



# UNDERSTANDING DIVORCE WITH CHILDREN

What Most Divorce Lawyers Never Tell You

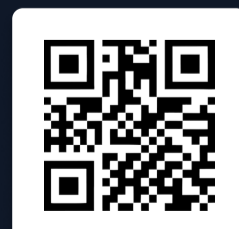
**April D. Jones**

— FOUNDER & CEO

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## Author's Note

Custody is one of the most difficult experiences any parent can face. It often arises during a time of emotional strain, uncertainty, and transition. My goal with this chapter is to help you understand what to expect and how to stay grounded through the process. Colorado law refers to custody as the allocation of parental responsibilities, which includes both decision-making and parenting time. The language may sound formal, but at its heart, it is about one thing: protecting the well-being of your child.

Every family's path is different, yet I have seen countless parents navigate this journey with strength, focus, and care. The legal process can feel intimidating, but when you understand how it works, you can move forward with confidence and purpose.



## Introduction

The custody process in Colorado follows a defined structure that gives both parents a fair opportunity to be heard. It begins with a petition to allocate parental responsibilities and ends with a court order that determines parenting time and decision-making authority. Between those points are stages of negotiation, documentation, and, when needed, judicial review. The court's focus remains steady throughout: the best interests of the child. Judges do not compare which parent is more deserving or more capable based on emotion or opinion. They examine the facts, the family's daily routines, the child's relationships, and the capacity of each parent to provide safety and stability. Most cases begin with temporary orders, which set an initial structure for parenting time and responsibilities while the case progresses. During this phase, both parents must follow the court's direction, exchange required information, and participate in mediation if ordered. Many families resolve their differences through negotiation or with help from parenting experts before reaching a final hearing.

If the case does proceed to permanent orders, a judge will review testimony, evidence, and reports to create a final parenting plan. The process can be emotional, but its goal is stability, not punishment. Once the order is entered, it remains in place until a significant change justifies modification under Colorado law. Understanding how the process unfolds allows parents to approach each step with clarity and calm. Custody is not about winning or losing. It is about building a framework that supports the child's sense of home, belonging, and love in both households. stability, maturity, and love.



# Chapter 1: Understanding Divorce With Children in Colorado

Divorce is more than a legal process. It is a life transition that reshapes how families live, communicate, and plan for the future. For many people, divorce begins with a mix of fear, confusion, and exhaustion. You may feel like everything familiar has been taken apart and no one handed you a map. That is exactly why understanding how divorce works in Colorado matters. Knowledge creates steadiness. And steadiness is what courts reward and what families need most.

## How Divorce Works in Colorado

Colorado is a **no-fault divorce state**. That means you do not have to prove wrongdoing such as infidelity or abandonment to end your marriage. The only legal ground is that the marriage is **irretrievably broken**, meaning there is no reasonable chance of reconciliation. This standard protects privacy and keeps the focus on practical decisions instead of blame.

To file for divorce, officially called a **dissolution of marriage**, at least one spouse must have lived in Colorado for 91 days before filing. Either spouse can start the process by filing a petition in district court. Once the papers are served, the law requires a 91-day waiting period before the divorce can be finalized. That time gives the court and the parties space to resolve finances, property division, and issues involving children.



## The Role of the Court

The court's role is not to punish or reward either spouse. It is to create an order that fairly divides property, addresses financial responsibilities, and ensures that any children have stable, safe environments. Judges in Colorado use well-established statutory guidelines for dividing marital property, determining maintenance (spousal support), and resolving parental responsibilities.

Much of divorce happens outside the courtroom. Most cases are resolved through negotiation, mediation, or settlement conferences. These approaches allow families to keep more control over the outcome and reduce the emotional toll of litigation. Judges generally favor parties who demonstrate reasonableness and preparation because it signals maturity and maturity protects children and assets alike.



## Divorce and Parenting in Colorado

When a divorce involves children, the court must also address **parenting time and decision-making**. These issues are handled under Colorado's **allocation of parental responsibilities** laws, the same framework explained in depth in *Jones Law Firm's Guide to Child Custody in Colorado*. Judges want to see stability, cooperation, and childcentered thinking. Even in divorce, parents remain a team in the eyes of the court when it comes to raising their children.

## Financial Realities of Divorce

Money is one of the most stressful aspects of divorce. Colorado law follows the principle of **equitable distribution**, meaning assets and debts acquired during the marriage are divided fairly, though not always equally. The court considers the contributions of each spouse, both financial and non-financial, as well as future earning potential and economic circumstances.

Spousal maintenance, sometimes called alimony, may be ordered to help balance financial disparities, especially when one spouse supported the household or paused their career during the marriage. Colorado uses advisory formulas for maintenance, but judges retain discretion to adjust based on the facts of the case.

Transparency is key. Hiding assets or misrepresenting finances can destroy credibility. Courts value honesty and documentation over strategy or manipulation. The spouse who approaches financial disclosure with clarity and organization usually gains trust and better results.

## Emotional and Behavioral Impact



### Reality Check

Children who experience parental separation show a 16% higher risk of emotional and conduct problems within the first year after divorce.

*(Source: National Center for Health Statistics, "Family Structure and Child Well-Being: 2023 Update.")*

### What Works

Early co-parent counseling and consistent routines reduce post-divorce anxiety in children by up to 45%.

*(Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, "Helping Children Cope With Divorce," 2024 guidelines.)*



## Emotional and Practical Preparation

Divorce is not just about paperwork; it is about people. The emotional impact can cloud judgment and prolong conflict. That is why preparation matters. Create organized records. Keep communication calm and brief. Document parenting involvement. Seek professional counseling or coaching if needed. The court will not measure your pain, but it will notice your stability.

Clients often ask what the “right” way to behave during divorce is. The answer is simple: focus on what you can control. Show the court that you are steady, informed, and guided by your child’s and your own long-term well-being. Those qualities are noticed and they carry weight.

## ⓘ Common Myths About Divorce in Colorado

**Myth 1: Colorado favors mothers in divorce.**

**Truth:** The law is gender-neutral. Decisions about property, support, and parenting are based on facts, not stereotypes.

**Myth 2: Adultery or bad behavior automatically affects property division.**

**Truth:** Because Colorado is a no-fault state, misconduct rarely impacts financial outcomes unless it directly affects marital assets or safety

**Myth 3: You can refuse to sign divorce papers to stop the process.**

**Truth:** Once one spouse files and meets residency requirements, the divorce will proceed even without the other parties agreement.

**Myth 4: Everything is split fifty-fifty.**

**Truth:** Colorado divides property equitably, not equally. Fairness is based on contributions, needs, and the specific circumstances of each case.

**Myth 4: You have to go to court for every disagreement.**

**Truth:** Most divorces settle through negotiation or mediation. Litigation is the exception, not the rule

## ❓ Frequently Asked Questions

**How long does a divorce take in Colorado?**

The minimum is 91 days, but complex cases involving assets or children can take several months to more than a year.

**Can we use the same lawyer?**

No. Even if your divorce is amicable, one attorney cannot ethically represent both parties. However, you can work collaboratively with neutral mediators.





### What happens if my spouse will not disclose finances?

You can request formal discovery through the court. Judges take transparency seriously, and hiding assets can result in penalties or unfavorable rulings.

### Will the court consider who was at fault for the breakup?

No. The focus is on practical outcomes, not assigning blame.

### Can we change our divorce agreement later?

Certain orders, such as parenting time or maintenance, can be modified if circumstances change significantly.

*“The **past fades**, the future **shines brighter**.”*

## Looking Ahead

Understanding the foundation of Colorado divorce law is the first step in regaining control of your future. The process may feel uncertain, but knowledge turns fear into direction. The next chapter explores how to prepare for divorce before filing and the documents, decisions, and strategies that can help you protect what matters most from the very beginning.



## Chapter 2: Preparing for Divorce in Colorado

Divorce begins long before the papers are filed. For most people, it starts with a quiet question that turns into a sleepless night. *Is this really happening?* Once the decision is made, fear often turns to uncertainty. What do I do first? What do I need to protect? Who do I trust?

Preparation is where you take your power back. In Colorado, what you do before filing can shape everything that follows, from financial stability to credibility in court. Divorce is part legal, part emotional, and part logistical. Those who prepare early and stay organized enter the process stronger, calmer, and more protected.

### Getting Grounded Before You File

Colorado requires that one spouse has lived in the state for at least 91 days before filing for divorce. But beyond eligibility, you need to be emotionally and practically ready. Filing too soon without understanding your finances, your housing options, or your parenting plan can leave you scrambling.

Start by defining your goals. Do you want to keep the house? Do you need temporary financial support? Are you seeking shared parenting or primary custody? Having a clear sense of what matters most helps guide every conversation that follows, from mediation to courtroom testimony.

At this stage, it is also essential to take care of your mental and emotional well-being. Divorce is a loss, and grief is part of it. Find your support system early including friends, family, faith, or therapy. The steadier you are, the more clearly you will see what needs to be done. Judges notice when a parent is grounded, focused, and child centered.



### Gathering Financial Information

Finances form the backbone of every divorce. Colorado's laws on property division and maintenance require full financial disclosure from both parties. That means you must collect and organize documents early including bank statements, tax returns, pay stubs, loan information, retirement accounts, and property deeds.

Create copies of everything you can access. Keep them in a safe location that only you can reach. Understanding what you own, what you owe, and what you earn allows you to work from facts instead of assumptions.



If you suspect that your spouse may hide or move assets, do not confront them directly. Instead, consult your attorney and document what you can quietly. Courts have tools to uncover hidden assets, and a calm, methodical approach carries far more weight than accusation.



## Planning for Parenting and Stability

If you have children, start considering what stability looks like for them. Judges in Colorado focus on the best interests of the child which means consistency in schooling, routines, and emotional environment.

You do not have to have all the answers now, but think through your ideal parenting time schedule, who will handle transportation, and how communication will work. This preparation will make the process smoother once you reach formal discussions about custody and parenting plans.

It is also wise to start documenting your involvement in your children's lives. Keep track of school communications, medical appointments, and extracurricular activities. These records quietly tell the court who has been the steady parent and who has prioritized the child's needs without drama.

## Securing Your Digital and Personal Safety

Divorce today often involves technology. Change passwords to your personal email, phone backups, social media accounts, and financial apps. Set up two-factor authentication where possible. Avoid discussing the divorce online, even in private messages. Anything written in anger or frustration can resurface in court.

Also consider your physical safety and privacy. If your relationship includes any form of intimidation or control, you can request a temporary protection order through the court. Safety planning is not an overreaction, it is preparation. The law provides tools to keep you secure while the divorce moves forward.

