How to Prepare for an Initial Consultation with a Family Lawyer

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Introduction

Before your attendance at an initial consultation with a family lawyer you can take steps to prepare to ensure you get the most out of your conference. Think about these key steps that you might consider before the conference.

Understand Your Goals

Before the initial consultation, take some time to understand your priorities and clarify your own goals. What are the outcomes you are looking to achieve? By understanding your objectives, it will help your family lawyer to tailor their advice to consider your expectations and needs.

Gather Relevant Documents

Before your initial consultation, we recommend gathering relevant documents that will assist your lawyer in assessing your matter.

For matters relating to property settlements we suggest collating documents that support your financial position, such as a screenshot of your bank balances, share portfolio, superannuation and your latest tax return. It is also helpful to have an idea of the market value of any property held by either party of the relationship which may include obtaining a market appraisal from a local real estate agent. The purpose of this information is to provide your lawyer with an understanding of what assets, liabilities, superannuation and financial resources exist.

For parenting matters we suggest outlining the current parenting arrangements including the nights of overnight care each parent has with the child/ren and details about the care arrangements for the child/ren. You may also wish to detail any matters that cause concern.

For a divorce application we suggest providing your marriage certificate issued by births deaths and marriages.

Prepare a List of Questions

Before the conference prepare a list of questions for your family lawyer to address during the consultation. These questions should revolve around your priorities in the case, any goals you have, and any specific outcomes you would hope to achieve by the end of the matter. Common questions that do arise usually revolve around the likelihood of success, anticipated costs, potential timelines, and the legal procedures that will be involved in the matter. By creating this list and asking questions, you can ensure that all concerns you do have will be addressed in the consultation.

Conferences with your lawyer are confidential. The information is covered by legal professional Privilege.

It is best to be honest, open, and transparent with your family lawyer. Providing accurate and complete information during the consultation will allow your family lawyer to give you advice relevant to your circumstances. Lawyers are bound by confidentiality, meaning lawyers cannot disclose sensitive information a client has provided them with other parties (save for in circumstances of an imminent risk of harm to yourself or any other person or other very limited exceptions).

Consider Alternative Dispute Resolution

Engaging in alternative dispute resolution is dependent on the nature of your circumstances but is generally recommended to be considered (save in circumstances in which it would not be appropriate such as if family violence has occurred or the issues are urgent). Mediation is often encouraged as it can resolve the matter or minimise the issues in dispute in a time-efficient and cost-effective manner.

Budget and Fee Structure

Legal proceedings can be emotionally and financially demanding, so it is crucial to discuss fees and billings of the practice during the initial consultation. Things that may be useful to inquire about are the family lawyer's fee structure, hourly rates, retainer fees and any other potential costs associated with your matter. After your initial consultation, you will usually be sent a cost agreement which will outline the above matters, but it is useful to talk about it with your family to ensure you understand the processes. By understand the financial aspects of your case upfront will in due course be able to help you budget accordingly.

Conclusion

To conclude, preparing for your initial consultation with your family lawyer will assist in making the most of the time allocated. If you prepare for your conference according to this guide, it is likely you will have more time to discuss legal advice, strategy and outcome relevant to your specific circumstances.

To book in an initial consultation with our team of experienced family lawyers, Contact us on 1800 300 170 or email us at famlaw@matthewsfolbigg.com.au

Disclaimer

Family law situations can be complex and sometimes they can involve serious issues. Information outlined is proposed to provide general guidance only. Due to the seriousness of legal matters as well as the uniqueness of your individual situation, professional advice should be sought. For advice, please contact one of our Family Lawyers.