



## Cheryl L. Hepfer

Principal

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Cheryl Hepfer is a highly-regarded attorney who has practiced family law for more than 40 years. She has been rated by her peers and is listed in Best Lawyers in America and as a top lawyer in the Washingtonian, Bethesda Magazine, and Super Lawyers. She is past president of both the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and the International Academy of Family Lawyers.

Her practice consists primarily of domestic litigation involving significant assets and business interests. She has a wealth of experience in complex cases involving significant assets and property distribution, alimony, child custody and access. She has significant experience representing owners of businesses and their spouses, and those with significant assets, and works with business valuation experts and forensic accountants to maximize the benefits to her clients.

Although Cheryl frequently appears before trial and appellate courts, she is often able to resolve cases through negotiation, settling most of her cases out of court because she explores settlement options early, hoping to limit client costs and enhance the opportunity for an amicable resolution. Her decades of experience as a trial lawyer provide her with the ability to evaluate her cases, and to determine when settlement is or is not in the client's best interest. In the event that settlement is not the best option, her trial skills allow her to proceed to trial when that is in the client's best interest.

As a mentor to other family lawyers, Cheryl teaches at the Institute of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers every year, and provides guidance to local family lawyers who aspire to become fellows of the AAML. Cheryl is certified by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers as a Family Law Arbitrator.

### **Additional Practice Areas: Divorce, Custody and Visitation, Collaborative Law**

Cheryl is a frequent lecturer on matters of family law, including issues of the valuation and division of marital assets, custody, access and general divorce related topics, such as divorce litigation. She also has been quoted by several national and regional media outlets such as CNN, ABC's Nightline, The New York Times, WBAL Radio and National Public Radio. Some of her features and quotes can be found in the links below.

### **Services**

- Alternative Dispute Resolution
- Family Law

## Education

- American University Washington College of Law (J.D.)
- Carnegie Mellon University (B.S.)

## State Bar Admissions

- Maryland
- District of Columbia

## Court Admissions

- Supreme Court of the United States
- United States District Court for the District of Columbia
- United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces

## Professional Affiliations

- Bar Association of Montgomery County
- Maryland State Bar Association
- Montgomery County Chapter of the Maryland Women's Bar Association
- Maryland Women's Bar Association

## Recognitions

In September 2012, Cheryl was sworn in as the President of the International Academy of Family Lawyers (IAFL), which is comprised of 700 of the most highly regarded family law lawyers throughout the world. She is also Past-President of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML), which is comprised of 1700 accomplished family law attorneys in the United States who specialize in all issues related to divorce and family law. Cheryl is the only Maryland Diplomate in the American College of Family Trial Attorneys, which is comprised of the top 100 family law trial attorneys in the United States.

Cheryl has received numerous honors, awards and recognition by publications, surveys and associations including:

- 2025 Top Attorney for Family/Divorce, Bethesda Magazine
- Doyle's Guide Leading Family, Matrimonial & Divorce Lawyer – Washington D.C., (2025 - 2026)
- Lawdragon 500 Leading Family Lawyers, 2025
- Top 50 Women Attorneys in Maryland, Baltimore Magazine, 2024
- Washingtonian Top Lawyer, Washingtonian Magazine, 2022 - 2025
- Maryland Super Lawyers, Cover Story, January 2020
- Martindale-Hubbell's AV Preeminent® Top Rated Lawyers, 2019
- Top Attorneys, Family Law, Bethesda Magazine (recognition honors the region's most respected legal practitioners, as chosen by their peers), 2019 - 2023
- Named *The Best Lawyers in America*® for Closely Held Companies and Family, Business Law, Family Law, 2003-2026

- Top Lawyer List, Washingtonian Magazine, Divorce & Family Law, 2018
- Family Law Practitioner of the Year of the Family Law Section, Montgomery County Bar Association, 2015-2016
- Selected to Maryland Super Lawyers® for Family Law, 2007-present
  - Top 10 Maryland Super Lawyers List, 2017
  - Top 100 Maryland Super Lawyers List, 2012-2025
  - Top 50 Women Maryland Super Lawyers, List, 2011-2023, 2026, 2027
  - Top 25 Women Maryland Super Lawyers List, 2007-2011
- Selected to Washington D.C. Super Lawyers® for Family Law, 2007-2019
  - Top 100 Washington D.C. Super Lawyers List, 2008-2019
  - Top 50 Women Washington D.C. Super Lawyers List, 2008-2019
- Best Divorce Lawyers, Washingtonian Magazine, 2000, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011-2021
- Top Divorce Lawyers, Bethesda Magazine, 2010 and 2013-2017
- Top 25 Women Attorneys in Maryland, Baltimore Magazine, 2011-2012
- Top 50 Attorneys in Maryland, Baltimore Magazine, 2011-2017