## Choosing the Right Legal Team

Your lawyer is more than a paperwork processor, they are your strategist, advisor, and shield. Choose someone who listens to your goals and helps you focus on outcomes rather than emotion. At Jones Law Firm, we remind clients that clarity and preparation are the foundation of strong cases. The best lawyer cannot fix chaos. They can, however, guide a prepared client to a much better outcome.



## ⚠ Common Myths About Preparing for Divorce

**Myth 1: If I move out before filing, I lose rights to the house.**

**Truth:** Leaving the marital home does not mean forfeiting ownership or equity. It may affect short-term logistics, but financial rights remain intact.

**Myth 2: I should empty the bank account to protect myself.**

**Truth:** Draining joint accounts can backfire and lead to court sanctions. Judges expect transparency, not retaliation.

**Myth 3: Filing first gives an advantage.**

**Truth:** In Colorado, filing first only affects timing. It does not influence property division or custody outcomes.

*“Divorce isn’t the **end**, it’s a **new beginning**”*

**Myth 4: I have to tell my spouse before meeting with a lawyer.**

**Truth:** You have the right to confidential legal advice at any stage. Preparation is not betrayal, it is self-protection.

**Myth 5: Divorce always destroys credit.**

**Truth:** With planning, you can preserve your credit by separating accounts, paying debts strategically, and communicating with lenders.





## Frequently Asked Questions

### What if my spouse controls all the finances?

Gather what you can. Your attorney can request full disclosure through discovery. The court can compel cooperation if necessary.

### Should I move out of the family home?

It depends on safety, finances, and strategy. Leaving can reduce tension, but it can also change the “status quo” and affect your rights to enter or live in your home while your court case is happening. It is best to discuss timing and implications with your lawyer first.

### How can I prepare if I do not want the divorce?

Even if you hope for reconciliation, organize your finances and secure your information. Preparation protects you regardless of the outcome. You still need to protect YOU.

### What if we want to divorce peacefully?

Mediation and collaborative divorce options allow couples to avoid adversarial court battles. The key is honesty, cooperation, and shared focus on fairness.

### Do I need to tell my children before filing?

Yes, but plan the conversation carefully. Present it calmly and together if possible. Reassure them that they are loved and that both parents will remain involved.

## Looking Ahead

Preparation gives you control in an unpredictable process. Divorce is one of life’s most stressful transitions, but planning turns chaos into clarity. When you know your finances, understand your goals, and protect your stability, you build the foundation for the next chapter of your life, one grounded in strength, truth, and forward momentum.

In the next chapter, we will explore how Colorado courts divide property, assets, and debts, and how you can position yourself for fairness and peace of mind through every financial decision.



## Chapter 3: Dividing Assets and Debts in Colorado Divorce

Money may not be the reason a marriage ends, but it is often what keeps people locked in battle after the papers are filed. In divorce, financial questions become deeply personal. Who keeps the house? What happens to the retirement accounts? What about debt? The answers are not about punishment or reward. They are about fairness, transparency, and the law.

### How Colorado Approaches Property Division

Colorado follows a principle called **equitable distribution**. This means property is divided fairly, but not necessarily equally. The court's goal is to reach a division that reflects both parties' contributions and their financial circumstances moving forward. Some people assume this means a simple fifty-fifty split, but that is not always what fairness dictates.

The law divides property into two categories: **marital property** and **separate property**. Marital property includes assets and debts acquired during the marriage, regardless of whose name is on the account or title. Separate property includes anything owned before marriage, as well as certain gifts or inheritances received by one spouse alone, however the analysis does not end there because the increase in value of separate property during the marriage is considered marital property. You should speak to an attorney.

### Financial Transparency and Fairness



#### Reality Check

Roughly 22% of divorces involve at least one spouse hiding assets or under-reporting income, costing the other party an average \$15,000 in lost value.

*(Source: Institute for Divorce Financial Analysts, 2024 Member Survey.)*

#### What Works

Couples who exchange full financial disclosures and use neutral financial mediators settle 80% faster and save 40% in legal fees.

*(Source: American Bar Association, "Family Law Mediation Outcomes," 2023.)*



The distinction is not always straightforward. For example, if an inheritance was deposited into a joint account, it may lose its separate status. Judges look carefully at the facts and documentation to determine what belongs in each category.

## Factors Judges Consider

Under Colorado Revised Statutes § 14-10-113, judges must consider several factors when dividing property. They include the contribution of each spouse to the acquisition of marital property, the value of property set apart to each spouse, the economic circumstances of each party at the time of division, and any increase or decrease in the value of separate property during the marriage.

Judges also consider whether one spouse sacrificed career opportunities to support the household or raise children. Non-financial contributions such as homemaking, caregiving, and emotional labor carry weight. The law recognizes that both earning income and maintaining the home are contributions to marital wealth.

## The Role of Financial Transparency

Honesty in disclosure is one of the strongest signals of credibility in divorce. Every spouse in Colorado is legally required to exchange financial disclosures early in the process. This includes tax returns, bank statements, pay stubs, debt listings, and retirement account details. When one party hides or manipulates financial information, it damages trust and can lead to court sanctions.

Judges notice the difference between a spouse who is organized and transparent versus one who is defensive or evasive. The parent or partner who provides clear records, who answers questions with documentation instead of emotion, builds authority in the eyes of the court.

## Understanding Marital Debt

Debt division can be just as contentious as dividing assets if not more contentious depending on how strapped by debt a couple is at the time of dissolution. Mortgages, credit cards, car loans, and student debt often represent years of shared responsibility. In Colorado, the same equitable distribution rules apply. If debt was incurred during the marriage, it is usually considered marital even if it is in only one spouse's name.

However, if a spouse secretly took out debt for personal reasons that did not benefit the marriage such as hidden gambling or undisclosed spending, that may be treated differently because of the court using equity/fairness to weigh property distribution decisions. The court can assign that debt solely to the person who created it.



*“Balance matters—both in assets and emotions.”*



## Protecting Yourself Financially

Preparation and documentation are your strongest tools. Before or soon after filing, gather statements for every account you can access. Make a list of assets, debts, insurance policies, and monthly expenses. This record gives you a clear starting point and prevents confusion later.

Avoid making large financial moves without legal advice. Transferring money, selling assets, or changing insurance beneficiaries during a divorce can raise suspicion and lead to court scrutiny and even sanctions or jail time if the court finds you in contempt and chooses to punish you for failure to comply with court orders. Judges reward honesty and stability, not reactive behavior.



### ⓘ Common Myths About Dividing Property in Colorado

**Myth 1: Everything is split fifty-fifty.**

**Truth:** Colorado law requires equitable division, which means fair, not necessarily equal. Judges weigh contributions, needs, and context, not just math.

**Myth 2: Keeping assets in your name protects them.**

**Truth:** If acquired during the marriage, they are likely marital regardless of whose name appears on the title or account.

**Myth 3: You lose your rights to property if you move out.**

**Truth:** Leaving the marital home does not mean forfeiting ownership or equity. Your financial interests remain protected. You may unwittingly change the status quo and affect your temporary rights which can affect who the judge decides can remain in the home if that is a final orders issue. See a lawyer and make reasoned strategic moves from the start.

**Myth 4: Retirement accounts are always off-limits.**

**Truth:** Retirement savings accumulated during the marriage are marital and typically equally divided for the years the money was earned during the marriage (not prior to the marriage).



**Myth 5: Debts belong only to the person who incurred them.**

**Truth:** Most debts created during the marriage are marital, even if only one spouse's name is on the account.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Can we decide property division ourselves?**

Yes. Courts encourage settlement through negotiation or mediation. If both parties agree, judges usually approve the division as long as it is fair.

### **What happens to the house?**

The court can order the house sold and proceeds divided, or one spouse may keep it by buying out the other's share. Judges focus on financial feasibility and children's stability.

### **Does fault affect who gets what?**

No. Colorado is a no-fault state. Property division is based on fairness, not on who caused the divorce.

### **Can hidden assets be found later?**

Yes. If hidden assets are discovered after the divorce, the court can reopen the case and impose penalties for nondisclosure.

### **Are business interests divided?**

Yes, if the business was created or grew during the marriage. Professional valuations determine its marital value. Judges consider who will continue managing it and how fairness can be achieved without destroying the enterprise.

## Looking Ahead

Dividing assets and debts is one of the most technical and emotional parts of divorce, but it is also where clarity creates power. When you understand how Colorado law views fairness, and when you document your finances honestly and thoroughly, you stand on solid ground.

The next chapter explores what happens when divorce involves children and how parenting time, decision-making, and child support intersect with the process and how to protect your relationship with your children while moving toward resolution.



## Chapter 4: Divorce and Parenting in Colorado

When a marriage ends, parenting does not. For many families, the emotional heart of divorce is not the paperwork or the property, rather it is the children. Parents worry about losing time, losing influence, or losing their child's trust. These fears are understandable, but they are not destiny. In Colorado, the law is built to protect children's stability and ensure that both parents remain involved whenever it is safe and healthy to do so.

### How Colorado Defines Parenting Responsibilities

In Colorado, "custody" is not the term the law uses. The court refers instead to the **allocation of parental responsibilities**, which includes two components: parenting time and decision-making authority. Parenting time is the schedule of when children live with each parent. Decision-making is about who makes important choices for the child such as education, health care, and religious upbringing.

The goal is always to create a plan that supports the child's well-being and allows for meaningful relationships with both parents. Judges begin with the assumption that children benefit from active involvement by both parents unless there is a legitimate safety concern. Every plan must fit the unique needs of the child, not the preferences of the parents.



### The Best Interests of the Child Standard

All parenting decisions flow from one legal and moral cornerstone: the **best interests of the child**. Under Colorado Revised Statutes §14-10-124, courts must consider factors such as the child's relationship with each parent, the ability of each parent to encourage contact with the other, the child's adjustment to home and school, and any history of abuse or neglect.

Judges do not focus on who was "the better parent" during the marriage. They look for patterns of stability, maturity, and cooperation. The parent who can create peace rather than conflict, and who shows a consistent willingness to prioritize the child's needs over ego or resentment, is the parent judges trust most.

### Parenting Time and Schedules

Parenting time determines the rhythm of a child's daily life who wakes them for school, who helps with homework, who tucks them in at night. In Colorado, there is no single "standard" schedule because every family's circumstances differ.

Some families use a **week-on, week-off schedule**, which gives each parent seven consecutive days before switching. This can work well for older children who handle longer stretches apart from either parent.

