WASHINGTON COURTS

Family Law Handbook

Understanding the Legal Implications of **Domestic Partnerships and Dissolution** in Washington State

JULY 2019

Dear Reader,

Our Washington State law requires that the Administrative Office of the Courts provide the attached family law handbook to individuals entering into a domestic partnership, those seeking to terminate their domestic partnership and those responding to a dissolution action.

If you are receiving this book after entering into a domestic partnership, we would like to offer our sincere congratulations. Our supportive relationships can enrich our lives and help bring out the best parts, and best versions, of ourselves. This is truly something to celebrate.

If you are receiving this handbook during a more trying time, when your relationship is ending, this can certainly be an incredibly painful and stressful experience. This handbook can provide answers to some of the basic questions you may have regarding the law and the court processes you may encounter.

It is our hope that even during these very challenging transitions, families are able to strive toward civility and show one another mutual respect. This may mean keeping an open mind, disagreeing respectfully, and seeking mutual ground if and when it is possible and appropriate. For families with children, modeling respect, reflection, and self-awareness can help ease them into new transitions. Parental conflict is deeply troubling to children. How a child adapts to separation can be very dependent upon the response of their parents.

If your partnership is ending due to violence or assault, we encourage you to read through this handbook for information and resources to help you safely navigate your next steps and to identify the ways in which the court system may be able to assist you. We hope that you are able to identify supports around you and find ways to keep yourself and your children safe.

We encourage readers to look to the resource page at the back of this handbook where helpful websites and legal resources are listed. An electronic copy of this publication can also be found on the Washington Courts website. We hope you find this information beneficial and we wish you well.

Sincerely,

Judge Gretchen Leanderson
Superior Court Judges' Association
Co-Chair, Family and Juvenile Law Committee 2019-20

Commissioner Michelle Ressa
Superior Court Judges' Association
Co-Chair, Family and Juvenile Law Committee 2019-20

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Introduction

This Family Law Handbook has been developed to give you an overview of the laws that govern domestic partnerships in Washington State. The Legislature directed the Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts to create this handbook for distribution to individuals seeking to terminate their domestic partnership or respond to a dissolution action. The Secretary of State's Office also distributes information about domestic partnerships to individuals entering into a state-registered domestic partnership.

Throughout this handbook, you will find answers to frequently asked questions regarding domestic partnership, dissolution, moving with children, parentage, court orders, domestic violence, child abuse, and neglect, as well as the effects of dissolution on children. While this publication is not designed to provide legal advice, it will provide general information about the partnership contract, applicable laws about property and debts, and laws about dissolution of partnerships in Washington State.

When possible, it is always a good idea to consult with an attorney about your rights and responsibilities regarding any legal issue, including domestic partnership and dissolution. If you are unable to afford an attorney to represent you, a resource list with low-cost and free legal services is contained at the end of this publication.

CHAPTER 1
Domestic Partnerships

The laws that govern Washington State-Registered Domestic Partnerships are found primarily in Chapter 26.60 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW). You can find a copy of those laws at the Washington Legislature's Web site at www.leg.wa.gov. Throughout this handbook, the terms "domestic partnership" and "partnership" mean "state-registered domestic partnership," and the terms "domestic partner" and "partner" mean "state-registered domestic partner." (RCW 26.60.020 and RCW 26.60.025.) Under Washington law, domestic partnership is a civil contract between two adults who meet statutory requirements.

Those requirements are: 1) both persons share a common residence; 2) both persons are at least eighteen years old and at least one person is sixty-two years of age or older; 3) neither person is married to someone other than the party to the domestic partnership and neither person is in a domestic partnership with another person; 4) both persons are capable of consenting to the domestic partnership; 5) the persons are not nearer of kin to each other than second cousins, whether of the whole or half blood computing by the rules of civil law; and 6) neither person is a sibling, child, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece, or nephew to the other person. The gender of either person is immaterial.

Individuals who want to enter into a domestic partnership must file a "Declaration of State Registered Domestic Partnership" with the Secretary of State and pay a filing fee. Chapter 26.09 RCW governs domestic partnerships that do not meet the legal requirements and that are not valid at all (void) and domestic partnerships that may be voidable. If you have any doubts about meeting legal requirements for entering into a domestic partnership in Washington, you should consult an attorney. For more information about the filing process, visit the Secretary of State Web site: http://www.sos.wa.gov/corps/domesticpartnerships/.