## Publications & News

July 10, 2026

**32 Offit Kurman Attorneys Recognized in 2027 Edition of Maryland Super Lawyers**

January 30, 2026

**Offit Kurman and Four Attorneys Named to Doyle's Guide's Top Family Law Practitioners in Washington, D.C.**

December 19, 2025

**24 Offit Kurman Attorneys Recognized in 2026 Edition of Maryland Super Lawyers**

November 20, 2025

**Five Offit Kurman Attorneys Named to Washingtonian Magazine's 2025 Top Divorce Lawyers List**

October 31, 2025

**Offit Kurman Attorneys Named to Bethesda Magazine's 2025 Top Attorneys List**

August 21, 2025

**98 Offit Kurman Attorneys Recognized in Best Lawyers in America and Ones to Watch Lists**

February 24, 2025

**Doyle's Guide Recognizes Offit Kurman and Three Attorneys Among Top Family Law Practitioners in Washington, D.C.**

January 13, 2025

**Offit Kurman Family Law Team Honored on 2025 Maryland Super Lawyers and**

## Rising Stars Lists

January 2, 2025

**24 Offit Kurman Attorneys Honored on 2025 Maryland Super Lawyers and Rising Stars Lists**

November 22, 2024

**Eleven Offit Kurman Attorneys Recognized as 2024 Washingtonian Top Lawyers**

November 8, 2024

**Offit Kurman Attorneys Cheryl Hepfer and Catherine “Kate” McQueen Selected as 2025 Lawdragon 500 Leading Family Lawyers Honorees**

May 14, 2024

**Linda Ostovitz, Sandra Brooks and Cheryl Hepfer to Speak at the AAML Hot Tips in Family Law**

December 18, 2023

**Offit Kurman Maintains a Strong Presence on the 2024 Maryland Super Lawyers List**

December 4, 2023

**2023 Washingtonian Top Lawyers List Recognizes Five Offit Kurman Attorneys**

October 26, 2023

**Seven Offit Kurman Attorneys Named to Bethesda Magazine’s 2023 Top Attorneys List**

December 14, 2022

**Offit Kurman Remains Well-Represented on Maryland Super Lawyers List for 2023**

November 23, 2021

**Five Offit Kurman Attorneys Named to Washingtonian Top Divorce Lawyers List**

April 2, 2021

**Cheryl Hepfer Highlighted by American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers’ Fellow Spotlight**

## Blog Posts

July 7, 2026

**When One Parent Refuses: Getting a Child’s Passport for Summer Travel**

Planning international travel with your child can quickly become complicated if your ex-partner refuses to consent to a passport. Under U.S. law, children under 16 generally need both parents’ permission to obtain a passport. Without it, the application is...

June 8, 2026

**Understanding Financial Coercion in Family Law Cases**

Representing a financially dependent spouse in a family law case often involves more than simply litigating support or property division. In many cases, the dependent spouse may also be experiencing financial coercion, which is a form of control in...

April 8, 2026

### **What Happens to Debt in Divorce if a Spouse Files Bankruptcy?**

Divorce and bankruptcy are both stressful on their own, but when they overlap, things can become especially complicated. Understanding how these two legal processes interact is critical, particularly when dividing debt. Divorce cases are handled in family court, where...

March 9, 2026

### **Public vs. Private School in Divorce: Who Decides and Who Pays?**

When parents divorce, disagreements about whether a child should attend public or private school are common. The answers to “who decides?” and “who pays?” depend largely on custody and the family’s financial circumstances. Who Decides? School choice is part...

January 30, 2026

### **Smart Strategies for Family Law Clients: How to Avoid Common Mistakes and Keep Legal Costs Down**

Family law cases — from divorce to custody and property division — can be stressful and costly. However, most expensive problems are preventable. By staying organized, managing emotions, communicating clearly, and following legal advice, clients can greatly reduce stress,...