Other families follow a **2-2-5-5 schedule**, where one parent has Monday and Tuesday, the other has Wednesday and Thursday, and weekends alternate. This plan keeps children from going more than a few days without seeing either parent and can work especially well for school-aged children whose parents live near each other.



Another schedule is called “nesting” where the children remain in the home and the parents have a schedule to rotate in and out of the home, typically the former marital home.

When parents live farther apart or one has demanding work hours, an every-other-weekend schedule may make more sense. These arrangements often include one midweek dinner or evening to maintain contact. Judges prefer predictable patterns that reduce conflict and keep children connected to both parents.

## Parental Conflict and Co-Parenting Quality



### Reality Check

High-conflict co-parenting triples the likelihood that children will exhibit behavioral issues two years post-divorce.

*(Source: Journal of Family Psychology, “Parental Conflict and Child Adjustment After Separation,” 2024.)*

### What Works

Parents who communicate through structured apps like OurFamilyWizard or Talking Parents report a 60% drop in conflict-related court motions.

*(Source: National Council on Family Relations, “Digital Co-Parenting Tools and Court Compliance,” 2023.)*

## Decision-Making During Divorce

Decision-making authority covers the major issues in a child’s life: education, health, religion, and significant activities. Courts prefer joint decision-making when parents can cooperate, because shared input encourages unity for the child.

If parents cannot communicate without hostility, or if one consistently undermines the other, the court may award sole authority in one or more areas. For example, a parent who has managed medical appointments and therapy for years may receive primary decision making in that area, while education remains shared. Judges tailor these arrangements to reduce conflict and preserve stability.

*“Divorce ends a **marriage**, not **parenthood**.”*



## Co-Parenting After Divorce

Successful co-parenting requires boundaries, respect, and consistency. The most effective parents treat their co-parent relationship like a business partnership with one shared goal: raising a healthy child. Communication should be calm, factual, and focused only on the child.

Colorado courts often recommend or require the use of **co-parenting communication platforms** such as OurFamilyWizard or Talking Parents. These tools record messages and calendars so that there is a clear, neutral record of communication. Parents who use them consistently show responsibility and maturity to the court.

## The Role of Child Support

Child support ensures that children have consistent access to resources regardless of which home they are in. Colorado uses statutory guidelines that consider each parent's income, the number of overnights with each parent, and the child's needs. Support is not a punishment, it is a commitment to maintaining stability for the child.

Failing to pay support can seriously damage credibility. Judges view timely, accurate payments as a sign of integrity and respect for the child's welfare.



### ⚠ Common Myths About Parenting in Divorce

**Myth 1: Colorado always orders equal parenting time.**

**Truth:** The law encourages meaningful time with both parents, but equal time is not automatic. The child's needs, school schedule, and parental cooperation all matter more than percentages.

**Myth 2: Mothers usually get primary custody.**

**Truth:** Colorado law is gender-neutral. Parenting time and decision-making are based on the best interests of the child, not parental gender.

**Myth 3: Teenagers can choose where to live.**

**Truth:** A child's wishes may be considered depending on age and maturity, but children do not make the final decision. Judges weigh their input alongside all other factors.

**Myth 4: If I earn less, I will lose parenting time.**

**Truth:** Income does not determine parenting rights. Stability, involvement, and cooperation matter far more than financial status.

**Myth 5: Shared parenting eliminates child support.**

**Truth:** Even with equal parenting time, child support may still be required to balance household resources and meet the child's needs. The income of the parties will play a major role in this calculation.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What happens if one parent refuses to follow the parenting plan?

You can file a motion to enforce parenting time. Courts can order make-up time, counseling, fines, or other remedies, including jail time in certain circumstances.

### Can parenting time be modified later?

Yes, if there has been a significant change in circumstances and the modification serves the child's best interests.

### Do judges prefer parents who communicate directly or through apps?

Judges value whichever method keeps communication calm and documented. Co-parenting apps are often encouraged in high-conflict cases.

### What if we live in different states?

Long-distance parenting plans usually involve extended breaks during summers and holidays with the non school year parent to preserve meaningful contact.

### Can grandparents or other relatives get visitation rights?

Yes, in limited situations Colorado allows grandparents who have a bond and history with the child, to petition for visitation if it is in the child's best interests and does not interfere with parental authority.

## Looking Forward

Parenting through divorce is one of the hardest things you will ever do, but it is also one of the most defining. How you manage conflict, communicate, and show up for your child will shape their sense of security for years to come.

The next chapter explores **spousal maintenance and financial transition** and how Colorado courts determine support between spouses and what fairness means when both parties are rebuilding separate lives.



## Chapter 5: Spousal Maintenance and Financial Transition in Colorado Divorce

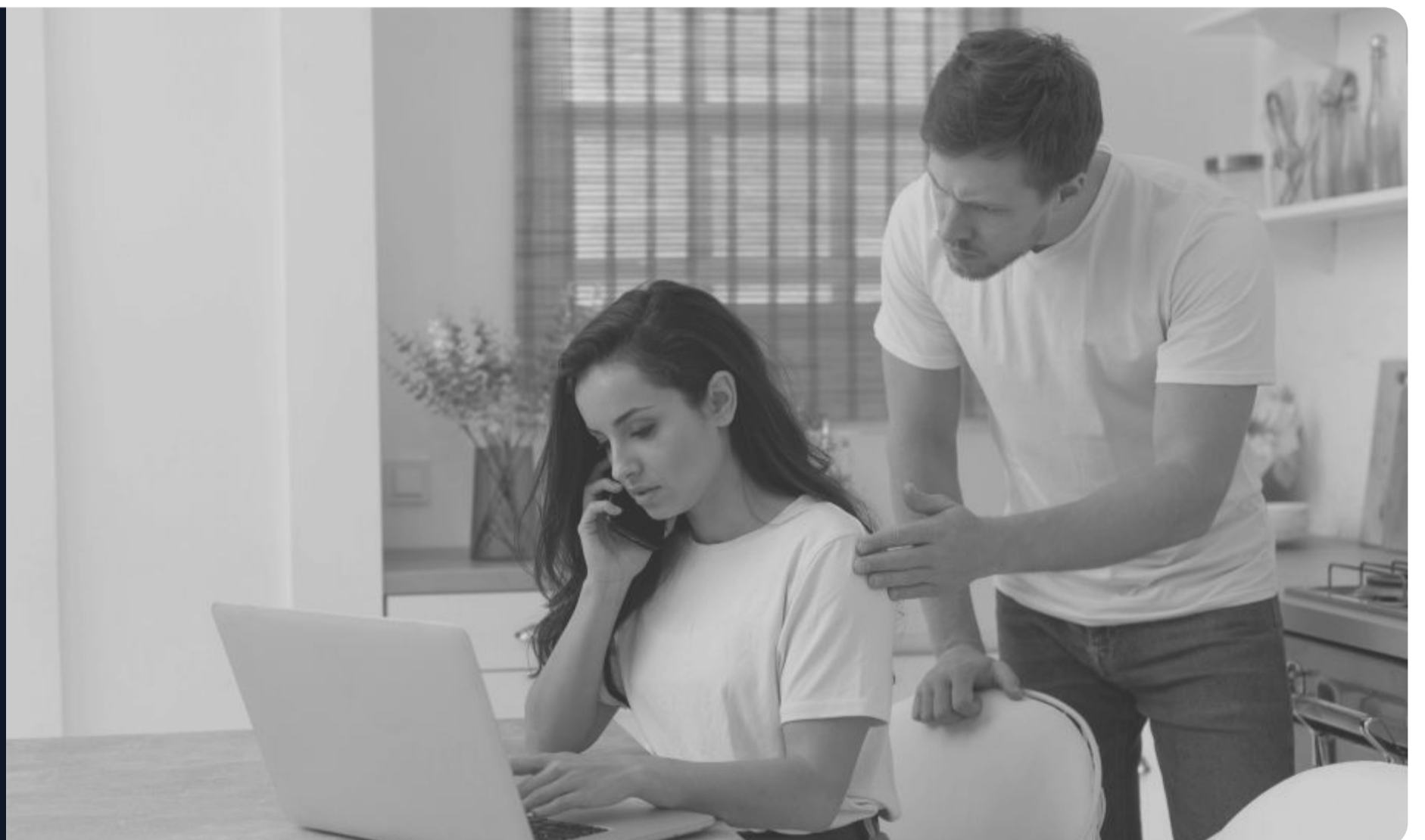
Divorce changes everything about how a family's money flows. For many people, the end of a marriage means the end of shared income, shared housing, and shared security. Spousal maintenance, often called alimony, exists to help balance that shift. It is not a reward or a penalty. It is a bridge from dependence to stability.

Colorado law treats spousal maintenance as a tool to help both spouses stand on solid ground after divorce. The courts recognize that marriages often involve economic partnership for example, one spouse may have focused on earning while the other built the household, raised children, or supported the career that created income. When that partnership ends, fairness means making sure both can move forward without financial collapse.

Every ending carries  
seeds of renewal.

Support brings  
strength through  
change.

New beginnings  
deserve solid ground.



### Understanding Spousal Maintenance in Colorado

Under C.R.S. §14-10-114, judges can award maintenance when one spouse lacks sufficient income to meet their reasonable needs and the other has the ability to help. The goal is temporary financial support while the receiving spouse becomes self-sufficient.

Colorado provides a formula to guide judges, but it is only a starting point. The court considers factors such as:

- The length of the marriage
- The income and earning potential of each spouse
- Each spouse's financial resources, including property division outcomes
- The lifestyle established during the marriage
- Contributions to the other spouse's education or career
- The age and health of each spouse

Judges apply these factors to design an order that is fair, realistic, and sustainable.



“Financial transitions *open* doors to fresh *beginnings*.”

## How Long Maintenance Lasts

The duration of spousal maintenance depends largely on the length of the marriage. Short marriages may result in maintenance for only a few months or none at all. Longer marriages, especially those spanning a decade or more, may lead to maintenance lasting several years or, in rare cases, indefinitely.

The goal is always transition, not dependency. Courts expect both parties to move toward financial independence at a pace that reflects their circumstances. Maintenance can end sooner if the receiving spouse remarries or becomes self-supporting.

## Spousal Maintenance and Economic Stability



### Reality Check

Women’s household income typically falls 30–35% in the year following divorce, while men’s declines about 20%.

*(Source: U.S. Government Accountability Office, “Gender Disparities in Post-Divorce Economic Outcomes,” 2024.)*

### What Works

When courts order time-limited maintenance with career-transition plans, recipients regain pre-divorce income levels within three years on average.

