



## Working with Advising Attorneys

Below are some pointers to help you maximize the value of your consultation with an outside attorney:

1. When you contact an attorney, ask about the attorney's hourly fee and get an estimate of the time it will take to review your Marital Settlement Agreement.  
Tell the attorney:
  - You chose mediation in order to resolve the issues in your divorce amicably.
  - You are seeking advice, not representation.
  - You want to pay by the hour at the time of your consultation; you do not want to pay a retainer.
2. Be prepared before you contact the attorney.
  - Put together a package for your attorney. Include: the first draft of the MSA, the disclosure forms that you and your spouse filled out, and relevant supporting documents, such as appraisals.
  - Make a list of questions that you want the attorney to answer.
3. Provide the attorney with your package of documents at least five days before your appointment.
4. Remember, your attorney's job is to provide expert legal advice, not to tell you what to do. He or she should:
  - Give you information about the law.
  - Explain the possible consequences of your decisions.
  - Make a realistic assessment of your legal rights and how he/she thinks the issues would be determined in court.
  - Make suggestions as to how he/she might improve your MSA.
5. During consultation, take notes or make a tape recording, so that you can go back later and review what the attorney said.
6. After your appointment, evaluate the information and advice you were given and decide how much of it is useful to you, under all of the circumstances of your own, unique situation. Remember that you, not your attorney, must live with the decisions that you make, in the years to come.
7. Prepare for the mediation Review Session by making notes on your copy of the MSA regarding any proposals you wish to make for revisions.