

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

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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 all of them. What you cannot control is the reasonableness of your spouse or the other attorney. But what you can control may make a significant difference in the expenses associated with your case.

Be aware of the fact that divorce cases require disclosure regarding income, expenses, assets and liabilities. The more documents you can locate and provide to your attorney in an organized manner, the better. Generally, we are seeking three years' worth of records, including tax returns, credit card statements, etc. But it's also helpful to provide information regarding how and when the assets were acquired.

We normally recommend that our clients prepare a chronology of important events, so that we can refer to that document in the future if needed, and we will then be able to fill in some of the blanks that may arise in the future. Because tracing of non-marital funds may be a significant part of a case, documents that trace funds that are premarital, inherited, or gifts from a third party will make a huge difference in educating your attorney in a coherent and organized way. You may not know the value of all of your assets, but you can do some research that will help get the value in the ballpark.

Be responsive to requests from your lawyer for documents and information. If your lawyer is looking for the information, it's because there is a need for it. The sooner you can provide the information, the better.

Be aware of the fact that most attorneys rely upon a team, that often includes a paralegal, an administrative assistant and associates. That is often to your benefit, as their hourly rates are generally lower than that of the lead attorney. Show them respect and respond to them just as you would your lead attorney.

Listen to your attorney's recommendations. It's your case, but there may be opportunities for compromise and settlement that occur early on or later in the case. If you delay considering a resolution until the day before trial, you have incurred substantial fees and costs associated with litigation. Rely upon your lawyer's advice. That's why we are often called "counselors."