*(Source: Brookings Institution, “Pathways to Post-Divorce Economic Recovery,” 2023.)*

## The Difference Between Temporary and Permanent Maintenance

During a divorce, judges can order **temporary maintenance** to provide support while the case is pending. This ensures stability during separation. After the divorce is finalized, **permanent or post-decree maintenance** may begin. It can be structured as periodic payments, a lump-sum buyout, or even a property offset in some cases.



Each method has tax and financial implications. Maintenance ordered in divorces finalized after 2019 is **no longer tax-deductible** for the payer or taxable to the recipient. Understanding these rules with your attorney or financial advisor can prevent costly mistakes later.

## When Maintenance Is Most Likely Awarded

Maintenance is ordered in cases for a variety of reasons, for example where one spouse has been financially dependent or out of the workforce for years. This might include a stay-at-home parent or a spouse who supported the other through school or career advancement. A disparity in income between two full time working spouses is also a reason.

Courts also consider health issues that limit earning potential. The focus is not on equalizing incomes forever, but on providing a path for both spouses to live reasonably as they rebuild their financial foundations.

## How Judges Evaluate Fairness

Fairness does not mean equal income. It means creating an outcome that reflects reality. Judges consider whether one spouse can maintain a home, pay bills, and support any dependents without unreasonable hardship. They also evaluate whether the paying spouse can meet their own needs while providing support.

Judges prefer to see proactive effort like job training, education, or career planning from both sides. A spouse who demonstrates motivation to rebuild financial independence often gains credibility in the court's eyes.

## ⚠️ Myths and Truths About Custody Modifications

**Myth 1: Maintenance is automatic in every divorce.**

**Truth:** Maintenance is not guaranteed. Judges award it only when financial evidence shows a true need and ability to pay.

**Myth 2: The higher-earning spouse always pays.**

**Truth:** Not always. The court looks at total financial pictures, including debts, property division, and living costs, before deciding.

**Myth 3: Maintenance lasts forever.**

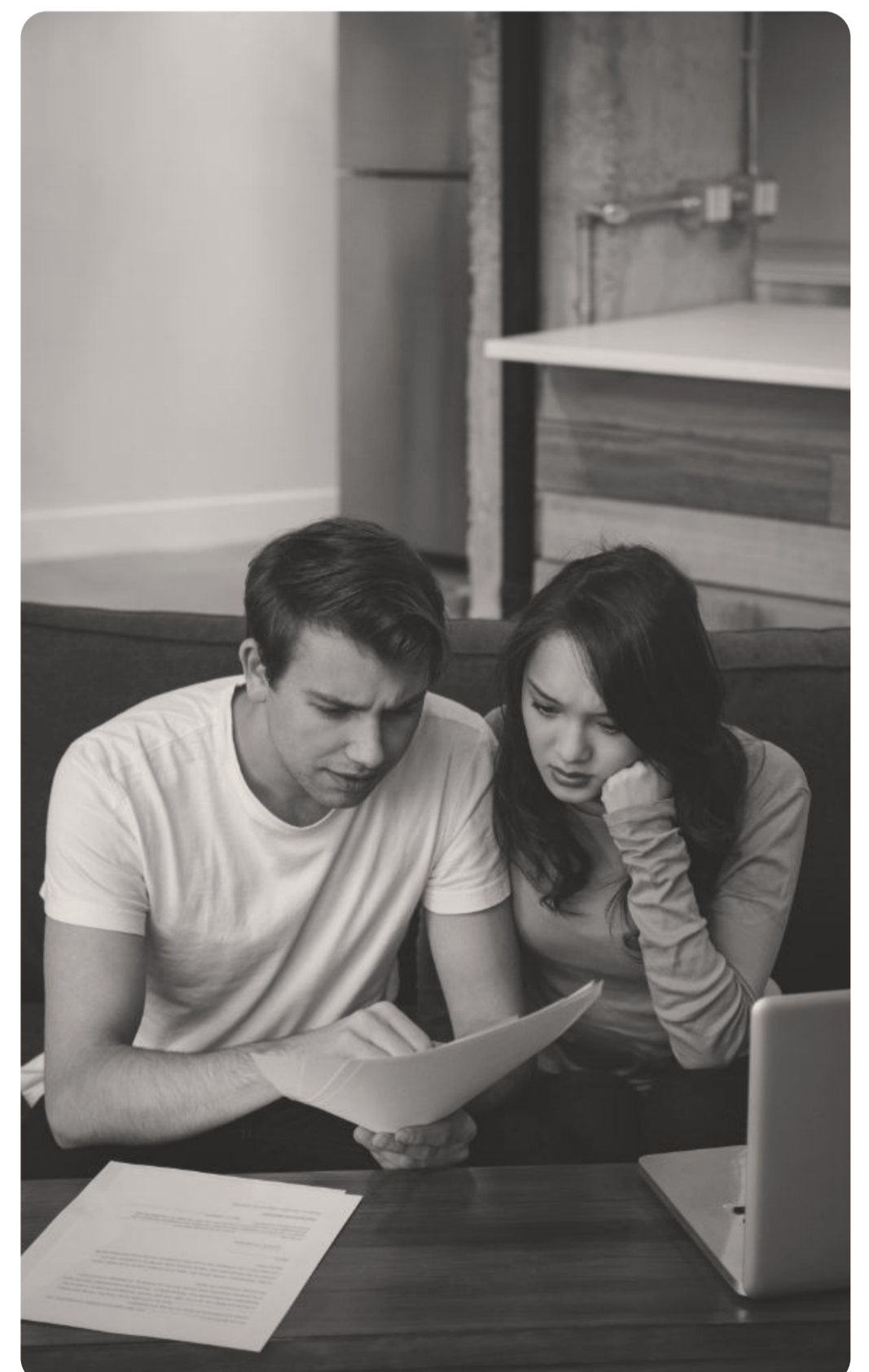
**Truth:** Permanent awards are rare. Most maintenance orders are temporary and designed to help the recipient transition toward independence.

**Myth 4: If you live with a new partner, payments automatically stop.**

**Truth:** Cohabitation can affect maintenance, but it must be proven to change financial circumstances before a court modifies or ends the order.

**Myth 5: You can avoid maintenance by quitting your job.**

**Truth:** Judges can impute income based on earning potential. Intentionally reducing income to avoid obligations can lead to penalties.





## Frequently Asked Questions

### How does the court calculate maintenance?

Among other things, Colorado's advisory formula uses both spouses' gross monthly incomes and the length of the marriage. Judges adjust it based on fairness and need.

### Can maintenance be changed later?

Yes, modifiable maintenance can be modified if either party shows a substantial and continuing change in circumstances. Once waived effectually the orders can not be modified.

### What happens if someone stops paying?

The receiving spouse can file a motion to enforce the order. Courts can garnish wages, add interest, and impose penalties for non-payment.

### Is maintenance taxable?

For divorces finalized after 2019, maintenance is not taxable to the recipient or deductible by the payer under federal law.

### Can we agree to waive maintenance?

Yes. Spouses can reach their own agreement to waive or limit maintenance, but judges will review it to ensure both understand the long-term consequences.

## Preparing for Financial Transition

Whether you are paying or receiving maintenance, planning is essential. Create a post-divorce budget. Identify new expenses, insurance needs, and tax impacts. If you are the paying spouse, set up automatic transfers to stay current. If you are the receiving spouse, treat maintenance as temporary income while you rebuild.

At Jones Law Firm, we encourage clients to see this phase as financial rehabilitation, not defeat for either party. With preparation, many people emerge stronger, with a clearer sense of independence and control than they had before.

### Looking Ahead

Money may be the most measurable part of divorce, but it is not the most defining. The goal is financial freedom, not financial fear. Maintenance exists to create time and space for both spouses to stabilize and move forward.

The next chapter explores **property and debt division orders and how they may be enforced after divorce**. We will discuss what happens when one spouse fails to follow through on financial orders, and how Colorado courts ensure accountability and fairness long after the decree is entered.



## Chapter 6: Enforcing Financial Orders After Divorce

A divorce decree is supposed to bring closure and a plan for parenting, property, and financial support that lets both people move forward. But sometimes, one spouse refuses to follow through. They stop paying spousal maintenance. They ignore property division orders. They delay signing documents or transferring assets. When that happens, the law provides tools to enforce compliance.

At Jones Law Firm, we often tell clients that a divorce order is only as strong as the follow-through. Enforcement is not about revenge. It is about accountability. It is about protecting what the court already decided was fair.

### Enforcement and Non-Compliance



#### Reality Check

Nearly 28% of U.S. parents entitled to child support receive no payment in a given year.

*(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Custodial Parents and Child Support. 2022 Release.")*

#### What Works

Using wage-garnishment programs like the Family Support Registry increases collection rates to over 90%.

*(Source: Colorado Department of Human Services, Child Support Services Annual Report 2024.)*

### When a Court Order Is Not Being Followed

When a spouse fails to comply with the court's financial orders, the other party can file a **motion for enforcement or contempt**. This asks the court to require compliance and to impose consequences for refusal. Enforcement actions can cover unpaid maintenance,

unpaid child support, failure to divide property, or refusal to sign required documents. The court will first determine whether the violation was willful. If the non-compliant spouse had the means to comply but chose not to, judges can order immediate payment, attorney's fees, fines, or even jail time in severe cases.

Colorado judges do not take contempt lightly, but they also do not tolerate disregard for court orders. The purpose of these actions is to uphold fairness and restore integrity to the legal process.



## How Enforcement Works

The process begins with a written motion explaining the violation and providing evidence such as bank records, messages, or previous orders. The court then sets a hearing where both parties can present their side. If the judge finds non-compliance, the order can include repayment schedules, wage garnishment, or seizure of assets, among other remedies.

For child support or spousal maintenance, the Colorado Family Support Registry can manage payment collection and tracking. If payments stop, they can intercept tax refunds or suspend professional and driver's licenses.

In property cases, if one spouse refuses to sign over a deed or transfer a title, the judge can authorize the court clerk to sign on their behalf. The system is designed to make sure justice does not depend on cooperation alone.

*“Secure your rights; demand accountability, not revenge.”*

## Financial Contempt: What It Means

“Contempt” sounds dramatic, but in Colorado family law, it simply means a party violated a court order to do something or not do something. There are two main types called **remedial** and **punitive**.

- **Remedial contempt** is designed to make the person comply. The judge can order jail time until the payment is made or the order is completed.
- **Punitive contempt** is about punishment for past defiance. It can include fines or short jail sentences.

