

LAW OFFICES OF LINDA A. KERNS, LLC

1420 LOCUST STREET
SUITE 200
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19102

(PA TEL) 215.731.1400
(FAX) 215.701.4154
(NJ TEL) 609.280.0302
WWW.LINDAKERNSLAW.COM

LINDA A. KERNS (PA, NJ, LL.M. IN TAXATION)
ELIZABETH A. BOKERMANN (PA)

Where do I start?

Any type of legal action involves requires organization, common sense, patience, knowledge and resources (both time and finances), as well as an occasional sense of humor.

Keep in mind the words of the English philosopher, Francis Bacon: Knowledge is power. Be thoughtful about your decisions throughout this process, and make sure you are relying on accurate information and advice.

Why do you need an initial consultation?

When you need information regarding any aspect of family law, please consider scheduling an initial consultation. Knowing how the law applies to your specific case will provide you with the appropriate direction and guidance that you need during what can be a difficult time.

What happens when you first call the office?

Interested clients call my office (215-731-1400) for a brief telephone consultation wherein we discuss the parties involved and the basic issues. At this time, you will need to provide your name and the other party's name, as well as your county and other basic information, so that I can check for any potential conflicts.

How long is the initial consultation?

These meetings usually take between one and two hours, depending on the complexity of the case.

What information will be discussed at the initial consultation?

The purpose of the meeting is for me to obtain the necessary background facts, and then tailor my advice to your specific situation. More detailed information from you means more detailed advice for you.

I start out the meeting requesting basic biographical information, such as names, addresses and birthdates. We discuss your income and earning history and the other party's income and earning history.

If there are children involved, you will need to supply their names and birthdates, as well as be prepared to discuss any issues. For example, for a child support case, I would need to know if there are any extraordinary expenses, such as tuition, daycare, health insurance, medical needs, etcera. For a custody case, we will begin to discuss the major issues and preferred schedules.

If it is a divorce case, we will discuss the assets and debts of both parties, no matter who holds the title. We will also discuss which assets or debts are considered "marital" and which may be considered "non-marital." Accordingly, no matter when an asset was purchased, or when a debt was incurred, you should be prepared to discuss it.

What information do you receive at the initial consultation?

Once you provide me with the background, I will explain how family law issues work in your specific county.

If this is a divorce case, I will explain the procedure for filing for divorce (or answering a divorce complaint that your spouse may have filed). We will discuss the legal significance of what is included in the divorce complaint and how the court grants a divorce. Because divorces vary from the simple to the complex, I will explain the procedure that I would anticipate in your specific case, and the "best-case" and "worst-case" scenarios that I would predict, based on the information that you provide.

For a child support or spousal support case, we can discuss the income and earning capacity of both parties, and I can estimate a support award, based on the child support guidelines. We will also discuss how these figures are calculated and what you can do to make sure your award is fair.

For custody cases, we will discuss current issues with your child or children and how you would like the case resolved. I will explain how procedure works in your county and what steps you can take to protect yourself. Sometimes, people are

unaware of the many different options available to resolve custody issues, and we can use these options to plan for your situation.

You will receive a reference packet of information which I have designed, that explains the law and your rights, including forms, helpful hints, worksheets and brochures for other useful services.

What should you bring to the initial consultation?

The more detailed information you can provide, the more specific advice I can provide. That being said, some people simply do not have access to all of the necessary information for a variety of reasons (e.g. their spouse took care of the finances, their spouse is secretive, the other party refuses to provide it, you do not want to alert the other party that you are looking into these matters). If you do not have documentation - do not worry about it. We can get it later.

Divorce

Marriage Certificate (Ordering Info: Philadelphia marriage certificates; Other Pennsylvania Counties)

Any Court Documents You Have Received (Divorce Complaint, Letter from an Attorney, etc.)

Recent Paystubs for you and your spouse

Recent Tax Returns (at least two years)

Information on your house (mortgage statement, value of house, real estate tax bill, etc.)

Automobile Information (how is it titled, how much is owed, how much is the payment)

Bank and Investment Statements

Retirement Account/Pension Plan Statements

List of Valuable Personal Property (jewelry, artwork, collections)

Vacation Homes

Credit Card Statements

Personal Loan Statements

Student Loan Statements

Written Agreements between you and your Spouse

Insurance Information: Health, Life, Automobile

Picture of opposing party (sometimes needed if we must hand deliver a court pleading)

Support Cases

Recent Paystubs for you and the other party
Tax Returns (preferably for the previous two years)
Health Insurance Information
Extraordinary Expenses: tuition, daycare, camp, extracurricular activities

Custody Cases

Work Schedules
Distances between various points: school-work-daycare-homes
Children's Schedules (activities, etc.)
Your preferred custody schedule
Holidays celebrated

Cases Where There Have Already Been Court Proceedings

All court documents/orders/pleadings
Correspondence
A Printout of All Docket Entries - This can be obtained at the clerk's office.

Tax Cases

Correspondence from the Internal Revenue Service and Income Tax Returns

Civil or Business Litigation

Depends on the nature of the case.

What is the charge for the initial consultation?

I charge a flat rate fee of \$295 for a 60 minute in-person consultation. I generally do not charge a fee for brief telephone consultations.

Retaining This Office

Many times, clients decide to retain my office during the course of the initial consultation. At that time, I will be able to quote you a retainer fee to get started on the case. Retainer fees vary depending on the complexity of the case and the number of issues involved.