November 12, 2025

### **Preparing for the Tough Questions: Cross-Examination in Divorce Litigation**

Divorce proceedings can be emotionally charged, and one of the most stressful moments for anyone involved in divorce proceedings is cross-examination. Whether you are negotiating child custody, spousal support, or asset division, your testimony can significantly impact the outcome....

October 21, 2025

### **Can My Spouse Move Away with the Kids? What the Law Says About Relocation During Divorce**

When parents separate, questions about where the children will live, and whether one parent can move away with them, often become some of the most emotionally charged and legally complex issues. Before a custody order is in place, understanding...

September 17, 2025

### **Will My Spouse Get My Inheritance in Divorce?**

Oftentimes, inheritances are considered separate property and are not divided in divorce. That means if you received money, real estate, or other property through an inheritance that was left specifically to you, it usually remains yours alone. There are...

August 19, 2025

### **Who Controls the Money Doesn’t Control the Divorce**

It’s very common in a marriage for one spouse to earn most of the income or handle all the financial decisions. But when divorce happens, the spouse who hasn’t managed the money often feels anxious or powerless. The good...

April 14, 2025

### **Why You Need to Update Your Estate Planning After a Divorce**

Divorce is a major life change that affects far more than just your relationship status. One crucial—but often overlooked—aspect that needs immediate attention after a divorce is your estate plan. Failing to update your estate planning documents can lead...

March 19, 2025

## **The Dos and Don'ts of a High-Asset Divorce**

Divorce is not easy, and when substantial assets are involved, the process becomes even more complex. High-asset divorces should be approached with the goal of fairness and financial security for the family. I've compiled some dos and don'ts to...

February 18, 2025

### **Tracing Offshore Accounts in Divorce: How to Uncover Hidden Assets**

Offshore accounts are appealing to those trying to hide money because they offer banking secrecy in certain jurisdictions, lax reporting requirements compared to domestic accounts, and complex structures involving shell companies, trusts, or cryptocurrency transactions. However, financial secrecy laws...

January 13, 2025

### **Why Divorce Lawyers Are Busy After the Holidays**

The holiday season, with its emphasis on family gatherings, goodwill, and celebration, might seem like an unlikely time to consider divorce. However, for many couples, the stress and emotional intensity of the holidays often bring underlying marital issues to...

December 18, 2024

### **Dividing Christmas Ornaments and Other Personal Property in a Divorce Case**

Divorce is a challenging process, and dividing personal property often adds emotional complexity. While big-ticket items like homes and retirement accounts might take center stage, sentimental belongings—such as Christmas ornaments, family heirlooms, and collectibles—can be just as contentious. Understanding...

November 18, 2024

### **Domestic Violence During the Holidays: Family Law Protections and Legal Options for Victims**

The holiday season, typically marked by celebrations, gatherings, and time spent with loved ones, can be a source of joy and relaxation. However, for some families, this period can also exacerbate underlying tensions, often leading to incidents of domestic...

October 29, 2024

### **Understanding The Role of Parent Coordinators in Custody Cases: Navigating High-Conflict Disputes for Effective Co-Parenting Solutions**

In high-conflict custody cases, finding a productive way for parents to work together can be challenging. To address this, courts are increasingly turning to parent coordinators—specially trained professionals who assist families in resolving conflicts, improving communication, and ensuring that...

September 25, 2024

### **Divorce and the Professional Athlete: Managing Assets, Custody, and Public Scrutiny**

Representing an athlete through a divorce requires a unique blend of legal expertise, emotional intelligence, and public relations savvy to guide a high-profile client through this complex and challenging period. Professional athletes live under constant public scrutiny and media...

August 13, 2024

### **How to Value a Startup Business in a Divorce**

Startups differ from mature businesses in that they are typically in the early stages of development, often with unpredictable revenue streams, high growth potential, and significant risk. This makes traditional valuation methods, which rely heavily on historical

financial data,...

July 11, 2024

### **Child Privilege Attorney in Divorce: Protecting Confidentiality and Best Interests**

A Child Privilege Attorney (CPA) is a legal professional appointed to protect a child's privilege, or right to confidentiality, concerning therapeutic and counseling communications. This role is vital in divorce cases where parents may seek access to the child's...