Most family law cases involve remedial contempt because the goal is correction, not punishment although punitive sanctions can and should be requested in many cases depending on the facts. Ideally, Judges want parents and former spouses to comply, not to suffer.

## Collecting Unpaid Maintenance or Property

Collecting unpaid maintenance or property division can feel frustrating, especially when months pass without progress. Colorado law gives several options beyond contempt:

- **Wage garnishment**, where payments are automatically deducted from the paycheck.
- **Liens** on property, which prevent sale or refinancing until the debt is paid.
- **Judgment interest**, which accrues on unpaid amounts and increases over time.

In some cases, a spouse may even seek to intercept retirement funds. The goal is to ensure that what the court ordered becomes reality.

## Protecting Yourself from Future Problems

The best way to prevent enforcement battles is preparation. Make sure all financial orders in your divorce decree are clear and specific. Avoid vague language such as “parties will divide debts fairly.” Instead, list every asset, debt, and payment timeline.



Keep meticulous records so you can clearly document every payment, transfer, or communication about finances. If enforcement becomes necessary later, your documentation becomes your shield. Judges believe records, not recollections.

It is also wise to use formal payment systems, such as the Family Support Registry or direct bank transfers, rather than cash or informal exchanges. Transparency builds credibility.

## ⚠ Common Myths About Enforcement

**Myth 1: Once the divorce is final, the court is done with us.**

**Truth:** The court retains authority to enforce and modify its orders as long as obligations remain outstanding.

**Myth 2: You cannot collect court ordered support if your ex-spouse moves out of state.**

**Truth:** Colorado can coordinate with other states under the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act to enforce orders across state lines.

**Myth 3: Contempt actions are always expensive and slow.**

**Truth:** Some cases resolve quickly once the motion is filed. Judges take non-compliance seriously, especially when children or large sums are involved.

**Myth 4: If I ignore the order long enough, it expires.**

**Truth:** Financial judgments can last for years and accumulate interest until fully paid. Avoiding payment only makes the debt grow.

**Myth 5: You cannot get attorney's fees in enforcement cases.**

**Truth:** Colorado law allows judges to order the violating party to pay the other side's legal fees if their non-compliance was willful.



## 🗨 Frequently Asked Questions

**What if my ex refuses to transfer property we agreed on?**

File a motion to enforce the property division. The judge can order the transfer or have the court clerk sign documents on your behalf.

**How do I enforce unpaid maintenance or support?**

You can file through the Family Support Registry or directly with the court. Wage garnishment and tax intercepts are common enforcement tools.

**Can I go to jail for not paying?**

Yes, but only for willful refusal. Judges prefer compliance plans, but repeated defiance can lead to short jail time.



### Can I recover missed payments years later?

Yes. As long as you have a valid court order, unpaid obligations remain collectible with added interest.

### Can we fix a vague or unclear order before it causes problems?

Yes. You can request clarification or modification before a dispute arises, preventing enforcement issues later.

## Looking Ahead

Enforcement is where accountability meets justice. It is how Colorado ensures that divorce orders mean something. When one party tries to sidestep the law, the court steps in to restore fairness.

The next chapter looks at **modification and post-decree changes** including how to adjust maintenance, parenting, or support orders when life changes in real ways that the original order could not anticipate.



## Chapter 7: Modifying Court Orders After Divorce

Life does not stop changing after divorce. Jobs shift, children grow, people move, and financial realities evolve. What made sense at the time of your divorce may not make sense years later. Fortunately, Colorado law recognizes that life changes can make existing court orders unworkable and it allows for modification when circumstances truly change.

Modification is not about rewriting history. It is about updating legal orders to reflect present realities. Whether you are asking to adjust child support, parenting time, or spousal maintenance, success depends on proving that the change is significant, lasting, and not the result of your own choices.

### Modification and Stability



#### Reality Check

About 1 in 3 child-support or parenting-time orders require modification within five years due to income or relocation changes.

*(Source: National Center for State Courts, "Family Court Caseload Trends," 2023.)*

#### What Works

Families that use mediation instead of litigation for post-decree modifications finalize changes 60% faster and maintain better long-term compliance.

*(Source: Harvard Negotiation Law Review, "Post-Decree Mediation Efficiency," 2024.)*

### When You Can Request a Modification

Under C.R.S. §14-10-122, either party can ask the court to modify an order if there has been a **substantial and continuing change in circumstances**. This means something major has shifted permanently not just temporarily, and not simply out of convenience.

Examples include:

- Job loss or a major change in income that was not voluntary
- Relocation for work or family needs



- A child's changing school or health situation
- Serious illness or disability
- Repeated non-compliance with the existing order by the other party

Judges evaluate each request carefully to determine whether the change truly impacts the child's or party's stability and whether the proposed modification serves their best interests.

## Modifying Parenting Time

Parenting time modifications are the most common post-divorce changes. Colorado courts will consider an adjustment if it benefits the child and improves stability. The standard depends on the degree of change requested.

- **Minor modifications** such as adjusting pick-up times or alternating holidays require less proof and can often be resolved by agreement.
- **Major modifications** such as changing the primary residence or the majority parenting schedule require clear evidence that the change is necessary for the child's well-being.

If one parent wants to relocate with the child, the process becomes more complex. Colorado law requires notice to the other parent and a full evaluation of how the move affects the child's education, relationships, and emotional health. Judges do not favor relocation automatically, they focus on what arrangement best protects the child's ties and development.

## Modifying Child Support

Child support can also be modified when a parent's financial situation changes significantly. The rule of thumb is a **10% or greater difference** in the monthly payment amount compared to the original order.

Courts expect transparency and updated financial disclosures, pay stubs, and tax returns are required. Judges also look closely at whether the change is voluntary. A parent who quits a job or reduces income to avoid child support will find little sympathy in court. Judges can impute income based on earning potential, not current wages.

When modification is justified, it applies going forward, not backward. That means you cannot erase past due support, even if your situation has changed. Acting quickly when your circumstances shift can save months of stress and unnecessary debt.

## Modifying Spousal Maintenance

Spousal maintenance can be modified only if the original order allows for it or if both parties agree. The same rule applies: the change must be substantial and continuing.

Courts may modify maintenance if:

- The paying spouse's income has dropped significantly for reasons beyond their control
- The receiving spouse's financial situation improves dramatically
- Either party experiences major health or employment changes

However, if your decree explicitly says maintenance is **contractual and non-modifiable**, the court cannot change it even if life changes drastically. Many spouses overlook this when they agree to settlement terms. Reviewing your decree with an attorney before seeking modification can clarify what options are available.



## Evidence Judges Rely On

Judges base modification decisions on documentation, not emotion. Your case is stronger when supported by credible evidence such as:

- Updated financial statements
- Medical or employment records
- School reports or evaluations for children
- Proof of attempts to communicate or co-parent cooperatively

Colorado courts reward transparency and preparation. Parents who come in with organized records and clear reasoning earn more credibility than those who rely on frustration or assumption.



## ⚠ Common Myths About Modifying Court Orders

**Myth 1: You cannot modify spousal maintenance once set.**

**Truth:** Some orders can be modified if they are not labeled non-modifiable. Always review your decree before assuming you are locked in.

**Myth 2: Verbal agreements to modify reached between parents are enough.**

**Truth:** Verbal changes are not enforceable. Only a signed and approved court order makes the modification official.

**Myth 3: Judges always favor the parent with more money**

**Truth:** Judges favor stability and the child's best interests not income level.

**Myth 4: Child support automatically adjusts when income changes.**

**Truth:** Support does not change unless someone files a motion and the court approves it. Until then, the original amount remains due.



*“Promises fulfilled bring **strength**, stability, and **dignity**.”*

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Can I change parenting time without going back to court?

Only if both parents agree and file the new plan for court approval. Otherwise, the original order stays in effect.

### What if the other parent refuses to exchange financial information?

You can file a motion to compel disclosure. Judges require full transparency when financial changes are claimed.

### Can I modify both parenting and child support at the same time?

Yes. In fact, these issues often overlap. The court can adjust both during the same proceeding.

### Do I need an attorney to file for modification?

While you can file on your own, the process can be complex. An attorney ensures the motion is properly supported and avoids technical errors that delay relief.

### How soon will the change take effect?

Modifications generally apply from the date of filing forward, not retroactively. File promptly when a significant change occurs.



## Looking Ahead

Life after divorce is rarely static. Jobs change. Children grow. Finances shift. What matters most is how you adapt legally and emotionally to those changes. The law gives you the ability to adjust your orders, but the process works best when approached with honesty, preparation, and respect for stability.

The next chapter examines **relocation and out-of-state moves**, one of the most emotionally charged issues in post-divorce life. You will learn how Colorado courts handle requests to move children, what standards apply, and how to present a case that prioritizes your child's future while respecting parental rights.



## Chapter 8: Relocation and Out-of-State Moves

Few issues after divorce are as emotional or as complex as relocation. When one parent wants to move whether across town or across the country the decision affects everything about parenting time, stability, and a child's sense of home.

Colorado law recognizes that life changes. Jobs evolve, families grow, and opportunities arise elsewhere. But when children are involved, relocation is not a private choice. It is a legal question, and one that courts handle with great care.

### Relocation and Child Adjustment



#### Reality Check

Children who relocate more than 50 miles after divorce experience 25% more academic disruption and 20% higher anxiety scores.

*(Source: University of Illinois, "Child Mobility and Post-Divorce Adjustment," 2023.)*

#### What Works

When relocation plans include virtual contact and extended summer parenting time, 85% of children maintain secure attachments to both parents.

*(Source: Journal of Divorce & Remarriage, "Long-Distance Co-Parenting Outcomes," 2024.)*

### The Legal Standard for Relocation

Under C.R.S. §14-10-129(2), a parent who wishes to relocate with a child must provide written notice to the other parent and the court. The notice must include the proposed new location, the reason for the move, and a revised parenting plan. If the other parent objects, the court holds a hearing. The question judges must answer is not "who deserves to move," but what arrangement serves the child's best interests in light of the proposed relocation.

Judges evaluate factors such as:

- The reason for the move and whether it is made in good faith
- The reasons the other parent objects



- The history and quality of each parent’s relationship with the child
- The educational, emotional, and social impact on the child
- The feasibility of maintaining a meaningful relationship with both parents
- The presence of extended family in each location

No single factor decides the case. Judges weigh the total picture what move, or lack of move, will best preserve the child’s stability and well-being.



## Timing and Procedures

A parent cannot relocate a child before receiving court approval if the other parent objects. Doing so can lead to serious legal consequences, including being ordered to return the child or losing parenting time.

