, children's information, etc. The information you provide on intake forms will help build your file and provide data throughout your case.
- **Tax return.** We ask that you bring your most recent tax return. Most importantly, tax returns provide income information that can be used to calculate support. Tax returns might also yield sources of income that you may not be aware of, which can be helpful to know at the very beginning.
- **Marriage certificate.** In Pennsylvania, you must file your marriage certificate with the Court when you are seeking a divorce. Supplying it at the very beginning can save time and energy as you move forward to finalize. If you don't have a copy accessible, you can always order a duplicate.
- **Court documents.** In the situation where one spouse has already initiated the divorce process, it is very helpful to bring in copies of any documents received from them, their attorney or the Court. Most importantly, it is crucial to advise of any upcoming court dates so that you and the attorney can prepare.
- **Other legal documents.** If you have been divorced before, a copy of your Divorce Decree could be helpful. If you have children from a different relationship, you might want to bring your custody order. If prior to your marriage you signed a Prenuptial Agreement, you should definitely provide that to your attorney at the consultation.
- **Questions.** Meeting with an attorney for the first time can be very stressful. You might find that after the meeting you have a dozen questions that you forgot about or were too nervous to ask. If you prepare a written list of questions in advance, you can share with the attorney and make sure you leave feeling satisfied.
- **An open mind!** We are here to educate you about divorce process options. There is more than one way to get divorced, and different processes work better for different families. Your consultation is the time for your attorney to listen to your circumstances and suggest the process that will fit you and your family.

WHAT NOT TO BRING:

- **An audience.** Bringing one close friend or relative is usually acceptable if you discuss it with the attorney or office in advance. However, a third-party does introduce issues of confidentiality; the additional person does not have the same duty to keep your information secret as an attorney does.
- **Your spouse.** Unless you are pursuing mediation, it is not appropriate to bring your spouse to a divorce consultation. Your attorney will represent you and your best interests; your spouse will need to retain separate counsel if they want legal advice.

These lists are, of course, not all inclusive. Every marriage is different, every divorce is different and every attorney is different. If you have questions about what to bring, speak with the attorney you'll be meeting so you can best prepare.

Tags: Consultation, Divorce, Income