June 4, 2024

### **Home State Jurisdiction and the UCCJEA: Ensuring Stability in Child Custody Matters**

In the arena of family law, child custody disputes often present some of the most challenging issues. To provide clarity and uniformity across state lines, the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act (UCCJEA) was enacted. Central to the...

May 9, 2024

### **What happens to Debt in Divorce: Understanding Financial Responsibilities**

Divorce is a challenging time, often fraught with emotional and logistical complexities. Amidst the emotional upheaval, one aspect that requires careful consideration is the division of debts. Financial entanglements can add a layer of complexity to an already difficult...

April 16, 2024

### **International Assets and Divorce**

The division of international assets during a divorce can be complex due to differing laws and regulations in each country. The process of dividing international assets in a divorce typically involves the following steps: Identification of Assets : Both...

January 8, 2024

### **Navigating the Path of Divorce Post-Holiday Season**

A Guide to Moving Forward Divorce is a highly emotional process, and the holidays may offer a temporary reprieve from the intensity of these emotions. However, once the festive season concludes, individuals may find themselves emotionally prepared to confront...

December 13, 2023

### **It's Tax Time**

Although most folks think that tax time is April 15th or thereabouts, there are a number of things that you should consider doing before the end of the year that may affect your tax obligation for 2023. Certainly, check...

December 6, 2023

### **How to Divide Time with Children Over the Holidays Recap**

The holiday season is a time of tremendous joy, but it can also be a time of tremendous stress—especially for divorced parents who share custody of their children. Between splitting time, coordinating gifts, arranging travel, and communicating with relatives,...

November 16, 2023

### **Traveling with Babies Recap**

Originally posted 12/18/18, no content changes. Does anyone enjoy flying with a baby? Infants themselves certainly don't like the experience, but neither do their parents and aisle-mates. Young children's cries and frequent needs (for food, attention, and diaper

changes)...

November 14, 2023

### **Understanding Relocation Custody Cases: Navigating Complex Family Legal Matters**

Relocation custody cases, also known as move-away cases, arise when one parent desires to move with their child to a new location, typically a significant distance away from the other parent. These cases present complex legal and emotional challenges...

October 11, 2023

### **Deciding Whether to Have a Prenup?**

Deciding whether to have a prenuptial agreement, often referred to as a "prenup," is a personal choice that should be made after careful consideration. While prenups are not necessary for every couple, there are several reasons why you might...

October 10, 2023

### **Divorce: It's Not About Winning or Losing - It's About How You Play The Game**

Originally posted 3/4/2020, no content changes. Legendary football coach Vince Lombardi once said, "Winning isn't everything...it's the only thing." Well when it pertained to his beloved Green Bay Packers, this hall-of-famer might've been right. However, when it comes to...

September 15, 2023

### **Whose Case Is It Anyway? – The Risk Of Hiring An Overly Aggressive Divorce Attorney**

"Go for the jugular." "Show no mercy!" "Revenge is a dish best served cold." Face it, divorce often doesn't bring out the best in people...and this need for vengeance can cloud a client's point of view when it comes...

September 14, 2023

### **Skin-to-Skin Contact Recap**

If there's one worry every new parent shares, that worry might be sleep—or, rather, the lack of it. When the disturbances are unpredictable, the needs incommunicable, and the stress overwhelming, a baby's crying drowns out everything else. Forget work,...

September 7, 2023

### **GPS Surveillance Data in Civil Cases**

They show us where we are, get us where we need to go, and prevent us from losing our way. It is hard to imagine modern life without Global Positioning System (GPS) devices. Indeed, many people not only have...

September 5, 2023

### **Hotel Travel Tips**

Have you ever wondered how you might be able to make the hotel experience more pleasant? Here are some things you may not have thought about. Some hotels send out pre-registration emails, asking for your preference as to pillows...

August 18, 2023

### **Getting Divorced? Get Ready for Your New Financial Reality**

Hardly anyone has walked away from divorce financially better off than they were before. Contrary to popular belief, people almost never marry intending to split up and lay claim to their spouse's money. Rather, after a long period of...

July 14, 2023

### **Family Law Recap: Taking a Break from Your Divorce**

Happy summer! Right now, millions of Americans are on vacation, packing for an upcoming trip, or just returning to work. If you're not currently away yourself, you've no doubt encountered a couple (or a couple dozen) out-of-office autoresponder messages...

