

## What If You Can't Afford A Divorce (Lawyer)?

With the economy down lately it's fairly common I get a several calls during a week from people seeking a divorce, but they say they can't afford it and just want a few tips. I have to say I always chuckle and think what other profession can you call up and hope to get a few tips, for free? I normally chat for 15 minutes or so and consider it part of my pro bono duty for the week. But, it does lead into a more serious question and that is, what can a person possibly hope to learn in a few quick minutes talking to a lawyer?

While I do understand that a divorce is expensive, I have to say that I think they people who call for a "quick question" are truly wasting their time. Most of the answers that I give on these telephone calls are already online (even on this blog!) and the person is not going to get any legal advice in those few minutes.

What I would suggest the person do instead is the following:

1. Get organized. Spend the time organizing all the debts, pull a credit report, list the assets, etc. But if you need to do it yourself or even hire a lawyer it really helps to be organized
2. Talk to family about a loan. It may sound self-serving for a divorce lawyer to tell you to get a loan, but if you need a lawyer you'll need money. That's the bottom line and there is no better time to count on family then when you truly need them.
3. Don't call and ask if the lawyer does "pro bono" First, there is no legal requirement that Minnesota lawyers work for free. There is an aspiration that lawyers do some pro bono work each year, but with most lawyers graduating law school with over \$150,000 in debt and lawyer unemployment at 67%, it's unlikely that you can find someone to do this, you wouldn't work for free for a stranger, you shouldn't expect a lawyer to.
4. Call your local Legal Aid. Often times even if you don't qualify for legal aid you can attend a divorce clinic where divorce lawyers will spend a day and help out legal aid. In our area legal aid is technically called [Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services](#), they do a great job and can often put you on a wait list for help.
5. Talk to your HR person, you'll be surprised that your company may offer an Employee Assistance Program that will give you a lower cost divorce lawyer. Also, you may be able to either take a loan against your retirement 401(k)/pension.

The bottom line is try a few things before you either give up and sign whatever your ex gives you or try to do it yourself (although, there are a few instances where pro se divorce is no big deal).

Thanks for reading and post any comments or questions below or email me at [Jkohlmeyer@rokolaw.com](mailto:Jkohlmeyer@rokolaw.com).

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