

Ten reasons to : Hire a lawyer for domestic-relations proceedings

By *MELISSA R. GILLIS, ESQ.*

1 You don't know the law. Pro-se litigants frequently encounter roadblocks that can cost not only time and money, but missed deadlines and case dismissals.

2 Limited assistance representation. The court has instituted a cost-effective program whereby a lawyer can represent a party in just one aspect of their case such as a court hearing or preparing a memorandum.

3 Child support guidelines. The way child support is calculated in Massachusetts has changed dramatically. Calculations are highly complex, and there are now many built-in deviation arguments.

4 Dealing with other attorneys can be difficult. Pro-se litigants are at a severe disadvantage. A lawyer has the knowledge and experience to manipulate facts and law to their client's benefit.

5 Knowing the judge. Lawyers are familiar with how judges think and are likely to rule on a particular issue, thereby enabling them to prepare accordingly.

6 Public speaking. Courtrooms are typically open forums. Lawyers are accustomed to speaking in venues with many people present.

7 Thinking on your feet. Presenting your case in court requires articulate on-the-spot arguments that are compliant with court rules and laws.

8 Knowing procedural rules. Lawyers know how to serve the other party, when to bring motions, how to dismiss a case or request a continuance, and how to conduct discovery.

9 Trying cases. It takes a highly skilled lawyer to effectively make opening and closing statements, enter evidence, elicit testimony, and propose judicial findings.

10 'He who represents himself has a fool for a client.' With the Family Court home to such emotionally charged issues, lawyers are able to think objectively.



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