July 10, 2023

### **I did not want to get too much "in the weeds..."**

I did not want to get too much "in the weeds..." As of July 1st, Maryland became the 21st state where recreational cannabis sales are legal. Anyone over 21 can purchase dried flower, pre-rolled joints, and vape cartridges containing...

May 12, 2023

### **Smart Home Devices and Domestic Abuse**

Originally Posted 5/13/2019, no content changes. Modern homes are increasingly powered by internet-connected devices, from speakers to televisions, from thermostats to door locks, from security cameras to baby monitors. For some, this so-called "smart" technology can make life a...

May 11, 2023

### **How to Protect Your Privacy**

While you will be sharing a great deal of information during the divorce process, it is important for you to take steps to protect your privacy. You will be required to produce financial documents, and you may also be...

May 11, 2023

### **How to Prepare for Divorce**

Whatever brought you to the decision to consider divorce, as with most situations, knowledge is power. If you have determined that your spouse is considering separation or divorce, or if you have decided that you have tried to resolve...

March 14, 2023

### **So, you're thinking about a Prenup Agreement**

More and more couples are considering entering into a prenuptial agreement before marriage. It's often concerning that even the mention of exploring an agreement would be detrimental to the relationship. The parties are basically negotiating what would happen should...

February 13, 2023

### **DIY Divorces Recap**

There's a lot to be said for embracing a do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos. DIYers develop useful skills, sometimes discover new hobbies, and often save a great deal of money. But while plenty of DIY projects can reduce upfront costs and...

January 13, 2023

### **What is Dissipation and How Does the Court Handle It?**

Under Maryland Law, and in most jurisdictions, dissipation is the expenditure of marital assets for the principal purpose of reducing the funds available for equitable distribution. It usually occurs when one spouse uses marital property for their own benefit...

October 28, 2022

### **Can My Spouse Take My Business?**

The law may differ slightly from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Generally, businesses started

during the marriage will be determined to be marital property to be divided upon divorce. If the business is a partnership or a corporation, ownership by title...

August 24, 2022

### **Separation? Where Do I Start?**

If you are contemplating a separation, or if you believe that your spouse is, where do you begin? Collect and preserve financial information. This will include tax returns and information regarding income and expenses, such as check registers, checking...

July 15, 2022

### **Alternatives To Court**

Litigation can be scary and expensive, emotionally as well as financially. But you do not necessarily have to go to Court to resolve issues in a divorce. The first step in determining how best to proceed is to discuss...

May 18, 2022

### **Traveling with Toddlers on Planes**

Here are nine tips for traveling with Toddlers in today's world: Be prepared for dirty objects that find their way to your toddler. Bring along plenty of sanitizing wipes and keep them within easy reach. Pack at least two...

November 18, 2021

### **How to Manage the Expense of a Family Law Case**

It is a concern that every client has, but few are willing to discuss with their counsel. So, what are some tips to keeping your fees as low as possible? You can control some of the expenses, but not...

September 22, 2021

### **What's the Deal with Adultery in Maryland?**

Adultery is a misdemeanor in Maryland, punishable by a \$10 fine. It's doubtful that a prosecutor would ever prosecute that crime, but it may have a consequence in a divorce case. So what's the big deal? There are two...

August 18, 2021

### **So, What About Your Personal Property - Is It Yours?**

Anything that you owned prior to your marriage, that you received through inheritance, or that was a gift to you (not to both of you) during the marriage, is not marital property. It's yours. You can keep it upon...

July 12, 2021

### **Should You Consider a Collaborative Divorce?**

A collaborative divorce—or the legal process in which a couple enters a formal agreement to work together, out of court, to settle the terms of a divorce—can be an excellent choice for spouses who are on good enough terms...

May 11, 2021

### **Flying This Summer?**

Nonetheless, we want to be cautious and take precautions from the time you enter the airport until you depart the airport at the end of your journey. One easy step is to register for TSA Precheck, which allows passengers...

# Featured Works

## Speaking Engagements

- Fellow Spotlight, American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, April 2021, Featured
- “Debate Over Ending Lifetime Alimony”, The Diane Rehm Show, May 2013, Guest
- “Forget About the Prenup, Now It’s the Postnup,” The Daily Record, February 2013, Quoted
- “Diaper Duty, Divided and Decided: Sign Here,” The New York Times, May 2012, Quoted
- “Just Call it a Pre-Prenup,” The New York Times, May 2012, Quoted