

CHRONOLOGY OF DISSOLUTION PROCEEDING

1. **Petition for Dissolution** - The Petition is the original document which is filed with the Clerk of the Court identifying the parties, where they live, when and where they were married, names and ages of children, places of employment, grounds for dissolution and request to provide child support, maintenance, division of marital assets and asking the Court to dissolve the marriage.
2. **Process** - Your spouse must be served with a copy of the Petition for Dissolution and a Summons. By law this is to be done by the Sheriff delivering a copy of the Petition to the residence of place of work of your spouse. This step may be avoided under certain conditions.
3. **Response** - This is a document that will be filed as the answer to the Petition. It will admit the facts that are alleged in the Petition which are true and will deny the allegations which are disputed such as grounds, need for support, and maintenance.
4. **Discovery** - This is the process by which we determine what property is owned by the parties and other important facts concerning the issues of the case. This may include completion of a Comprehensive Financial Declaration, production of documents and records, responding to written interrogatories or answering questions at a deposition.
5. **Pre-Trial Conference** - This is a conference in the judge's chamber with the attorneys of the parties. The parties are required to attend. The judge will hear an informal discussion of the assets of the parties and the issues remaining and will attempt to make a settlement proposal for the parties to consider. This conference is generally conducted by the judge who will hear your case.
6. **Marital Settlement Agreement** - The Marital Settlement Agreement is a negotiated agreement between the parties that resolves all of the issues of custody, support, maintenance, visitation, and division of marital and non-marital assets. This document will be presented to the Court at Prove-Up and will be included in the Judgment for Dissolution.
7. **Prove-Up** - This is a hearing after the agreement is completed. Testimony is presented regarding grounds and other allegations contained in the Petition for Dissolution. The marital settlement agreement is presented and the parties testify that it correctly states the terms of the property division, custody and visitation provisions, child support and alimony arrangements.
8. **Judgment for Dissolution** - This document signed by the Judge officially dissolves the marriage. It is signed after the Prove-Up or after the trial.
9. **Trial** - When the parties fail to agree, evidence is presented to the judge by oral and written testimony and documents of the parties income, assets, living expenses, needs of children and many other issues. The Judge will then order the parties to divide their assets according to his dictate and will also issue orders regarding all other issues presented to him at the trial.