

# **10 Golden Rules** For Completing Colorado Divorce and Family Law Forms

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Colorado allows separated couples to divorce or seek family law orders, without representation by an attorney. Some couples complete their divorce without any professional help. Other couples choose to resolve their divorce or family law related issues with the assistance of a mediator, often submitting their mediated agreement (called a “Memorandum of Understanding” and usually drafted by the mediator) and completing the divorce process on their own. In both instances, specific, official family law forms must be completed.

Based upon our experience as professional mediators in working with many such couples, we offer our “Ten Golden Rules For Completing Family Law Forms.”

## **1. Obtain and use the current, official Colorado divorce forms.**

A comprehensive list of official Colorado divorce and family law forms and instructions can be obtained on-line at the Colorado Judicial Branch’s Self-Help Center, and an abbreviated list (along with other plain language resource materials) adequate for many cases may be downloaded to your computer for completion and printout, on our website, at:

<http://www.coloradodivorcemediation.com/tools/>.

## **2. Carefully follow the checklists provided by Court staff in choosing and completing the forms required for your case.**

The Order issued at the time of your case’s filing or status conference lists (by checkmark ✓ or circle ○) the documents required for your case. Carefully review it and be certain to assemble and complete all documents required by that Order before the court hearing.

## **3. Complete forms by legible writing in black ink or type.**

Clerks and court staff greatly appreciate your using a typewriter, or completing forms on-line (using Microsoft’s Word® or Adobe’s Acrobat®). If these are not available, choose someone to print legibly all required information in black ink.

## **4. Provide contact information in the “Caption Box” for the party filing that form.**

Most court divorce forms require contact information for the person responsible for filing that particular form, in the box labeled “Attorney(s) or party without attorney”. Even if you have consulted with another professional (attorney, mediator, divorce planner), provide your own personal address, phone, fax and e-mail contact information. (Of course, if you are formally represented by a lawyer, they will file all forms on your behalf.)

Please note that only one party ordinarily files certain divorce forms (for example, the Decree and the Support Order). Others such as the Sworn Financial Statement, and the Certificate of Compliance (stating you have sent the other party mandatory financial documents and disclosures) must be filed by each party. Each party must provide their own contact information for the forms they complete.

**5. Have documents notarized (when required).**

Colorado law requires a notary to witness your signature on many divorce forms. You may choose to sign documents before the Court Clerk staff, or use private notary services such as banks and many mailing/copying stores. Remember, you must provide the notary with valid identification, and the notary must observe you sign to “notarize” the document. Separate notaries can be used when parties sign at different times.

**6. Carefully complete separately and fully your Sworn Financial Statements.**

Perhaps the most important divorce form is the Sworn Financial Statement and where appropriate, its Supporting Schedules (if investments, retirement or separate property assets). Each party must separately complete his or her form in most divorce and family law type cases.

Pay special attention to your income, support and expenses planning on Pages One to Four (and its Summary). For couples with children, each party’s gross income from all sources should match the income shown on your child support worksheet and attached supporting documentation (such as your recent pay-stub, W-2 or last year tax return).

It also helps the Court a great deal to learn you both have created an approach to support and to your own budget that will allow you to meet your reasonable expenses. Mediation (in conjunction with standardized software projections of anticipated post divorce cash flow) is one process that many couples utilize to create a plan for presentation to the court.

Finally, each of you must disclose all property and debts acquired during your marriage on the remaining pages of your Financial Statement and its Supporting Schedules.

**7. Carefully complete a Child Support Worksheet.**

If you have children, you must complete a Child Support Worksheet, calculating the Guidelines’ recommended child support and any suggested deviation. It is helpful to complete this task using on-line tools (which use a spreadsheet to accurately make all calculations), at the websites listed above (in Rule 1).

**8. Organize all completed documents in preparation for your court hearing.**

At your informal status conference, you ordinarily will need to have disclosed required information to the other party, and file a completed Sworn Financial Statement and Child Support Worksheet. At your final Permanent Orders hearing, you must have other documents as check-marked on the Order given you at the time of its scheduling. Before filing with the Court, make yourself and the other party a copy of all documents.

**9. Be considerate of Court staff and Clerks.**

Divorce is stressful for you, but also for Court staff! The old adage “Honey catches more flies than does vinegar” holds true. Courtesy and respect to court personnel will help you in the process.

**10. Request professional assistance when needed.**

Like all legal processes, divorce is challenging. Consider professional help (legal assistance, mediation services or other professional aid) if needed; it may cost less than you think.

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***About the author:***

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