The fact that a person is in a domestic partnership can affect many aspects of life, such as insurance coverage, property ownership, responsibility for debt, inheritance, decisions about one's personal health care, disposal of his or her remains, and rights about that person's children. When you enter a domestic partnership, you may need to make changes to insurance policies, your will, financial accounts, benefits (like retirement), or other arrangements you have regarding your living situation, business, or finances. Sometimes changes to such arrangements become effective just by filing a valid domestic partnership declaration. You should make sure you know whether you need to inform your bank, government agencies, landlord, employer, health care provider, or others about your partnership so that they can make any necessary changes to agreements or records. Sometimes one or both partners choose to change their last name. This is a social or cultural custom, not a legal requirement. If a name

change is made, however, you should be aware that you may need to provide proof of your partnership for financial institutions or government agencies to change their records. The Social Security Administration will require that a domestic partner get a court-ordered name change to change the Social Security records to the new name.

Federal laws may affect the rights and responsibilities of domestic partners as well. Those laws may differ significantly from our state laws. To make sure you fully understand all of your rights and responsibilities under both state and federal laws, you may wish to consult an attorney with experience in domestic partnership law.

If you or your prospective partner have children from a previous relationship, plan to have children together, own a business or other property, have debt, or have unresolved legal responsibilities, getting legal advice can be very important.

It is important to note that if a same-sex domestic partnership couple did not marry, or did not institute legal proceedings to dissolve their partnership, seek a legal separation, or seek a declaration of invalidity (annulment) before June 30, 2014, their domestic partnership automatically became merged by law into marriage on that date unless one of the partners was 62 or older on June 30, 2014. If such proceedings were finalized without entry of a decree of dissolution, annulment, or legal separation, then the domestic partnership was automatically merged into a marriage and was deemed a marriage as of June 30, 2014. That situation could have occurred if the partners agreed to and did dismiss their legal proceedings, or if the court issued an order of dismissal. For the purposes of determining the rights and responsibilities of individuals who had a domestic partnership and have been issued a marriage license, or are deemed married under the provisions discussed above, the date of the original state-registered domestic partnership is the legal date of the marriage. The couple, however, may choose a different date on the marriage license.

If you and your partner entered a legal union in another state or country that is not a marriage (such as a civil union or a domestic partnership), you should consult a lawyer about how your relationship may be treated under Washington law. The rules regarding such relationships can be complicated, and there may be situations not discussed above that may affect your rights and responsibilities.

Same sex couples have been able to legally marry in Washington State since 2012. In 2015 marriage equality became a legal right nation-wide. Same sex couples can now legally marry in any state, and can obtain the same protections and benefits as heterosexual couples. Where the couple lives or where they are married no longer makes a difference, and each state must recognize same sex marriages even if the couple was married in a different state. However, some couples, when one of them is at least 62 years old, do not wish to marry because of the possibility of losing retirement or other benefits. For many reasons, including these, the option of entering into a state-registered domestic partnership is still available in Washington State.

CHAPTER 2
Pre-Partnership Agreements

What is a pre-partnership agreement?

Sometimes couples determine that it is in their best interest to plan ahead in the event the relationship does not ultimately work out. A pre-partnership agreement is a voluntary contract entered into by two people before their partnership. They decide in advance how their property will be divided if they terminate their partnership, get a legal separation or annulment, or when one of them passes away. The contract contains all of these agreements. Sometimes couples wait until they are in a domestic partnership to make these agreements – for purposes of this handbook these are referred to as "post-partnership agreements."

What makes the agreement enforceable?

In general, a pre- or post-partnership agreement is more likely to be enforced by a court if the contract is fair and if both partners are honest and clear about their finances, salary, other income, possessions, property, and debt. If a couple does not follow the agreement during the partnership, or they forget its terms when they acquire new assets or liabilities, this can potentially affect the enforceability of the agreement by the court.

Do you need an attorney to make these kinds of agreements?

Pre- and post-partnership agreements are very complicated and are often not enforced by a court if they are not carefully written. Attorneys can help make sure an agreement is drafted correctly, and will be enforced. It is a good idea for both of you to have independent legal advice (that means different attorneys for you and your partner or intended partner) when drafting such a contract.

CHAPTER 3
Ending a Domestic Partnership

How can a domestic partnership end?

There are several different ways in which a domestic partnership can end. It can end by a court order, such as a "decree of dissolution of domestic partnership" or a "decree of invalidity" (annulment). A "decree of legal separation" does not end the partnership, but it can affect property, finances, and raising children just like a dissolution of the partnership would. A partnership will also legally end in the event one spouse passes away. A domestic partnership can also end when the partners marry one another. In that case, the partnership end date is the same as the date in the marriage certificate. Please see the previous chapter for more information on domestic partnerships that were converted to marriages as a result of legislation passed in December 2012.