Notice and timing are critical. Courts appreciate parents who follow the rules and approach relocation transparently. A parent who tries to move without notice risks damaging their credibility permanently.

## Why Parents Seek Relocation

Relocation requests usually come from one of three life changes:

- A new job opportunity or promotion that offers financial or career growth
- The desire to be closer to extended family or a new support system
- Remarriage or a partner’s relocation

These reasons are legitimate, but they are not automatic grounds for approval. Judges want to see that the move serves the child, not just the parent. If the new environment offers better schools, family support, or improved quality of life, the court may approve it especially if the parent has a solid history of cooperation and child-centered thinking.

## The Impact on Parenting Time

When a move is approved, parenting time must be restructured. Long-distance parenting plans often involve:

- Extended summer or holiday time with the non-moving parent
- Regular virtual contact through video calls
- Scheduled travel arrangements with clear cost-sharing provisions

Judges expect parents to work creatively to preserve connection. A parent who demonstrates flexibility and a detailed plan for maintaining contact stands out in the court’s eyes.

If the relocation is denied, the child typically remains with the parent who stays in Colorado. The relocating parent may then choose whether to move without the child or remain local.

## How to Prepare for a Relocation Hearing

The success of a relocation case depends on preparation and credibility. You should be ready to present evidence of:

- The reason for the move and how it benefits the child
- Details about the new community, school, and support network
- Communication plans for maintaining the other parent's relationship
- Financial and travel arrangements that minimize disruption

Judges are less concerned with promises and more interested in plans backed by facts such as school rankings, housing details, and real schedules and more. A thoughtful presentation shows maturity and genuine care for your child's continuity.



### ⚠ Common Myths About Relocation in Colorado

**Myth 1: The primary parent can move wherever they want.**

**Truth:** Not without approval. Even primary parents must follow the notice and hearing process before relocating with a child.

**Myth 2: Judges always favor the parent who has the child most of the time.**

**Truth:** Judges evaluate all factors equally. A parent who cooperates and promotes the child's bond with both parents can prevail even without primary time.

**Myth 3: A better job automatically guarantees permission to move.**

**Truth:** Financial improvement helps, but it must clearly benefit the child's overall wellbeing, not just the parent's.

**Myth 4: A move within Colorado is never considered relocation.**

**Truth:** If the move significantly changes the child's school or daily life, it can still trigger relocation rules even within the state.

**Myth 5: Once approved, relocation orders cannot be changed.**

**Truth:** Like other custody orders, relocation arrangements can be modified later if circumstances change substantially.

### 🗨 Frequently Asked Questions

**Can I move before the court hearing if I have an urgent job offer?**

No. You must either get written consent from the other parent or court approval. Moving without permission can jeopardize your case.

**What if the other parent refuses to discuss relocation?**

You can still file your motion and proceed to a hearing. Judges do not reward avoidance or silence.



### Can my ex stop me from moving if I do not have the child most of the time?

No. You can move as an individual, but you cannot change the child's residence without court approval.

### Do relocation cases always require an attorney?

While not mandatory, having an experienced attorney is essential. Relocation cases are some of the most complex in family law and require precise legal and emotional presentation.

### What happens if my child refuses to move?

Judges will consider the child's age and maturity. Older children's preferences are taken seriously, especially if they express thoughtful, consistent reasons.

## Looking Forward

Relocation cases test every part of parenting after divorce including commitment, communication, and sacrifice. They force parents and judges alike to weigh opportunity against stability. The court's focus remains steady: what arrangement protects the child's growth, relationships, and sense of belonging.

The next chapter explores **custody evaluations and professional assessments**, a crucial part of how courts understand family dynamics when the facts are disputed. You will learn what evaluators do, how they influence outcomes, and how to prepare for the process with confidence and clarity.



## Chapter 9: Custody Evaluations and Professional Assessments

When parents cannot agree on what arrangement best serves their child, judges often turn to outside professionals for help. These experts act as the court’s eyes and ears, providing insight into family dynamics that are not easily captured in testimony or paperwork.

In Colorado, the three most common professionals involved in contested custody cases are **Child and Family Investigators (CFIs)**, **Parental Responsibilities Evaluators (PREs)**, and **Guardians ad Litem (GALs)**. Each plays a different role, but all share the same purpose of helping the court understand what arrangement truly supports the child’s wellbeing.

### Custody Evaluations and Child Safety



#### Reality Check

In contested custody cases, courts appoint evaluators in roughly 35% of filings; of those, 1 in 5 reveal undisclosed mental-health or safety concerns.

*(Source: Family Court Review, “Custody Evaluation Practice Survey,” 2024.)*

#### What Works

Cases with qualified evaluators reach resolution 40% faster and have 50% fewer post-decree modifications.

*(Source: American Psychological Association, “Effectiveness of Custody Evaluations,” 2023.)*

### Why Courts Use Custody Evaluations

Judges do not live with families. They see only snapshots of conflict in the courtroom. Custody evaluators provide a fuller picture by observing interactions, reviewing records, and interviewing both parents, children, and sometimes teachers, counselors, or relatives.

The goal is not to replace the judge’s authority. It is to offer professional insight into what arrangement will minimize conflict and promote a child’s safety, emotional health, and stability.

Evaluations are especially common in high-conflict cases, cases involving allegations of abuse, or when parents disagree sharply about parenting time or decision-making.



## The Role of a Child and Family Investigator (CFI)

A CFI is typically an attorney or mental health professional appointed by the court to conduct a focused investigation. CFIs handle cases that require a quick, cost-effective review are usually capped at a set fee under Colorado law (often around \$2,750).

A CFI interviews both parents, may speak with the child, and collects collateral information such as school or medical records. They then write a written report recommending parenting time and decision-making arrangements. Judges give significant weight to these findings because they are based on direct observation rather than argument.

CFIs are neutral. Their job is not to side with either parent but to uncover facts and patterns that serve the child's best interests.

## The Role of a Parental Responsibilities Evaluator (PRE)

A PRE is usually a licensed psychologist who conducts a deeper and more comprehensive evaluation. PREs are used in complex or high-conflict cases where psychological issues, substance abuse, or mental health concerns may play a role.

Their evaluations are far more detailed and often 50 to 100 pages. PREs use psychological testing, observe parent-child interactions, and interview witnesses. They analyze communication patterns, emotional functioning, and parenting capacity.

Because PREs dig into sensitive topics, their findings often carry significant weight with judges. They can also testify at hearings to explain their conclusions. While more expensive than CFIs, PREs provide a level of depth that can clarify the most difficult custody disputes.

## The Role of a Guardian ad Litem (GAL)

A GAL is an attorney appointed to represent the **best interests** of the child. Unlike CFIs or PREs, who investigate and report, a GAL advocates. They appear in court, question witnesses, and make recommendations directly to the judge.

GALs are most often used in cases involving allegations of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence. Their duty is to ensure that the child's voice and safety remain at the center of the case. They do not simply repeat what the child says rather they assess what outcome protects the child's well-being.





## How to Prepare for a Custody Evaluation

Preparation matters. Evaluators pay close attention to consistency, honesty, and cooperation. Parents who approach the process with transparency and respect tend to build trust and credibility.

You should:

- Stay calm and professional during interviews. Evaluators notice attitude as much as content.
- Be honest about your strengths and weaknesses. Pretending to be perfect raises red flags.
- Provide requested records promptly and accurately.
- Avoid criticizing the other parent excessively. Focus on your relationship with your child instead.
- Follow recommendations, for example, if an evaluator suggests counseling, classes, or communication tools, take them seriously. If you have concerns, discuss them with your attorney.

The evaluation is not a test to win. It is an opportunity to demonstrate maturity, empathy, and commitment to your child's growth.

Clarity begins with careful evaluation.

Fair assessments reveal the full picture.

Truth guides every just decision.



## What Happens After the Report

Once complete, the evaluator submits a written report to the court. Both parents receive a copy, and either side can request that the evaluator testify at a hearing. Judges rely heavily on these reports when making final decisions, especially if they find the evaluator credible and the recommendations well-supported.

If you disagree with a report, you can challenge it through cross-examination or by presenting your own expert. However, disagreement alone is not enough. Judges value evidence not emotion when evaluating conflicting opinions.

### ⚠ Common Myths About Custody Evaluations

**Myth 1: Evaluators always side with the mother or father.**

**Truth:** Evaluators focus on the child's needs, not gender or stereotypes. Claims of bias require proof, not perception.

**Myth 2: You can "game" the evaluation by saying the right things.**

**Truth:** Evaluators are trained to detect coached answers and inconsistencies. Authenticity matters more than polish.

**Myth 3: Children get to choose where they live.**

**Truth:** Evaluators consider children's preferences based on maturity, but the court decides what arrangement serves their best interests.

**Myth 4: The evaluator's recommendation is final.**

**Truth:** Judges are not bound by the report, though they often rely on it. You can present evidence to challenge conclusions.

**Myth 5: Hiring your own expert guarantees a different outcome.**

**Truth:** Competing experts can help clarify facts, but credibility and preparation carry the most weight in court.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**What is the difference between a CFI and a PRE?**

A CFI conducts a limited investigation and provides a concise report. A PRE offers a deeper, psychological evaluation, often in complex cases.

**How long does the evaluation process take?**

CFIs often complete reports within two to three months. PREs may take longer, depending on the scope of testing and the level of conflict.

**Can my attorney be present during interviews?**

Typically, no. Evaluations are meant to be candid and conversational, without legal coaching.

**Will the evaluator talk to my child alone?**

Yes, if the child is old enough and it is appropriate. The evaluator tailors the approach to the child's age and emotional readiness.

**Can I refuse to participate?**

Refusing participation can harm your credibility. Judges may interpret it as noncooperation and draw negative inferences.



## Looking Forward

Custody evaluations are often one of the most stressful parts of family law cases, but they also offer clarity. They help judges see beyond accusation and emotion to understand the real needs of a child. The process rewards parents who are authentic, respectful, and prepared.

The next chapter focuses on **financial enforcement and post-decree compliance**, how to ensure that child support, maintenance, and property division orders are followed, and what remedies exist when they are not.



## Chapter 10: Post-Decree Compliance and Financial Enforcement

The divorce decree marks the end of the case, but not always the end of conflict. Many parents and former spouses discover that enforcing what the court already ordered becomes the next challenge.

Colorado courts expect every party to follow the terms of their decree. Parenting time, child support, maintenance, and property division are not suggestions rather they are legal obligations. When one side refuses or delays, the other side has tools to make sure the orders are honored.

