



Lepage Associates

Solution-Based Psychological Services

Collaborative Divorce: The Full Team Interdisciplinary Model

A Service Set

The highest quality divorce experts, covering every aspect of divorce: legal, financial, children.

A Mind Set

Dedicated to, and experienced in, keeping stress to a minimum and the process civil and dignified.

A Service Set and Mind Set for Preserving the Well-Being of Individuals and Families.

The Full Team Interdisciplinary Model of Collaborative Divorce allows for a private and dignified process to guide divorcing partners through their divorce while also preparing them for the future. Your team consists of six experts: a lawyer and a divorce coach for each of the clients, one financial specialist, and one child specialist. In this Expert-Team approach to divorce, you can be assured that the major areas of divorce will each be attended to by a specialist in that area: experienced divorce attorneys will provide legal advice and representation to each spouse, a financial planner who is certified in divorce financial planning will provide various short-term and long-term scenarios regarding division of property and cash flow, coaches will assist in promoting effective communication and keeping the process on track, and a child specialist will provide information on the many issues related to children and divorce and will act as the voice of the child. (Please see reverse or a page 2 for a more in-depth description of each expert role.)



Philosophy of this Approach: **It makes sense in life to utilize experts;** it saves time, money, and frustration, and increases confidence in the outcome. The full team approach is a collaborative model based on the idea that *building experts into the process from the beginning* is the best way to ensure this. **More experts does not mean more cost,** because you do not have more conversations/meetings, you simply target those meetings by expert rather than discussing everything with attorneys. In fact, collaborative divorce has been found to cost less than traditional divorce. But perhaps even more importantly, at its foundation is the desire to provide **a process in which partners can divorce in as amicable and respectful a manner as possible, a process dedicated to preserving the dignity and emotions of each adult and each child experiencing this life transition,** that keeps parent-child relationships strong and sets the groundwork for a positive co-parenting relationship. (Studies show that a collaborative settlement is reached faster than settlement in traditional divorce negotiation; greatly reduces the emotional trauma families experience in divorce, especially children; and results in increased cooperative co-parenting post divorce.) In a nutshell, though the marriage is ending, the process protects the family.

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Collaborative Divorce: Definition & Description

Collaborative Divorce is a process for resolving disputes respectfully. A non-adversarial approach, it utilizes specially-trained lawyers and a team of professionals to help the spouses negotiate a mutually acceptable settlement without using the court to decide any issues. Clients and their respective attorneys and team members work together toward the sole goal of reaching an efficient, fair, comprehensive settlement of all issues. The lawyers do not go to court or threaten to go to court. Settlement is the only agenda. Clients and attorneys sign the collaborative pledge, in which divorcing spouses and their attorneys all agree the attorneys are disqualified from going to court. This disqualification removes the process from the adversarial court system; it removes the threat of contentious litigation and takes the fear, hostility, and negativity out of the negotiations and instead allows parties to utilize non-adversarial conflict resolution and interest-based negotiation to come to a fair settlement agreement that both parties have designed and are comfortable with.

Collaborative Divorce: Team Members

Collaborative Law Attorneys: The Attorneys address the legal issues that a couple faces in seeking a divorce. Attorneys will provide legal information and legal advice specific to their client's situation. Your attorney will discuss with you your needs and interests, and how to get those best met in your separation and divorce agreement. Through problem-solving negotiations that do not include adversarial techniques or tactics, the attorney advises clients concerning applicable law and its effect on them and helps them draft agreements in the spirit of cooperation.

Collaborative Coaches: Coaches prepare you for successful amicable negotiation of a settlement agreement. They help you identify your underlying needs/interests/concerns, prioritize issues, and develop a plan for effective communication of the importance of those issues for you. Your coach will work closely with you in your development and effective utilization of skills needed to deal with critical issues involving the divorce. Coaches can also help handle emotional issues that might otherwise get in the way of the settlement process so each person can think clearly about the future, prioritize issues, communicate effectively, and move forward. This vital role allows attorneys to stay centered on what they know best, the law and reaching mutually satisfactory settlements.

Child Specialist: The Child Specialist helps parents with the vast array of child-centered issues, and helps the children be heard in a healthy way. Children are aware mom and dad have a team of people working with them to aid in the divorce, yet in traditional divorce a child rarely meets with anyone on this helping team, even though the divorce will have such a large impact on the child's life. Our Child Specialists provide the child a voice in the divorce process by meeting with each child to assess the child's needs and concerns. The child feels listened to and respected as an important member in the process, and in addition parents learn valuable information about how their child is thinking and feeling, and are better able to assist each child through the process. The Child Specialist can work with the child(ren) to address any specific emotional and practical day-to-day needs as they relate to the divorce process, and can help the parents do this. Lastly, the Child Specialist can help parents design a parenting plan that specifically address the defined needs of the child(ren) and family; the Child Specialist does not design the plan, but rather provides a wealth of information that parents utilize as they wish in making their final decisions.

Financial Specialist: This professional acts as a neutral party who assists both spouses in gathering all the financial information about the couple or family in a supportive and nurturing environment. Each client is encouraged to assist in financial disclosure and documentation of the income, expenses, assets, and debts of the family. The essential shift is from a data focus to a system focus, whereby the Financial Specialist listens and then helps the clients understand the overall picture created by their particular family's financial situation. The knowledge gained by the clients through the data collection and documentation can aid each partner in achieving the financial settlement he/she desires.