What is an annulment?

In Washington, an annulment is called a "Decree of Invalidity." A Decree of Invalidity is rare and is only granted in situations where there was some legal defect, coercion, or fraud from the start of the domestic partnership that makes it invalid. Even if the domestic partnership was not valid from the beginning, the court still has the power to divide the property, enter a parenting plan for children, and make financial orders.

What is a legal separation?

Some couples determine that they do not wish to dissolve their domestic partnership and opt for a legal separation instead. Partners may choose to separate rather than dissolve the partnership for many different reasons: religious, economic, social, emotional, etc. A legal separation means that the partners are separating but not ending their domestic partnership. There is no requirement that a couple be physically separated before getting a legal separation. Legal separations can provide all of the same legal relief as a dissolution; however, it is very important to note that any property distribution, parenting plans, or other relief granted will be final. A legal separation action can be converted into an action for dissolution, with proper notice. After six months have passed since the decree of legal separation is entered, either party may convert the decree to a decree of dissolution of domestic partnership. Further court action is necessary to convert the decree. If the couple later determines that they would like to convert their separation into a dissolution, the other issues, such as property distribution, will not be addressed again by the court. Couples who later reconcile after obtaining a legal separation will want to consult with an attorney regarding community property implications.

What is dissolution of domestic partnership?

In Washington, a dissolution of marriage, which many people refer to as a divorce, is a legal procedure in superior court that ends the marriage. Washington law provides that domestic partnerships be dissolved through an identical court action. Before December 2009, some domestic partnerships could be dissolved or terminated by filing documents with the Secretary of State; after December 2009, this procedure is no longer available. Court action is necessary to dissolve a domestic partnership in Washington, except as noted below.

There are exceptions to the requirement of a legal action to dissolve the domestic partnership, as discussed above. First, if parties to a domestic partnership marry one another, the domestic partnership is dissolved by operation of law as of the date in the marriage certificate. Second, any domestic partnership in which neither party was sixty-two years or older as of June 30, 2014, that was not converted into a marriage by the parties or dissolved by June 30, 2014, was automatically merged into a marriage and is deemed a marriage as of June 30, 2014, and the domestic partnership is dissolved that same date, unless there was a legal proceeding for dissolution, annulment, or legal separation pending in court on that date. Third, if legal proceedings for dissolution, annulment, or legal separation was pending as of June 30, 2014, but those proceedings were finalized without a decree being issued, the domestic partnership was merged into a marriage as of June 30, 2014, and the domestic partnership was dissolved that same date.

One or both partners can file for dissolution if a partnership falls apart. The law uses the term “irretrievably broken” to describe this situation. A partnership is “irretrievably broken” if one of the partners says it is. The other partner does not have to agree that the partnership is irretrievably broken in order for one partner to file for dissolution. A partner does not have to prove wrongdoing (such as cruelty or adultery) to dissolve the partnership. This no-fault system is intended to help partners settle matters without unnecessary bitterness or resentment. The court will enter orders for parenting arrangements, how children will be supported, dividing the couple’s property and debts, and possibly for maintenance (alimony).

Are there residency requirements for filing a dissolution in Washington?

You need only to reside in Washington State on the date that your petition for dissolution of domestic partnership is filed. There is no requirement that you reside in Washington for any specific amount of time before filing the petition. However, if your partner has not lived in Washington, this may limit the court’s ability to divide debts, award property, and set child support or maintenance.

If you are also asking the court for a parenting plan, Washington must also have jurisdiction over your children. Jurisdiction can be complicated, but generally Washington will have jurisdiction to order a parenting plan if the children have lived primarily in this state for the last six months. The state will also have jurisdiction if the children recently moved to another state but Washington was

their home state prior to the move and one parent continues to live here, or if no other state is a home state for the children. In certain cases, a court can grant temporary emergency jurisdiction over children if they have been abandoned or are in danger.

How does a partner file for dissolution?

To start a dissolution, one partner must file with the court a summons and petition for dissolution of domestic partnership. The person who files is called the “petitioner”. If both partners agree to the dissolution, they may file the petition jointly. If that is the case, a summons is not needed. Additional documents, such as a proposed parenting plan or proposed child support worksheets, may also be filed. These documents are filed in the County Clerk’s office. Information about filing fees and other filing requirements is available at the Clerk’s office.

These documents must be served on the other partner, who is called the "respondent", usually by having copies delivered to him or her, unless the petition is filed jointly. The legal term for delivery of legal documents is called “service of process.” The laws and court rules about serving a petition and summons, and about responding, must be followed carefully to make sure your case can move forward. If you are unsure how to properly serve the other person, you should obtain additional information by accessing one of the resources listed at the back of this handbook or seek legal advice.