### Why Enforcement Matters

Court orders protect stability. When one parent ignores the schedule or withholds financial support, it undermines the foundation the judge built for the family. Enforcement is not about punishment. It is about restoring balance so children remain secure and parents can move forward without constant disruption.

Judges take violations seriously, especially when they affect children. A parent who consistently blocks visitation, withholds payments, or refuses to follow property orders risks fines, attorney's fees, and even sanctions.

### Enforcing Parenting Time

Parenting time disputes are emotional because they strike at the heart of family life. Colorado law provides clear remedies through **C.R.S. §14-10-129.5**.

If the other parent refuses to follow the schedule, you can file a **motion to enforce parenting time**. The court can:

- Order make-up time for lost visits
- Require the violating parent to pay your attorney's fees
- Impose additional conditions to ensure compliance
- In extreme cases, modify custody arrangements





Judges look favorably on parents who handle enforcement calmly and document violations clearly. Keep records of missed visits, texts, and communication attempts. The court wants facts, not emotion.

## Enforcing Child Support

Child support ensures children's needs are met including housing, food, clothing, education, and care. When payments stop, it can feel like the system has failed. But Colorado offers several ways to collect support, including through the **Family Support Registry and the Child Support Enforcement Unit**.

If payments fall behind, the court can order wage garnishment, intercept tax refunds, suspend licenses, or hold the delinquent parent in contempt. Judges prefer cooperation but will escalate enforcement when necessary.

Interest accrues on unpaid child support, and parents cannot simply "forgive" arrears owed to the state. Acting quickly when payments stop protects both the child's stability and your financial security.

## Enforcing Spousal Maintenance and Property Division

Spousal maintenance (alimony) and property division orders carry the same weight as any other part of the decree. When a spouse fails to transfer an asset, pay maintenance, or refinance a joint debt, you can file a **motion for contempt or a motion to enforce judgment**.

The court can:

- Compel compliance through wage assignment or asset seizure
- Impose fines or interest
- Award attorney's fees
- In severe cases, order jail time for willful disobedience

Most enforcement disputes resolve long before reaching that point. Judges often encourage mediation first, especially when both sides want to fix the issue without escalating conflict.

*"Respect and safety are everyone's basic rights."*

## Contempt of Court

Contempt is a powerful but serious tool. It applies when someone **willfully disobeys** a valid court order. The process includes filing a verified motion, serving notice, and attending a hearing where the violating party must explain their actions.

If the court finds contempt, penalties can include fines, community service, or jail. The goal is not revenge rather it is compliance. Judges prefer to see problems solved, not punished.



## How to Avoid Enforcement Battles

The best enforcement strategy is prevention. Clear orders, transparent communication, and documented agreements reduce confusion and conflict.

- Put every modification or agreement in writing.
- Keep receipts and records of payments.
- Communicate through approved apps or email to maintain accountability.
- Address violations early, before patterns form.

Parents who stay organized and proactive project reliability which is something judges remember in future hearings.



### ⚠ Common Myths About Enforcement

**Myth 1: Court orders automatically enforce themselves.**

**Truth:** You must file a motion. Judges cannot act until someone brings the violation to their attention

**Myth 2: If both parents agree verbally to change payments or schedules, it is binding.**

**Truth:** Only written, court-approved changes are enforceable. Verbal deals create confusion and risk.

**Myth 3: Nonpayment of child support means you can withhold parenting time.**

**Truth:** Support and parenting time are separate legal issues. Denying visits can backfire legally and emotionally.

**Myth 4: If your ex moves out of state, you cannot enforce the order.**

**Truth:** Colorado can enforce orders across state lines through federal and interstate child support laws





**Myth 5: Contempt means automatic jail time.**

**Truth:** Judges use contempt to gain compliance, not punishment. Jail is typically a last resort.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**What should I do first if my ex violates the order?**

Start with documentation such as dates, messages, and receipts. Then contact your attorney or file a motion to enforce.

**Can I recover my attorney's fees?**

Yes. Judges often award fees when one party's defiance caused unnecessary litigation.

**How long does enforcement take?**

Simple cases can be resolved in months. Complex or contested matters will take longer depending on court schedules.

**What if the other parent hides income?**

Your attorney can request financial disclosures or subpoena records. The court can impute income based on earning capacity.

**Can enforcement lead to modification of the order?**

Yes. Persistent violations can trigger changes in custody or financial arrangements if they harm the child's stability.

## Looking Forward

Post-decree enforcement is about accountability, not anger. It protects the structure you fought to create and ensures that children continue to thrive under consistent, reliable arrangements. Parents who handle enforcement with professionalism gain both respect and results.

The next chapter explores **moving forward and rebuilding stability post divorce** including how to manage life transitions, preserve co-parenting relationships, and keep your family strong when everything feels uncertain.



## Chapter 11: Moving Forward After Divorce and Finding Stability, Healing, and Growth

Divorce changes everything. It alters your routines, your finances, your friendships, and the shape of your family. For many people, the months that follow a divorce feel like standing in the middle of a storm that has finally gone quiet. There is relief, but there is also uncertainty. What happens now?

Colorado courts can issue orders, divide property, and establish parenting plans. But the law cannot rebuild your sense of peace rather that part is up to you. Moving forward means shifting your focus from survival to stability. It means taking what you learned during the process and using it to create a calmer, stronger next chapter for yourself and your children.

### Life After Divorce and Mental Health



#### Reality Check

Adults going through divorce have a 2.4× higher risk of major depression within the first year compared to married peers.

*(Source: National Institute of Mental Health, "Divorce and Adult Depression Study," 2023.)*

#### What Works

Participation in structured post-divorce therapy or support groups reduces recurrence of depressive symptoms by 60%.

*(Source: American Journal of Psychiatry, "Cognitive Behavioral Interventions After Marital Dissolution," 2024.)*

### The Power of Stability

Children thrive on consistency. After a divorce, their world feels unfamiliar, and even small routines can make a big difference. Keeping bedtime, dinner time, and school routines predictable helps children rebuild confidence and trust.

Parents often underestimate how closely their children watch their emotional cues. When you show steadiness in tone, in behavior, and in your reactions, you give your child something powerful: reassurance. The way you handle change teaches them how to handle their own challenges.



This same principle applies to your own healing. You cannot control everything that happens, but you can control how you respond. Stability comes from structure including financial plans, parenting calendars, boundaries, and moments of calm you intentionally protect.

## Rebuilding Communication

Even after divorce, communication with your co-parent remains essential. The tone may shift from personal to professional, but the purpose stays the same: your child's wellbeing.

Use tools that help you communicate clearly and reduce conflict such as apps like **OurFamilyWizard** or **TalkingParents** which create accountability and clarity. Avoid revisiting old wounds or using messages to re-litigate the past. Each exchange should focus on logistics, not emotions.

When communication breaks down, remember that silence is not strategy. Judges, children, and even extended family see cooperation as maturity. Every time you respond calmly instead of reacting defensively, you reinforce trust, both with your child and in yourself.

## Financial Recovery and Planning Ahead

Divorce is not just emotional; it is financial. Building stability requires a plan. Begin by creating a clear budget that reflects your new reality such as separate accounts, updated insurance, and a review of debt and savings.

If you received or owe support, track every payment carefully. Courts respect precision and documentation. For larger financial goals, meet with a financial planner who understands post-divorce transitions. You are not rebuilding from nothing. You are rebuilding with experience, clarity, and lessons earned.

## Redefining Your Identity

Divorce can shake your sense of identity, especially if you spent years defining yourself by your marriage or your family's structure. Moving forward means rediscovering who you are not just as a parent, but as a person.

Ask yourself: What matters to me now? What does peace look like for me? The answers may change over time, and that is the point. You are not returning to who you were before; you are evolving into who you are becoming.

Many parents find strength in community through church, volunteer work, fitness, or professional groups. Others reconnect with old passions or hobbies that had been on pause. Healing after divorce is not about forgetting what happened. It is about living fully again, with more wisdom and empathy than before.





## Co-Parenting with Grace

Co-parenting is not about friendship. It is about partnership for the sake of your child. Successful co-parents know that you do not have to like each other to be effective together. What matters is that you remain respectful, reliable, and consistent.

Your child benefits most when both parents focus on the future rather than the past. Use shared calendars, stick to the plan, and honor commitments. When problems arise, solve them privately and calmly. Children should never feel like messengers or mediators.

The parents who manage this best are those who understand that co-parenting is not a continuation of the marriage rather it is a new kind of collaboration, one grounded in love for the same child.

*“Healing begins where heartbreak meets self-love.”*

## The Emotional Journey

Healing after divorce is not linear. There will be days of progress and days that feel heavy. Grief, guilt, and even relief are all part of the process. Give yourself permission to feel it all without judgment.

If you struggle with anxiety or depression, seek professional support. Therapy, coaching, and support groups can provide perspective and tools that keep you from getting stuck. Healing is not weakness; it is strength in motion.



## ⓘ Common Myths About Enforcement

**Myth 1: Life gets easier right away.**

**Truth:** It takes time. Healing is gradual, but every act of consistency builds strength.

**Myth 2: Good co-parenting means being friends.**

**Truth:** It means being cooperative, not close. Respect and reliability matter more than friendship.



**Myth 4: Financial security is impossible after divorce.**

**Truth:** With a plan and discipline, rebuilding is achievable. Many people emerge more stable than before.

**Myth 5: Divorce defines you.**

**Truth:** Divorce is an event, not an identity. What defines you is how you rise after it.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**How long does it take to feel normal again?**

It depends on your circumstances and support system, but most people begin to feel grounded within one to two years. Healing has no set timeline.

**Can children adjust well to two homes?**

Yes. With consistent routines, open communication, and love from both parents, children can adapt well.

**How can I manage my co-parent's negativity?**

Stay focused on facts, document important exchanges, and avoid emotional engagement. The court notices maturity.

**Should I start dating right away?**

Take your time. Stability first, new relationships second. Children benefit when parents are emotionally grounded before introducing anyone new.

**What if my ex refuses to cooperate?**

Document, stay calm, and enforce orders through proper channels. Judges respect parents who maintain professionalism



## Looking Forward

Life after divorce is not about what you lost. It is about what you are creating next. Stability, peace, and purpose are possible, not overnight, but through daily choices that protect your integrity and your child's sense of security.

The next chapter will explore **building a legacy of resilience**, focusing on how to turn lessons learned through hardship into lasting strength for your family's future.



## Chapter 12: Building a Legacy of Resilience

Every family that walks through a divorce faces loss, but not every family stays defined by it. The difference often lies in how the parents respond, not just in the courtroom, but in the months and years that follow. Your legacy as a parent, and as a person, is not built on how your marriage ended. It is built on how you rise from it.

