

Tips on Being Prepared for a Family Law Appointment with a Lawyer

Are you recently separated, considering divorce, or just wanting to finalise some issues following the breakdown of a marriage or de facto relationship?

If you have never had to see a lawyer before the task may be quite daunting, but there are some easy steps that you can take to prepare for your meeting with a lawyer which will help to ensure that you get the most out of your initial meeting with a lawyer.

Information to have on hand

In most instances it will be very helpful for you to have the following information available to give to your lawyer:

- Your date of birth
- Your former partner's date of birth
- The full name and dates of birth of any children of the relationship
- The date that the relationship commenced
- The date that you got married (if applicable)
- The date that you separated
- The date that any divorce was finalised (if applicable)

If there are property division issues to be determined, the following information will also be of assistance:

- The assets and liabilities that each of you and your partner had at the commencement of the relationship
- The jobs that you and your partner were working in at the commencements of the relationship, including an estimate of what each of you were earning
- A history of each of yours and your partner's work history throughout the relationship, including an estimate of what each of you were earning
- Current employment details of you and your partner, including your current incomes
- A list of each of yours and your partners current assets and liabilities, with an estimated value of each asset or liability
- Details of any inheritances, significant monetary gifts, workers compensation or redundancy payments received by either you or your partner during the relationship

- Details of non-financial contributions of each of you and your partner during the relationship, such as who contributed more to housework, shopping, washing, cooking, family or joint money management and parental responsibilities
- Whether there are any issues that are likely to affect either yours or your partner's ability to continue to work into the future

If there are parenting issues to be determined, the following information will also be of assistance:

- The person primarily responsible for the care of the children at the various stages of the relationship
- Whether the children have any special needs
- The details of the children's current schooling
- What the arrangements have been for the children since any separation, including:
 - Where the children have been living
 - How much time the children have been spending with the non-resident parent
 - If there are any other people living in the house where the children are living, or in the non-resident parent's house
 - What the arrangements for the handover for the children have been
 - How the children are coping with the arrangements that have been in place
- Any specific concerns that you may have in relation to the children
- What you would ideally like the arrangements for the children to be
- Whether there have been any issues involving violence, drugs or other areas of concern

It would also be very helpful if you could bring with you copies of the following documents:

- Your marriage certificate
- The children's birth certificates
- Current bank statements
- Current tax return documents
- Current school reports for the children
- Your divorce certificate

- Any restraining orders
- Current members statements for superannuation policies
- Recent payslips
- Current statements evidencing the amounts of any liabilities

Of course the information listed above will not be relevant to all cases, and will not always be available to separated parties, but collecting as much of the abovementioned information and documents as possible before you meet with your lawyer will mean that less time is spent during the appointment in trying to ascertain these details, and your lawyer will be able to provide you with more accurate advice as to what results you may be able to expect, and what your options are in taking the matter further.

If you would like to make an appointment with one of our family lawyers please do not hesitate to contact us on 9375 3411.