The purpose of the summons is to command the responding partner to reply to the petition. The petition sets out basic facts about the domestic partnership, such as ages of children, date of the marriage, and date of separation. It also explains what the petitioning partner wants in the way of a parenting plan, property and debt division, and support.

Once served, the responding partner has from 20 to 60 days to reply (depending on whether they are in Washington or elsewhere and the manner in which they are served) in writing to the petition. This reply, called a "response," may include a "counter-petition," and states the respondent’s position on the parenting plan, property, and support. If the respondent does not file a response within the required time frame, the petitioner may ask the court for an order of default. The court will grant by default only those requests that were filed in the initial documents, so it is very important to make sure those documents are complete and correct before they are filed.

What happens after the initial dissolution paperwork is filed?

In some situations, the next step is to arrange temporary court orders to guide the conduct of the parties. Either partner can ask the court for temporary orders. Typically, temporary orders cover temporary custody arrangements for the children, child support, maintenance, occupancy of the family home, payment of bills, and other concerns for protecting people or preserving property while the case is going on.

If the partners cannot agree, a judge or court commissioner will decide temporary orders at a hearing. For more information on the rules related to temporary orders, hearings, and how to prepare for a hearing, you may consult the www.washingtonlawhelp.com website listed on the resource page, and also check to see if your county has "local court rules" that must be followed regarding page limits and days and times for hearings. An attorney will be able to assist you in navigating through this process and providing appropriate evidence to the court. This can be very helpful if your case is particularly emotional, there are complex legal issues, or the safety of one of the parties or the children is a concern.

Is there a waiting period before a dissolution can be final?

The waiting period to finalize a dissolution in Washington is 90 days. This means the summons and petition must be filed with the court and served upon the other spouse for more than 90 days before a judge can sign the dissolution decree and end the domestic partnership. This waiting period is intended to allow time for the parties to consider reconciling, or for the parties to "cool down," because often emotions are highest at the beginning of a dissolution action. Ninety (90) days is the minimum waiting period; however, and it can take much longer if the parties have difficulty reaching an agreement, or if the case goes to trial. In the case a partner does not respond at all to a petition after it is properly served, the court can typically enter the decree of dissolution by default after the waiting period has run.

When does a dissolution case end?

All of the issues, such as property, division, and arrangements for children, must be settled in order to finish a case. If partners cannot agree to everything, a trial will be held to settle any disputes. If partners agree on everything, there is no need for a trial, but the court must still approve the agreement.

The final stage occurs when the court signs a "Decree of Dissolution of Domestic Partnership." This happens after the partners reach an agreement, after a trial, or after the waiting period has passed and there has been no response from the other partner. If there are children, a final parenting plan and final order of child support must also be signed by the court. A domestic partnership is not ended until the court signs the final orders.

Can spouses legally change their names during a dissolution?

Yes. At the court's discretion, the court may grant an order to change either party's name if requested.

Are there special court forms to use in a dissolution?

Yes, and you must use the proper forms. These forms can be found free of charge on the Washington Courts website at www.courts.wa.gov/forms/ or in

many cases packets are available on www.washingtonlawhelp.org. These forms can also often be purchased at your county courthouse. Some stores and online services sell form kits that say they can be used in all states, but Washington has its own forms that MUST be used in most family law court actions.

How can an attorney help with a dissolution?

This handbook is a guide and is provided for informational purposes only. Only attorneys can give legal advice, taking into account a person's unique situation and needs. Although an individual has the right to get a dissolution without being represented by an attorney, sometimes the help of an attorney is essential. Not knowing the right procedures, which paperwork to file, how to present evidence, or what is best in your situation can have serious and sometimes lasting consequences. It is always a good idea to at least consult with an attorney before you start any legal action, including a dissolution, legal separation, or annulment proceeding. If you are unable to afford an attorney, please see the back of this handbook for a list of free and low-cost legal services in Washington State.

How can courthouse facilitators help with a dissolution?

In Washington State, the superior court in each county handles family law matters, and most of them have "courthouse facilitators." Courthouse facilitators are not attorneys and cannot give you legal advice, but they can tell you which forms you need, explain court procedures, and help you navigate through the process. They are available to assist parties who are not represented by an attorney, also known as "pro se" parties.

