

A Collaborative Team

Many Collaborative cases include the participation of professionals other than the lawyers. These professionals comprise the “team.” These other professionals are all neutral - meaning they are not advocates for either client. Instead, the professionals provide their expertise to the parties and to the lawyers and assist everyone in arriving at a mutually acceptable agreement. Below is a list of some of the other professionals who often participate in Collaborative family law cases.

Process Facilitator

The Process Facilitator is a mental health professional by education, training and experience. The Process Facilitator helps everyone to stay focused on the future and effective problem-solving. They are not providing therapy or fixing past marital disputes. The Process Facilitator usually helps in the following areas:

1. To assess challenges in the case.
2. To prepare clients for the process.
3. To maximize the clients’ success by facilitating productive communication among the parties and the group.
4. To option generate and problem solve.
5. To help with any emotions that come up during the process.
6. To help with any parenting topics including helping the parties finalize a parenting plan which will be needed for the final court order.

The Process Facilitator generally attends all joint meetings (there are exceptions to this).

Financial Professional

The Financial Professional might be a certified public accountant, a certified divorce financial planner, or a valuation expert. The Financial Professionals usually provides the following services:

1. Help with the creation of household budgets - historical and future.
2. Help with identifying the expenses incurred for the benefit of any children.
3. Creation of an inventory spreadsheet identifying all assets and debts.
4. Help with generating options and problem-solving of financial issues.
5. Providing help in other miscellaneous areas including education of spouses about financial matters, tax advice, valuation services, and projections.

The Financial Professional generally attends all joint meetings (there are exceptions to this).

Other Experts Than Can Be Brought Into a Case to Provide Specialized Information

a. Child Specialist

In some instances, the children may need someone to talk to about everything happening to the family. Sometimes the parents request this, and sometimes the Process Facilitator recognizes the need. The Child Specialist would represent a voice for the children in the process and would not be an advocate for mother or father. The Child Specialist generally does not attend joint meetings. Instead, the Child Specialist reports regularly to the Process Facilitator and possibly the lawyers.

A child specialist may be asked to help parents learn and implement co-parenting skills, to perform or oversee evaluations, and to make recommendations about what arrangements would be in a child's best interests.

b Appraisers

In many cases, value information is needed. Appraisers may be needed in one or more of the following areas:

- * real estate
- * antiques
- * collections
- * business interests
- * furnishings
- * oil and gas interests

c. Specialized Areas of Law

If a family's estate includes a family business or partnership, trusts or foundations, oil and gas interests, or other unique categories of assets, the divorce issues have to be resolved keeping in mind possible tax consequences or other unforeseen complications. Post-divorce, some spouses decide to jointly own specific assets and in that event, joint operating agreements may be needed. In all these instances, lawyers who specialize in these areas may be brought into the case to advise the couple and to draft specific language or agreements related to these assets.