

HELPHYOURSELF

Your first trip to the lawyer's office – Your consult

Please also read our blog on first visit with lawyer -

<https://www.lisavancelaw.com/blog/2017/09/what-can-i-get-out-of-a-consultation.shtml>

Before you initiate the divorce process, you need to take two important steps.

The first step, of course, is to come to the conclusion that you want to get a divorce. That can be an instant reaction to discovering infidelity, or a slow, gradual realization about you and your spouse's incompatibility developed over a series of months or even years.

The second step, then, is to find the lawyer who will represent you in the divorce. The initial consultation is the opportunity for you to learn more about your lawyer and how well you get along, and for your lawyer to learn more about your case and how your divorce can best be settled.

While you don't need to bring all of your bank statements and other financial documents—that will come soon enough once we officially take your case—you should have some sense of what's in your marital estate. This includes any assets like real estate or land which can't be as easily liquidated as bank accounts, or any businesses you or your spouse own or partially own. The more you can tell us in the initial consultation, the better sense we can give you as to how complicated the financial aspects of your divorce might be.

(Texas is a community property state, meaning that the assets you're acquired and the debts you've accrued during marriage belong to the both of you, even if a specific asset or debt is just in one person's name. There are some assets and debts that may be separate property, and just belong to you or your spouse; we'll be able to help you sort out which is which once we have your paperwork in hand to review.)

If your divorce involves children, of course, that's something we'd want to know immediately. Specifically, your lawyer will want to know how old your children are, if they're from this marriage or a prior relationship, where they're going to school now, and where they might be going to school in the future, as well as what extracurricular activities they're involved in now and in the future.

If that seems detailed, know that there's a good reason for all that information. Parents who are getting divorced often think about parenting plans that work for the here and now, but thinking about what you might need three or five years down the road can save you from having to modify a divorce decree relatively soon after you and your spouse have agreed to it.

You should also think about what you want when the divorce is finalized. Knowing what's important to you will help your lawyer think about the best strategy possible for getting to the finish line. In some cases, litigation is warranted and even necessary given the details of your case and what you're seeking. But, in some cases—especially if you want to minimize conflict for yourself and your child—you might be better served with a collaborative divorce or with mediation than by going to court.

Even though your lawyer may have tried a number of cases similar to yours, every case is different, and the more candid and upfront you can be in that first meeting about your specific details, the better it will be. Your lawyer will be entering into a confidential, trusting relationship with you, protecting your interests in a divorce. By being honest and forthcoming with your details as well as your wishes, you'll put yourself in the best possible position to get the kind of divorce you're seeking.