Courthouse facilitators may provide some or all of the following under General Rule 27:

- Referral to legal, social services, and alternative dispute resolution resources;
- Assistance in calculating child support based upon the information provided by the self-represented party;
- Process interpreter requests;
- Assistance in selection as well as distribution of approved forms and instructions;
- Assistance in completing approved forms;
- Explanation of legal terms;
- Information on basic court procedures, including requirements for service, filing, scheduling hearings, and complying with local procedures;
- Review of completed forms to determine whether forms have been completely filled out but not as to substantive content;
- Previewing pro-se pleadings before hearings to determine whether procedural requirements have been complied with; and
- Attendance at pro se hearings to assist the court.

Many facilitator programs also sell do-it-yourself dissolution kits with instructions tailored for their respective court. Additional information about the facilitator in your county (office hours, appointments, fees, etc.) is available at the County Clerk's office, superior court, or the Washington Courts website at www.courts.wa.gov under "Court Directory" or under "Programs & Organizations." Most facilitators charge a fee for their services.

CHAPTER 4
Property Rights – Dividing Assets and Debts

How does a separating couple divide property and debt?

When a couple dissolves their domestic partnership, legally separates, or their partnership is declared invalid (commonly known as an annulment), legal responsibility for property and debts must be divided. Property means more than land – it can also mean possessions, bank accounts, retirement funds, and business and contract rights. The couple can agree on the division, or if they cannot agree, the court must divide the respective rights partners have in their property and their debts. The division of assets and debt must be just and equitable under the circumstances.

Note: If a domestic partnership has dissolved by operation of law and has been merged into marriage, then marriage laws apply to ownership of property and responsibility for debt.

What is "community property"?

Washington is a "community property" state. Generally, all property acquired during domestic partnership is presumed to be community property, with both parties having an equal but undivided interest in the property. Community property laws can be complicated. Couples who have been in a partnership for a long time, who have significant property, or who own a business will want to seek legal advice on how to best determine a fair and equitable distribution.

What is "separate property"?

"Separate property" means possessions or real estate that was owned before the partnership, that was received during the partnership as a gift or as an inheritance, or that was bought with separate property money. In some cases, determining what is separate property can be complex or unclear and getting legal advice can be important.

How does a court divide property and debts?

In Washington State, a court is required to determine what is separate property and what is community property, and then divide the property and debts between the partners in a manner that is "just and equitable." To do this, the court uses a series of factors under Washington law, such as the length of the domestic partnership, employment history, how much property the couple has, and other factors. The court must also consider whether a parent should be allowed to continue living in the family home so the children do not have to be moved.

Does the court divide property and debts 50/50?

When a court divides property and debts justly and equitably, this does not necessarily mean that the property will be divided 50/50. This is because an "equitable" division is not always an "equal" division. The court may divide property and debts unequally for a number of reasons. For example, the court might give one partner less than 50 percent of the assets if that partner can recover from the economic setback of the dissolution faster than the other.

What if a partner has misbehaved during the partnership?

Bad behavior does not usually affect how property and debts are divided. This means that the court will not award one partner more of the property just because the other partner misbehaved or was at fault. An exception to this general rule is when the misbehavior was intended to and resulted in the waste or destruction of property. A court may give one partner more property when the other partner did something to waste, lose, or destroy community property.

What about taxes and other financial considerations?

Property division, property settlements, and family support arrangements can have serious tax consequences to one or both partners, and your tax-filing status may be affected. Property and debt divisions are final and cannot be modified later, except under extremely limited and unusual circumstances. For this reason, it is important that you speak to an attorney before your case is finalized if you have questions regarding property distribution or debt.

CHAPTER 5
Maintenance (Alimony)

What is maintenance?

Maintenance (sometimes referred to as alimony) is financial support provided by one partner to the other during and/or after a dissolution, separation, or invalidity proceeding.

How does the court decide whether to give maintenance?

If you file for dissolution, file for legal separation, or request that your partnership be declared invalid, you have a right to ask for maintenance. Maintenance is generally based on financial and economic factors, not whether one of the partners is at fault. Instead, if there is a big economic difference between the partners, maintenance may be ordered to help achieve financial independence or to put the parties on more equal footing after the dissolution. The court has a great deal of discretion to decide how much and for how long maintenance will be paid. The court considers many factors (such as the length of the partnership, health and ages of the partners, and employment history), but there is not a formula like there is for child support. If maintenance has been ordered, a partner can later ask that the order be changed under certain circumstances. For long-term domestic partnerships, those longer than twenty-five years, the court is more likely to award maintenance for a longer period of time, or even indefinitely, as it attempts to equalize the parties for the rest of their lives. Maintenance can greatly affect the taxes of both the partner paying and for the partner receiving it. For this reason, it can be important to consult a tax professional or family law attorney, especially as federal tax laws may treat marriages and state-registered domestic partnerships differently.

