

Guide to Planning an Exit Strategy

MERIWETHER & THARP^{LLC}
— THE ATLANTA DIVORCE TEAM —



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Each individual person's case has unique facts and circumstances. Therefore, the information provided in Meriwether & Tharp, LLC's Guide to Exit Strategy is general information and is not a substitute for legal advice from an attorney. The information contained in this Guide does not constitute legal advice nor is it intended to be legal advice. If you have a need for legal advice, please consult with an attorney.

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Considering Divorce?

If you're thinking about getting a divorce, chances are that you've got a myriad of questions and uncertainties in your head.

However, with proper planning and strategizing in the early stages of the case, you can better position yourself to receive a positive result in your divorce.

In the next pages, we include information on how to [plan an exit strategy](#) in the early stages of your divorce so that you can make this process as easy and as painless as possible.



We have also included a checklist for your convenience. We know that divorce can be emotionally and physically exhausting, but you don't have to do this alone. Meriwether & Tharp is here to help you get through this difficult time in your life.



Exit Plan Steps

1. Collect Information

Collect and maintain copies or records of important information, like financial, personal, and insurance related information. You will likely need this important information during your divorce, so having it handy can save time and money.

Next, protect sensitive information by privatizing important computer files if you are sharing a computer with your spouse. If you share common passwords or other credentials to computer files or online accounts, it is best to change those passwords - especially your email account.

Also, forward any mail that may contain private or sensitive material to a Post Office box or relative's address.

Similarly, if changing your password on your email may raise too much suspicion, try opening a different email account with a password only you would know. Failing to protect your sensitive information early in your case could lead to lengthy divorce disputes.

2. Protect Information

Protect your finances and your assets.

Sever the financial ties between you and your spouse. Open and maintain a personal bank account at a different financial institution than your current accounts and your spouse's accounts. Some banks will improperly use accounts in one spouse's name within their bank as a source of funds for fees and overdrafts from other accounts. This is less likely to happen at a different financial institution.

Keep enough money in this account to support yourself (and your children) during the pendency of the divorce. As discussed above, send those statements to another, private address.

Do not transfer or move funds that could possibly belong to your spouse. Be sure to seek the advice of an experience divorce attorney if you are unsure.

Regarding marital assets, do not alter, transfer, assign, or make a gift of any marital assets that are titled in both you and your spouse's name. Seek the advice of a divorce attorney before taking any steps that may concern the separate property of your spouse. Further, try to avoid accumulating any new or additional debt. It is important to keep your assets as liquid as possible.



Exit Plan Steps Cont.

3. Make a Budget

Make a projected budget. The importance of this cannot be stressed enough.

Being able to quickly ascertain the amount of your monthly income and expenses will be critical in completing the documents required for a divorce in Georgia.

4. Be Active

Be sure to stay active in the lives of your children.

Maintaining an active presence in the lives of your children will not only make the transition easier for them, but it will also place you in a better position regarding custody and child support matters.

5. Healthcare

Research alternative healthcare options if your coverage is tied to your spouse or their employer.

If you are personally covered by your spouse's health insurance, please note that coverage will terminate at the end of your divorce.

6. Gather Info

Keep a journal of any and all facts, times, dates and events surrounding your marriage, children, and divorce.

This evidence may be helpful to your attorney when representing you. Also, make sure you maintain the evidence in a secure location where your spouse will not find it.

7. Plan for the future

Research ways to support yourself, if you are not already gainfully employed. If you are employed, stay employed.

It is vital to ensure that you are able to support yourself and maintain assets like your home or car during what could be a prolonged process.

Additionally, it is important to begin thinking about where you and your spouse will live during your separation.

It is common for couples to live separately during the pendency of a divorce. So it is best to determine if you will stay in the marital home or relocate. Often times, divorce alters the financial picture considerably, therefore having a budget and a plan for the future can help get you back on track.



Exit Plan Steps Cont.

8. Obtain Legal Advice

You may want to obtain legal advice from an attorney licensed to practice in your state.

An experienced divorce attorney may be able to provide you with more specific and personalized advice on what more you should do in order to prepare for your divorce.



9. Talk With Spouse

Finally, talk about the divorce with your spouse - once you have prepared yourself, it is time to begin the process of preparing your spouse for the eventuality of the divorce.

Although the thought of announcing to your spouse your intentions for divorce may seem daunting, it is necessary. It is best to ensure that the initial conversation with your spouse about divorce is as pleasant as possible.

This may seem counterintuitive; however, the initial conversations with your spouse will set the tone for the proceeding divorce litigation and post-divorce life.

Remaining positive and calm will help with settlement negotiations, and it will also help establish the tone for your post-divorce relationship with your spouse.

Divorce is difficult process and mitigating the emotional trauma throughout the process reduces the likelihood of permanent bitterness between spouses.

Exit Plan Checklist

STEP 1

- ☐ Collect and maintain copies or records of financial, personal, and insurance related information.

STEP 2

- ☐ Open and maintain a personal bank account at a different financial institution that your current accounts and your spouse's accounts.
- ☐ Try to avoid accumulating any new or additional debt. It is important to keep your assets as liquid as possible.

STEP 3

- ☐ Make a projected budget.

STEP 4

- ☐ Stay active in the lives of your children.

STEP 5

- ☐ Research alternative healthcare options if your coverage is tied to your spouse or their employer.

STEP 6

- ☐ Keep a journal of any and all facts, times, dates and events surrounding your marriage, children, and divorce.

STEP 7

- ☐ Research ways to support yourself if you are not already gainfully employed. If you are employed, stay employed.
- ☐ Begin thinking about where you and your spouse will live during your separation.

STEP 8

- ☐ You may want to obtain legal advice from an attorney licensed to practice in your state.

STEP 9

- ☐ Talk about the divorce with your spouse.



Why Meriwether & Tharp?

For more information about planning an exit strategy please visit the “Planning an Exit Strategy” section of our website at: <http://mtlawoffice.com/planning-exit-strategy>.

If you decide that you need a family law attorney, it can be difficult to tell most law firms and attorneys apart. Meriwether & Tharp, LLC is a full service family law only law firm and was established in 1998 by partners Patrick “Leh” Meriwether and Robert L. Tharp. As one of the largest family law only firms in Georgia, Meriwether & Tharp, LLC has the resources and experience to provide clients with close, personal attention and individualized legal services. We make clients our first priority and we strive to build long-term client relationships. For more information about Meriwether & Tharp please visit the “Why Meriwether & Tharp” section of our website at: <http://mtlawoffice.com/the-mt-difference>.

Here is a word about our philosophy and what makes Meriwether & Tharp different from other law firms.

Philosophy

Divorce hurts. We know that obtaining a divorce or going through other family law issues is an emotionally and physically draining process that can put a strain on your day to day life. But divorce doesn't have to be nasty. Our experienced attorneys and staff demystify the divorce process and strive to get you the best possible result in a timely manner while keeping costs down. We provide you with information in an easy to understand manner and let you take control. Although no lawyer can completely remove the emotional sting of a divorce, we will be there to help you every step of the way. Let us take care of your family law issues. You take care of your life.

While we hope this Guide to Georgia Divorce was informative, we know that you probably still have questions, so let us give you some answers. Call (678) 879-9000 now for a free telephone consultation with one of our experienced family law attorneys. For more information, don't forget to visit our website at www.mtlawoffice.com and our check out our blog at <http://mtlawoffice.com/blog/>.

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