

**LAW OFFICE OF
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**FAMILY LAW
JUVENILE LAW**

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FAMILY LAW - INFORMATION

Family Law is composed of many areas, most of which are inter-related. The most common are divorce and post-divorce issues to enforce or modify child support, child custody, maintenance, and non-minor education expenses. Other areas include parentage (paternity) claims, adoptions, guardianships, and name changes, to name a few. Juvenile law is a closely related field, and includes juvenile abuse, neglect, delinquency, and dependency.

If your case involves a family law issue, you have come to the right attorney. Since 1997, I have handled family law (95%) and juvenile law (5%) cases exclusively, and before that, from 1995-1997, the two areas made up from 80% to 85% of my total workload.

If your case also involves a military issue (i.e., military pay, military retired pay under USFSPA, Survivor Benefit Plan, etc.), I am well prepared to assist you in handling it efficiently. I was 7 and ½ years in the Judge Advocate Corps in the U.S. Army and served on the Illinois State Bar Association's (ISBA) Standing Committee For Military Affairs for many years.

I type all my own pleadings, except that my assistants, Alisha and Jennifer, type up certain routine materials. They are extremely knowledgeable and hard-working, and you may feel free to tell them anything you would tell me. They will get me any message you have, but are not here to take abuse. If there is a problem, bring it to my attention; if you are the abusive kind toward them, I will not represent you. Your case will not be handed off to anyone else at any time. If you have need for any other types of legal assistance, I can refer you to other attorneys who handle the matter you need, but I am prohibited from making any representations regarding their abilities.

Pre-Trials. Pre-trials are for the express purpose of determining what issues are contested, whether discovery has been completed, whether Financial Statements have been filed, whether a GAL needs to be appointed, and numerous other administrative matters. Although they are a necessary part of the process, you DO NOT need to be present at any pre-trials unless I specifically tell you to be there.

Trial vs Settle. Know that litigation often spawns more litigation. To determine whether an issue is worth going to court over or having a hearing on, always weigh the cost in dollars and time, especially if it is a strictly financial issue. There is no utility in arguing over a small dollar amount if a reasonable compromise can be reached, and I will not hesitate to discuss the cost-benefit analysis of your goals with you.

Opposing Attorney. I frequently see the same attorneys on the other side day after day and am familiar with their work. Just because I know the opposing attorney and am friendly with them personally, will not prevent me from doing everything I can for your case, within the limits of the law. This does not mean that I have to be hostile, rude, or mean to the opposing attorney in order to accomplish my purpose. On the contrary, that type of behavior will harm, rather than help, your case, and attorneys who display

that kind of demeanor have a bad reputation that prevents them from getting the most out of a case.

Counseling and Advice. If you wonder about dating, money, changing the locks, leaving the State, etc., talk to me as soon as possible. If you need a psychiatrist, psychologist, counselor, or therapist, my assistants or I can provide you with a list upon request. Check your health insurance or homeowner's policy, either of which frequently will cover the cost of a limited number of mental health care counseling sessions.

Paperwork. You will have lots of papers to fill out. Do not fax or e-mail me anything that can be dropped off sent by regular mail, or conveyed over the telephone. In a crunch, feel free to fax me documents, but call before you fax to make sure it is ok; otherwise, I want clean, unfaxed copies, without any redactions. In the case of all discovery materials, I need originals, anyway. Also, be advised that I do not regularly read my e-mail, so do not expect a fast return if you use that sort of medium.

Appointments. It is imperative that you have an appointment if you wish to meet with me. Do not expect to simply drop by and be able meet with me, or that the office will even be open. I am present in court almost every day, and cover many counties in the southern Illinois area. In addition, my assistants are frequently out of the office tending to business, including dropping off discovery, filing pleadings on my behalf, or going to the post office. If you simply need to drop off materials, you may drop them off or use the gold mail slot at the side entrance (Monroe Street side); I own the building, such that anything you drop off will be given to me.

Change of Address. It is critical that I be able to communicate with you when needed. Always keep me advised of your home and work addresses and all telephone numbers, at all times. If you move, change jobs, get a new phone number, etc., contact my office right away -- even if by simply leaving a message on voice mail -- so that I may always be able to contact you regarding your case.

Wills. In Illinois, divorce revokes all terms of your will relating to your now ex-spouse. If you do not have a will, you should get one drafted; if your will leaves property to an "ex", update it after the divorce is final. Also, don't forget to change the beneficiary from your "ex" to someone else (unless you were ordered to do so in the divorce) on your bank accounts, life insurance policies, annuities, and other assets with named beneficiaries on their face, as these items are inherited outside of a will and are not revoked by divorce.

Case File. I will retain your file indefinitely. Long after the dust from your case has settled, if you need a document from it even years later, I will be more than obliged to make a copy and provide it to you. However, (a) I require advance notice in order to make copies of a large number of documents; (b) at no time, will I give out copies of my personal notes; and (c) your bill must be paid in full before I will release certain items.

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