CHAPTER 6
Effects of Dissolution on Children

How does dissolution affect children?

Dissolution can have many different effects on children and can be complicated. Your child may be feeling some of the same emotions you are experiencing, such as grief, sadness, guilt, or rejection, but may not be able to identify their feelings or put them into words. In some cases, they may have conflicts of loyalty, or in cases where there has been fighting or abuse, they may feel a combination of relief and fear about the future. How divorce affects children is very dependent upon the individual family and the emotional support and stability provided for the child.

What can parents do about the effects of dissolution and conflict on children?

The most significant thing parents can do to mitigate the negative emotional effects of dissolution on children, is to reduce or contain their exposure to conflict between their parents and provide a loving and stable environment. Providing structure, support, stability, and compassionate care for your child during this difficult time is very important. Before entering into a domestic partnership, it can be a good idea to make sure you and your intended partner have talked about parenting issues, including whether and when you want to have children, values about raising children, ideas about parenting, and how to divide responsibility for parenting. If you disagree on those issues, before entering into a domestic partnership and having children, decide how you will work out parenting and other conflicts. Are you able to work them out by sitting down and talking together? Is family counseling helpful? [**Important Note:** If there is domestic violence in your relationship, these methods of resolving conflict may not be appropriate. Please read Chapter 11: Domestic Violence of this handbook to obtain information about how to protect yourself and your children.]

Having children means more decisions to be made and more chances for disagreement. If you separate or dissolve your partnership, more decisions must be made at a time when you may have negative feelings about your partner. Being prepared with good conflict-resolution skills and knowing how to find help if you can't resolve the conflict on your own will make things easier for your children.

It is important to find the best way to communicate with the other parent so that children are kept out of any arguments or conflicts. Do not use the children as go-betweens or messengers or involve them in adult conflicts about parenting, child support, or other issues related to your dissolution.

When possible, work with the other parent to make sure that both of you have strong, positive relationships with your children, and that both of you are involved in parenting. [**Important Note:** Washington law generally supports children having strong, continued relationships with both parents. However, it also recognizes that there may be circumstances where, because of domestic violence, substance abuse, a parent's abusive use of conflict, or other parenting problems, a parent's time with a child may need to be limited.]

When a separation or dissolution occurs it is often very stressful, but there are things you can do to help yourself and your children make some of these changes easier. Taking care of yourself is important, so that you can be available to your children, continue to serve as a role model, and parent effectively.

Make sure there is an adequate child support order in place so that the children have sufficient financial support in the home(s) where they are residing. And, if you are the parent paying child support, make sure you pay your child support regularly and on time.

Many courts require separating couples to take a class on reducing conflict and the ways in which separation can affect children. More information about these classes can be obtained from your local County Clerk's office or Courthouse Facilitator Program. Many online resources, books, and publications also exist to help parents cope with the stress of divorce, while taking care of children. Information on same-sex parenting research can be found on the American Psychological Association website www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/parenting.aspx and from the American Academy of Pediatrics at http://pediatrics.org.

CHAPTER 7
Parentage and Children of Domestic Partners

A child of a domestic partnership can be the biological child of one, both or neither of the partners. Parentage laws are included in Chapter 26.26 RCW, the Uniform Parentage Act. During the 2018 Legislative Session, many changes were made to the laws governing parentage of children. These changes became effective January 1, 2019. This section is intended to provide a brief overview of the law as it has been amended. If you require additional information, the full Uniform Parentage Act is available online at www.leg.wa.gov, or consider speaking with an attorney. The law regarding presumptions of parentage can be complicated. An attorney can help explain whether any of the presumptions apply in your situation.

Generally, an individual is presumed to be the parent of a child if:

- The individual and the woman who gave birth to the child are married, or in a state registered domestic partnership, and the child is born during the marriage or partnership (this is true even if the marriage or partnership could be declared invalid);

- The child is born not later than three hundred days after the marriage or partnership ends due to divorce, annulment, invalidity, separation or death; or

- The individual and the woman who gave birth to the child get married or enter into a domestic partnership after the birth of the child, and (a) file record of this with the state registrar of vital statistics, or (b) the individual agreed to be, and is named a parent on the birth record, or (c) the individual lived in the same household with the child for the first four years of the child's life and openly held out the child as their child.

