

Divorcing out of Court- Saving couples and family big money

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Filing for divorce is the first step towards potential bankruptcy. Once the attorneys are hired, it's easy to lose control of money, especially when emotions are high and each side wants "their day in court". Consider the following comparisons*:

Low conflict divorce

Litigation: both parties represented by attorneys charging \$350/hour, some negotiation, and an uncontested final agreement (no trial): \$35,000.

Mediation: neutral mediator charging \$375/hour, 3-three hour sessions, preparation of all paperwork, each party represented by consulting attorneys (document review and advice): \$6,600.

SAVINGS: \$28,400, almost enough for 3 trips for two to Hawaii, two weeks, all inclusive package and a room with a view.

Contested divorce with child custody issues

Litigation: both parties represented by attorneys, settles right before trial: \$117,000

Mediation: 6 three hour co-mediated (attorney-therapist mediation team) sessions at \$425/hour, paperwork, and consulting attorneys: \$12,975

SAVINGS: \$104,025, enough to put two students through four years of undergraduate studies at Cal State Fullerton, living on campus.

High Conflict Divorce with contested child custody and financial issues

Litigation: both parties represented by attorneys, use of therapist evaluators and forensic valuation experts for community business and pension issues: \$300,000.

Mediation: 12 three hour co-mediated sessions, paperwork, two consulting attorneys, a neutral financial expert: \$30,825.

SAVINGS: \$269,175, almost enough for a vacation home in Big Bear Lake (based on 2007 median price of \$294,500).

If you think these approximations are exaggerated, consider the statement made by Los Angeles County Superior Court Supervising Judge, Marjorie Steinberg, in Los Angeles Times Magazine's May 4 article: "It's nothing for us to see \$50,000 spent on each side

and sometimes \$1 million on each side. When I see someone with only \$25,000 in attorney's fees I think that's pretty cheap." Consumer Reports cited "launching a divorce war" as number 3 in their "12 money mistakes that can cost you \$1,000,000", February, 2008, edition.

You have the power to put your money to better use. Investing in a mediation or collaborative team that will address the legal, emotional, and financial issues in your divorce is one option. But one size does not fit all. Contact a mediation and/or collaborative trained professional to find out what will work best for your unique situation and goals. With the right tools, you can save big money and have a more satisfying divorce.

* These figures are approximations only and not intended as a guarantee of cost for your situation.