### Redefining What Strength Means

Resilience does not mean pretending that everything is fine. It means facing what happened, learning from it, and finding ways to keep moving forward with dignity. Strength is not about never falling; it is about refusing to stay down.



Parents often worry that divorce has permanently damaged their children. But studies and lived experience show that children with at least one stable, emotionally consistent parent thrive. They learn courage, flexibility, and self-worth not by watching perfection, but by watching recovery.

Every time you show grace in the face of frustration, follow through when it would be easier to quit, or choose calm over conflict, you are teaching your child something powerful about resilience.

### Turning Hardship into Legacy

Legacy is not measured in property settlements or financial statements. It is measured in the habits, values, and sense of safety you pass to your children.

Ask yourself what you want your child to remember when they look back on this time. Do you want them to remember chaos, or calm? Division, or strength? Legacy is built in the moments you stay kind when you are exhausted, the moments you choose peace over blame, and the moments you stay involved even when it feels impossible.

The truth is, your child will not remember every motion filed or every hearing date. They will remember the feeling of being loved through uncertainty. They will remember that you showed up.



## Planting Stability for the Future

A legacy of resilience is not built overnight. It grows through steady effort and consistent parenting, honest communication, and responsible decisions that show your children what security looks like.

Keep your focus on the long view. Today's conflict will pass, but the habits you build now with structure, boundaries, and calm communication will carry your family forward for years.

Financially, this means living within your means and setting realistic goals. Emotionally, it means finding joy in small things and giving yourself permission to rest. Spiritually, it means believing that even from pain, new purpose can emerge.

## Leading by Example

Children learn far more from what we model than what we say. When they see you handle hardship with strength and grace, they internalize those qualities. When they see you forgive, they learn compassion. When they see you stand firm with kindness, they learn integrity.

You are writing their instruction manual for resilience every day. That is leadership at its highest level not through authority, but through example.



## ⚠ Common Myths About Resilience After Divorce

**Myth 1: Resilience means pretending you are not hurt.**

**Truth:** Real resilience allows you to feel pain but still move forward. Healing and strength coexist.

**Myth 2: Children who experience divorce will always struggle emotionally.**

**Truth:** Children can flourish when they feel secure and loved. Stability, not perfection, is the foundation.

**Myth 3: You must rebuild alone.**

**Truth:** Resilience includes asking for help. Community, counseling, and connection are part of recovery.



**Myth 4: Forgiveness means excusing what happened.**

**Truth:** Forgiveness is letting go of the control that pain has over your future.

**Myth 5: The story ends with the divorce decree.**

**Truth:** The decree closes a chapter, not the book. What comes next is entirely up to you.



## Frequently Asked Questions

**How can I teach resilience to my children?**

Model it. Stay calm under stress, follow through on your promises, and show gratitude even in difficulty.

**What if I still feel angry about how things ended?**

Anger is natural. Acknowledge it, work through it, but don't let it become your identity. Therapy or coaching can help you release it.

**Can co-parents create a shared legacy for their children?**

Yes. When both parents act with respect and consistency, children see that love for them can survive disagreement.

**What if I feel like I have lost too much to start again?**

You have not lost your capacity to grow. Resilience is built one steady step at a time. Even small progress matters.

**How do I measure progress in healing?**

When you respond with patience where you once reacted with anger, when you find peace in quiet moments that is progress.

## Looking Forward

A resilient legacy is not about forgetting your past. It is about transforming it into wisdom that guides your future. Every steady choice you make, every calm response, every kind boundary, every act of courage becomes part of that legacy.

Your children will learn that hardship does not define them. Love, stability, and perseverance do. That lesson will carry them further than any court order ever could.

The final chapter brings these lessons together. It is about closing one story and beginning another with clarity, hope, and the confidence that you have already done the hardest part: you kept showing up.



## Chapter 13: The Final Word And A New Beginning

When a marriage ends, it can feel like your story has ended too. The legal process is long, the emotions are heavy, and even the victories can feel bittersweet. But here is the truth: divorce is not an ending. It is a transition. The story of your life and your family's continues from here.

At Jones Law Firm, we have walked beside thousands of Colorado families through the most painful and uncertain seasons of their lives. We have seen fear turn into strength, conflict turn into cooperation, and exhaustion turn into calm. That transformation does not happen overnight, but it happens every single day that you choose steadiness over chaos, clarity over confusion, and peace over pain.

### The Choice to Begin Again

Divorce takes away many things, but it also offers one powerful gift: a reset. You get to decide who you will be now. You get to choose how you show up for your children, how you protect your peace, and how you rebuild your future.

You may not have chosen divorce, but you can choose how this next chapter unfolds. You can choose to rise above resentment, to rebuild with integrity, and to model resilience for your children.

That choice every day becomes your power.



### What Endures Beyond Divorce

Court orders expire. Children grow. Life changes. But the way you handle this season leaves a lasting mark. The steadiness you show now teaches your children how to navigate their own challenges with grace and grit.

What endures is not the paperwork or the arguments. What endures is the sense of safety you rebuild for your children, the calm you protect inside your home, and the dignity you carry forward into your new life.

Divorce may have rewritten the structure of your family, but it does not erase your role as a parent, your values, or your future.



## Moving from Surviving to Living

The goal is not just to survive divorce, it is to live well after it. That means giving yourself permission to feel joy again, to laugh freely, and to imagine what comes next.

It means setting goals that remind you that you are more than your past. It means surrounding yourself with people who bring peace, not pain. It means remembering that healing is not weakness. It is your proof that love, faith, and hope still exist, even after heartbreak.

If you have made it this far, you have already proven that you can endure what many people fear most. You can also build what many people never find: a peaceful, grounded, purposeful new life.

## For Parents Who Are Still in the Middle

If you are still in the thick of it, the motions, the court dates, the late-night worry, hold on. This will not last forever. The storm always feels endless until the moment it clears, and then you will see what your effort was building all along: stability, safety, and strength.

Your children will not remember every argument or every sleepless night. They will remember that you loved them enough to keep showing up. They will remember that you gave them safety when everything else felt uncertain.

That is the legacy that endures.

## Building a Legacy of Resilience



### Reality Check

Children who perceive at least one stable, emotionally responsive parent after divorce show a 75% reduction in stress-related illnesses over five years.

*(Source: Harvard Center on the Developing Child, "Toxic Stress and Protective Relationships," 2024.)*

### What Works

Parents who maintain predictable routines and cooperative communication foster emotional resilience that lasts into adulthood.

*(Source: Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, "Post-Divorce Resilience Predictors," 2023.)*



## For Those Who Are Ready to Begin Again

If your case is behind you and life is starting to quiet down, this is your moment to rebuild and to redesign your life, not around loss, but around purpose.

It starts small. Clean spaces. Honest conversations. Future plans that belong to you. The more you honor what you have lived through, the more you realize that this ending was really an invitation to something new.

## The Real Victory

The real victory in divorce is not in winning motions or court battles. It is in finding peace again. It is in raising children who know that love can survive even when marriage does not. It is in learning to trust yourself again, not because you never made mistakes, but because you learned from them.

That is what healing looks like. That is what victory looks like.

*“Divorce didn’t break you — it **revealed you.**”*

## From Me to You

I have stood with families for more than twenty-five years, and I have seen this journey from every angle. I have seen pain, courage, and renewal. I have seen parents who thought they could not go on find their footing again. I have seen children who began this process scared and unsure grow into confident young adults because their parents stayed steady when it mattered most.

If there is one message I want you to take from this book, it is this: you can build a good life again. You can raise children who feel safe, loved, and whole. You can find peace, even after everything you have lost.

You do not have to do it perfectly. You only have to keep showing up.

All the Best,

**April D. Jones**

Founder and CEO, Jones Law Firm, PC



## About the author

### April D. Jones

Founder & CEO, Jones Law Firm, PC

For more than 30 years, **April D. Jones** has stood as one of Colorado's most respected family law attorneys, known for her unwavering commitment to guiding families through life's most difficult transitions. As Founder and CEO of **Jones Law Firm, PC**, April leads a team dedicated to protecting what matters most, children, stability, and the future of Colorado families.

April's approach combines strategic legal insight with deep compassion, helping clients navigate complex custody, divorce, and family law issues with clarity and confidence.

*The biggest **adventure** you can ever take is to **live** the life of your **dreams***

Throughout her career, April has represented thousands of clients in high-stakes custody and divorce matters, earning recognition for her leadership, integrity, and results. She has been named among Colorado's top family law attorneys, featured in Super Lawyers, and honored for her contributions to advancing justice and diversity within the legal profession.

As a thought leader and mentor, April frequently speaks on topics related to parenting through conflict, leadership, and women in law. Her firm's guiding principle, "We Choose Sides. Yours.", reflects her commitment to advocacy rooted in empathy, strength, and strategy.

When she's not in the courtroom or mentoring her team, April is an active community leader, serving on boards, volunteering in educational outreach, and advocating for children's rights and family stability across Colorado.

Through this book, *The Ultimate Guide to Child Custody*, April extends her mission beyond the courtroom, empowering parents with the knowledge, preparation, and perspective they need to protect their children and build a better future.



We Choose Sides.  
*Yours.*



# Understanding Divorce with Children in Colorado

Your guide to protecting your children, your finances, and your future.

Divorce isn't just a legal process, it's a life transition that reshapes your family's future. *In Understanding Divorce With Children in Colorado*, award-winning attorney **April D. Jones**, Founder & CEO of **Jones Law Firm, PC**, shares insights from over 30 years of guiding Colorado families through their most challenging chapters.

This clear, compassionate guide helps you:

- Understand Colorado's "irretrievably broken" standard, and why fault rarely impacts financial outcomes.
- Prepare for financial reality by organizing records and navigating the equitable division of assets and debts.
- Learn how parenting time and decision-making (Allocation of Parental Responsibilities) are decided under the "best interests of the child" standard.
- Protect your credibility in court through transparency, preparation, and maturity, not emotion or retaliation.
- Structure effective co-parenting communication using proven tools and strategies that promote stability and reduce conflict.
- Navigate spousal maintenance (alimony) and financial support as a bridge from dependence to long-term stability.

More than legal advice, this book is your roadmap to clarity, confidence, and stability, so you can move forward with **strength, strategy, and empathy**.

*When I called Jones Law Firm, I was overwhelmed and afraid of losing time with my son. Their team brought calm, direction, and results. I walked away with security for my child, and a new sense of hope.*



— Emily R.  
Denver, CO



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