

The Great Divide

DIVORCE SERIES | Article 2

Finding the Right Divorce Lawyer.

Making the right choice will shape your future.

By Ryan P. Nowlin

You have been served with divorce papers, and your head is reeling as you consider what your next steps should be. You are emotional and infuriated, so you call your closest friends and colleagues to ask, "...Do you know a good divorce lawyer?"

Hiring the right divorce attorney is one of the most important decisions you will make in the entire divorce process.

It's a good time to speak to individuals who have been divorced to learn about their experiences, and their

lessons learned, and to ask for their recommendations. However, it is important to remember that your mileage may vary – everyone's experience with divorce differs in some ways, both great and small. When they offer the attorney's name, go a little deeper and ask why they are recommending this lawyer. You want to better understand their experience and find out if the attorney they are recommending is:

- ✔ Smart
- ✔ Savvy
- ✔ Ethical
- ✔ Strong negotiator
- ✔ Tireless advocate
- ✔ Compassionate
- ✔ Good listener



rnowlin@sssb-law.com

Ryan P. Nowlin is a partner at Schneider Smeltz Spieth Bell LLP, where he represents individuals in every phase of divorce and custody proceedings.

Ryan is a fellow of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and is board certified by the Ohio State Bar Association as a Certified Specialist in Family Relations Law.

Ryan and his wife reside in Lakewood with their five children.

One distinction that will be helpful in the selection process is that those attorneys who primarily practice family law frequently handle more complex legal principles. Additionally, there are a variety of important financial aspects involved with a divorce, and hiring an attorney with the skill and breadth of knowledge of current legislative developments and financial issues is a smart investment in your future.

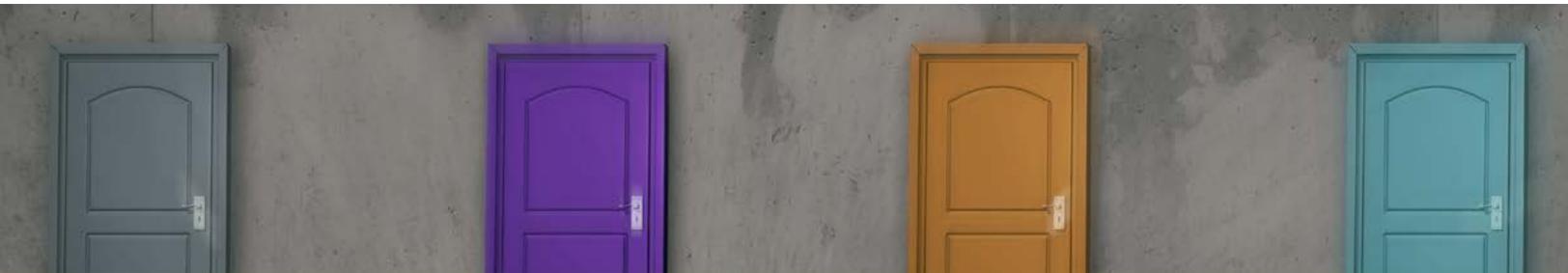
Once you're equipped with a few names of attorneys, it's time to do your research. Do your homework on the lawyer and their law firm to make sure that you have the right professional who is equipped to help shape your new future. Once you have narrowed down the list, it's time to contact the most promising candidates to set up an interview or consultation designed to help you see if they are a good match for you and your divorce circumstances.

When interviewing a potential attorney, you should attempt to identify who you would be more compatible with, as you are going to rely upon and need to trust this professional to help you work through one of life's most challenging situations. Be prepared for your conversation--know what you want to learn about, and what responses will be the best fit for you and your personal circumstances. Below are several questions that you can ask a prospective attorney:

- 1** How long have you been practicing family law? Why did you choose family law as the focus for your legal practice?

- 2** Are you a certified family law expert? What is your hourly rate?
- 3** What experience do you have with my spouse's attorney? Knowing who they are, does that change your strategy?
- 4** How long does a divorce typically take from start to finish? How do you think my circumstances are likely to affect this timeline?
- 5** What can be done to protect our children during the divorce process?
- 6** What other costs, besides legal fees, will be involved with the divorce?
- 7** Who (besides yourself) will be working on my case?
- 8** What about all the financial aspects of this divorce--who will advise me?
- 9** What is your recommendation to accomplish this divorce as efficiently as possible and with minimal drama?
- 10** What else do you think is important for me to know about you as I am evaluating you as my attorney?

Ask all attorneys you interview the same questions and take good notes. Then sit down and review your notes, their qualifications, and your perceptions of how well they will work alongside you and your family.



For more information on choosing the right attorney or to set up an initial consultation interview with a Family Law attorney, please contact Ryan Nowlin.