These presumptions can be challenged only in very specific circumstances and by using legal procedures that are explained in our statues: RCW 26.26.501 through RCW 26.26.523, and RCW 26.26.301 through RCW 26.26.314. Very strict timelines apply to challenging parentage. An attorney can give you valuable advice about how to proceed if you want to challenge parentage of a child.

If you and your spouse were in a state-registered domestic partnership before you were married to each other, and a presumption applied to you in the domestic partnership, that same presumption carries over to your marriage. The presumption can be rebutted only by the methods outlined in the laws mentioned in the paragraph above. In certain circumstances outlined in the law, the court

may order that the parties and the child submit to genetic testing to determine parentage.

What is De Facto Parentage?

In some circumstances, an individual who is not the biological or adoptive parent of a child may request that the court identify them as a “de facto” parent. In these circumstances the individual who claims to be a “de facto” parent must meet certain specific criteria including, but not limited to, having taken on full and permanent responsibilities, as a parent would. The child must have a strong bond with that individual, and continuing the relationship between the individual and the child must be in the best interest of the child. A de facto parent has the same legal status as a legal parent, whether biological, adoptive or otherwise. De facto parentage cases can be very complex and getting legal advice is recommended, particularly in cases where domestic violence or another parenting deficit is present.

What parentage presumptions apply in assisted reproduction situations?

In the event a child is conceived through assisted reproduction, and not through sexual intercourse or surrogacy, the donor is generally not considered a parent of the child, unless legal consent to parentage is given by the woman giving birth in a signed record, or the donor is her current spouse. A partner may only challenge paternity of a child conceived by assisted reproduction under limited circumstances, such as when consent to the assisted reproduction was not given.

How is parentage determined in the case of surrogacy?

A surrogacy agreement is the agreement between one or more intended parents and a woman who is not an intended parent who agrees to become pregnant through assisted reproduction. The Uniform Parentage Act now addresses in detail the requirements for surrogacy agreements and the protections afforded to both the parents of the child conceived through a surrogate, as well as for the surrogate herself. To be eligible to act as a surrogate, a woman must be at least twenty-one years of age, have given birth to at least one child, but not enter into more than one surrogacy agreement that resulted in the birth of a child, complete a medical evaluation, complete a mental health consultation, and have independent legal representation of her choice throughout the process. The intended parent(s) must be at least twenty-one years of age, have completed a medical evaluation, a mental health consultation, and also have independent legal representation throughout the process. If you are considering entering into a surrogacy agreement, an attorney can advise you on the requirements and protections afforded to you.

What happens if a child was conceived as a result of sexual assault?

If pregnancy occurred after sexual assault, the victim parent may ask the court preclude the other person from establishing or maintaining parentage. The court will hold a fact finding hearing to decide whether this is in the best interest of the child. Child support and payment of other costs may be granted. In this circumstance seeking advice from an attorney knowledgeable in sexual assault cases can be very helpful.

CHAPTER 8
Parenting Plans

What is a parenting plan?

A parenting plan is a legal document that explains the basic arrangements for caring for children, including where the children will live, who will make decisions for the children, and how disputes about the parenting arrangements will be resolved. The term “custody” is not used in Washington State. Instead, both parents usually share responsibility for their children. Typically, the children will live with one parent for the majority of time. Sometimes the children will live with each parent for equal amounts of time. The parenting arrangements depend upon what is in the best interests of the children. In Washington, the law requires that parenting arrangements encourage each parent to maintain a loving, stable, and nurturing relationship with the children, taking into account each child’s developmental level and the family's social and economic circumstances. There is no one parenting plan that is best for all children.

When do parents need a parenting plan?

If both domestic partners are the children’s legal parents and then separate, a court orders a parenting plan as part of their dissolution, legal separation, annulment, or parenting plan modification.

How does a court decide where the children will live?

Often separating parents can agree on parenting arrangements for their children. If separating parents voluntarily agree on arrangements, the court will usually approve their agreement. Agreed parenting arrangements still have to be in the children’s best interests. When separating parents cannot agree, a court will make the decision. The general standard the court uses to make that decision is “the best interest of the child.” Other factors include the relationship of the child to each parent, the agreements made by the parents, the emotional and developmental needs of the child, the child’s relationships with siblings and other adults, plus the child’s involvement with places like school, past performance of parenting functions by each parent, the potential for each parent to perform parenting functions in the future, each parent’s employment schedule, the wishes of the parents and of the child if the child is mature enough, and whether there have been serious parenting problems. If there are no serious problems, the factor that is given the greatest weight by the court is the relative strength, nature, and stability of the child’s relationship with each parent.

What if there have been serious parenting problems?

