

# What We Know

## ARTICLES & INSIGHTS

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



[Alicia Journey](#) is a North Carolina Board Certified Family Law Specialist in the firm's family law practice group. She represents clients in child custody, child support, domestic violence, equitable distribution, and alimony matters. Her experience with domestic actions includes handling related complex civil litigation matters, such as tortious interference with child custody, alienation of affections, criminal conversation, and interstate child abduction. Her practice encompasses all levels of jurisdiction within North Carolina, including jury trial experience and appeals to both the North Carolina Court of Appeals and Supreme Court.

## Think you don't need a lawyer? Think again.

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Yes, you can go to the drug store and buy a pair of scissors for \$5, but that doesn't mean you should give yourself a haircut. You'll most likely end up back at the salon giving your stylist a really nice tip to fix the damage. The same temptation to do-it-yourself can occur when it comes to family law issues. With the plethora of information and self-help resources available online about divorce, many well-intentioned people trying to save their hard-earned money think they can cut costs by handling the legal issues involved in their separation and divorce themselves.

At first, it seems straightforward, and you can't imagine why anyone would pay a lawyer to do something so simple. But then there's a problem. Your spouse decides that the custody schedule you agreed on isn't working and refuses to bring the kids back. The two of you have a difference of opinion about what part of your agreement is supposed to mean. You find out that your spouse was having an affair, putting money into an account that you didn't know about, or letting bills that were in your name go unpaid. There is no downloadable form for these unwelcome surprises, and signing an agreement or taking action before you know what your rights are can create a mess that takes a lot of time and money to clean up. It is often difficult to think clearly when you are dealing with all the emotions involved with family issues. You will greatly benefit from working with an experienced attorney, who has your best interest in mind, from the start.

A good attorney can not only walk you through the legal process, but can also help you plan for your future and avoid unexpected legal pitfalls. Attorneys are trained to present your case in a way to get the best results for you and your family. Because of their knowledge and expertise, they can educate you about your rights and obligations as well as current updates to the law that can work in your favor.

Not all attorneys are created equal, so do your research and spend time asking your friends for referrals. Take your time and select an attorney who makes you feel comfortable and who you can trust with the details of your case. Always be sure to discuss cost, deadlines, and clarify expectations up front. Do yourself a favor and find a qualified attorney to handle your legal needs. You'll be glad you did.

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