

## **How to Get Started with a Collaborative Divorce**

Once people become aware of Collaborative Law and decide they would like to try it, the next question for them is, "How do I get started?" Here are some simple steps to follow:

- Learn About Collaborative Law
- Consult a Collaborative Attorney
- Introduce the Idea of Collaborative Law to Your Spouse
- Create a Collaborative Team
- Schedule a Joint Meeting

**Learn about Collaborative Law Association of the Rochester Area (CLARA).** This website will provide you with a lot of helpful information. The International Academy of Collaborative Professionals (IACP) website ([www.collaborativepractice.com](http://www.collaborativepractice.com)) is also a good source of information. In addition, some attorneys, mental health professionals, and financial professionals have websites and blogs about Collaborative Law. Several books about Collaborative Law are available. (please see resources)

**Consult a Collaborative attorney.** In NY, the Collaborative Law process often begins with hiring an attorney. Each spouse must be represented by a separate, independent lawyer in the Collaborative process. The CLARA web site has a handy, easy-to-use resource where you can locate a Collaboratively-trained professional or other professional in your area. Click on a name to view a member's profile. The profiles detail the Collaborative professional's training and experience, and many of the profiles will also introduce you to that person's philosophy and practice style.

Contact a Collaborative attorney by phone, email or in person. It is best to meet with a lawyer in person to decide if you and the attorney seem to be a good fit. The chemistry between you and your lawyer is very important.

In most communities in NY, there are mental health professionals and financial professionals who are trained to work with clients on Collaborative Law teams. A consultation with one of these professionals might help you select a Collaborative Law attorney who will meet your needs.

**Introduce the idea of Collaborative Law to your spouse.** It is important for both husband and wife to believe that the Collaborative Law approach is the best way for them to get through the divorce process with as little damage as possible to anyone's finances, emotional well-being or important relationships. If your relationship with your spouse is cordial, you can give him or her information about the process and website references.

If, however, you think your spouse might be more likely to appreciate the information if it comes from a source other than you, brainstorm with your attorney options for informing your spouse about Collaborative Law. Think about what approach would appeal to your spouse as well as what might upset him or her.

Here are some possible ways to introduce your spouse to Collaborative Law:

- Talk to your spouse directly if the lines of communication are open and if you and your spouse have agreed to get a divorce. Provide your husband or wife with articles, information and website references.
- Think about with whom you can talk and educate about Collaborative Law who also has your spouse's ear. Family members, pastors, counselors and mutual friends often have the ability to present information in a way that makes someone feel comfortable. The same information, if offered by a spouse, might be viewed with suspicion and not have the same impact.
- Sometimes, clients will ask their attorneys to mail their spouse information about Collaborative Law. This might cause someone to have a negative response to the information, so think carefully about whether there are other alternatives before you use this method for getting information about Collaborative Law to your spouse.