

The Divorce Timeline — Your Stage-by-Stage Checklist

RWI Law | rwilaw.com | [Hablamos Español](#)

Use this checklist to stay organized and prepared at every stage of your Minnesota divorce. Knowledge is your greatest advantage.

Stage 1 — Before You File

- ☐ Hire an experienced family law attorney before taking any legal steps
- ☐ Gather all financial documents — bank statements, tax returns, retirement accounts
- ☐ Document all marital and non-marital assets
- ☐ Open a bank account in your name only
- ☐ Confirm you meet Minnesota's residency requirement — 180 days in the state
- ☐ Discuss safety planning with your attorney if domestic abuse is involved

Stage 2 — Filing the Petition

- ☐ Petition for Dissolution of Marriage filed with district court
- ☐ Other spouse is served with divorce papers
- ☐ Respondent files their response — typically within 30 days
- ☐ Note the mandatory 30-day waiting period before any decree can be finalized

■ *Minnesota is a no-fault state — no grounds needed beyond irretrievable breakdown*

Stage 3 — Temporary Orders

- ☐ File for temporary orders if needed — custody, support, housing
- ☐ Establish a temporary parenting schedule if children are involved
- ☐ Address temporary spousal maintenance if applicable
- ☐ Confirm who stays in the marital home during proceedings
- ☐ Ensure neither party dissipates marital assets — get a restraining order if needed

■ *Temporary orders set the tone — how they are negotiated often shapes the final outcome*

Stage 4 — Discovery

- ☐ Complete your financial disclosures fully and accurately
- ☐ Provide tax returns, bank statements, investment and retirement account records
- ☐ Respond to interrogatories — written questions answered under oath
- ☐ Prepare for deposition if required — sworn oral testimony before trial
- ☐ Request business valuations or forensic accounting if applicable

The Divorce Timeline — Your Stage-by-Stage Checklist

RWI Law | rwilaw.com | Hablamos Español

■ *High-asset divorces often require more extensive discovery — do not rush this stage*

Stage 5 — Negotiation & Mediation

- ☐ Work with your attorney to develop a settlement position on all key issues
- ☐ Attend mediation — required in most contested Minnesota divorces before trial
- ☐ Come prepared with documentation and a clear sense of your priorities
- ☐ Know the difference between what you need and what you want
- ☐ Review any proposed settlement agreement carefully before signing

■ *Most cases settle at this stage — even highly contested ones*

Stage 6 — Trial (If Needed)

- ☐ Work with your attorney to prepare your case and any witnesses
- ☐ Organize all exhibits, financial records and supporting documentation
- ☐ Understand that a judge — not a jury — decides all issues in a divorce trial
- ☐ Be prepared for the judge's ruling to come weeks after the trial concludes

■ *Trial is more expensive and unpredictable than settlement — but sometimes necessary*

Stage 7 — After the Final Decree

- ☐ Update beneficiaries on all life insurance policies
- ☐ Update beneficiaries on all retirement accounts and investment accounts
- ☐ Execute QDROs for any retirement account division ordered in the decree
- ☐ Transfer property titles and vehicle titles as required
- ☐ Update your will, healthcare directive and power of attorney
- ☐ Process a legal name change if applicable — included in your decree
- ☐ Update your Social Security record, passport and driver's license if name changed

Need legal help? RWI Law is here. Visit rwilaw.com or call 612-688-1649.