If one or both parents have serious problems that affect their ability to parent, the court *must* consider these problems when making parenting arrangements for

the children if they are brought up. These problems include child abuse or neglect, domestic violence, substance abuse, impairments that interfere with a parent's ability to care for a child, withholding the child from the other parent without good cause, or abandonment of the child. Sometimes, the court has to restrict a parent's time with the children. These restrictions can include limiting the time a parent can spend with a child, supervised visitation, and treatment or educational program to help the parent with the problem. If a parent is a convicted sex offender, the court almost always has to prohibit that parent from having time with the children. If you fear for the safety of your children, you may ask the court for an emergency temporary order, immediately restricting visitation with the other parent.

Can children decide where they want to live?

In Washington State, adults decide where children will live. A court may consider a child's wishes only if the child is old enough and mature enough. There is no magic age for a child to be mature enough to state his or her choice. Generally, courts do not want children to be involved in these decisions.

What does a guardian ad litem do in a dissolution?

A court may appoint a qualified person to represent the children's best interests in a dissolution, legal separation or modification of parenting plan. That person, called a guardian ad litem, investigates the situation and makes a recommendation to the court about what would be best for the children. Each court keeps a registry of individuals who are qualified to serve as guardians ad litem in that county. A court order spells out the duties, responsibilities, and fee arrangements for a guardian ad litem. In most cases, a guardian ad litem is not needed. Information about guardians ad litem can be found on the Washington Courts website at www.courts.wa.gov under "Programs & Organizations," or on the Washington Law Help website at http://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/ under "Family Law." In addition, statutes that apply to guardians ad litem can be found in Chapter 26.12.RCW, downloadable at www.leg.wa.gov. Local and state court rules that apply to guardians ad litem can be found under "Rules" on the courts' website page at www.courts.wa.gov.

What if there is disagreement about how to follow a parenting plan?

Once the court signs a parenting plan, both parents are required to follow it. For example, a parent may not refuse to allow the other parent to see the children just because that parent has not paid child support. A parenting plan usually includes the method parents are to use to resolve disputes about parenting issues. That method may be arbitration, mediation, counseling, or court action. Typically the parents need to use the specified dispute resolution method before going to court and asking that the parenting plan be enforced, unless an emergency exists.

Mediation to resolve parenting plan issues is usually not appropriate if there has been a history of domestic violence. Mediation may be ordered as the dispute resolution method but only if the victim requests it and the court finds it is appropriate under the circumstances. That parent is permitted to have a supporting person present during the mediation session. If you are a victim of domestic violence, please refer to Chapter 11 for more information.

What is contempt of court?

If one parent is not following the parenting plan, or any other order of the court, that parent may be found in contempt of court. The other parent may file a contempt motion with the court for consideration. If the judge or commissioner agrees, and finds the other parent is in contempt, the court will order some type of sanction, such as make-up visitation with the children, monetary sanctions, or in extreme cases jail time. In cases where there is a final order parenting plan already in place, it is important to know that if a parent is found in contempt twice or more in a three-year period, the other parent may file a modification action to have the judge relook at the parenting plan to see if changes are appropriate.

How do parents change a parenting plan?

Sometimes one or both of the parents want to modify (change) the final parenting plan. It is often not easy to make a major change to a parenting plan, especially if both parents do not agree. An example of a “major modification” is changing where the children live the majority of the time (changing from one parent’s home primarily, to the other parent’s home). If both parents agree to the major modification and the court finds that the modification is in the best interests of the children, the court will grant the request. Without such an agreement, the court will allow a major modification only in limited instances. It is not enough that the parent wanting the change thinks that his or her life has improved so much that the children should now live with him or her.

Minor changes can be made more easily, but only if the court finds it to be in the children's best interests. Parents can often agree on minor changes, such as the length of vacations or when the children’s time with the other parent will start or end.

What if one of the parents is in the military?

A law governing parenting plan modifications for parents who serve in the military took effect July 26, 2009. The law can be found at RCW 26.09.10(7). In brief, if a parent is in the military and receives orders that may affect parenting responsibilities under the parenting plan, that parent may request that a hearing be held on the temporary change to the parenting plan that is needed to accommodate that parent’s orders. If necessary, and requested by the military parent, such a hearing can be held electronically at that parent’s request. At the military parent’s request, while that parent is away, the court may award part or all of his or her residential time with the child to another suitable adult with whom the child has a significant relationship, if doing so is in the child’s best interests. No rights to visitation are created by this temporary delegation of residential time.

When the parent returns, the former parenting plan can be restored by the parent giving notice to the other parent and filing an appropriate motion, and presenting an order no later than ten days after the parent returns, unless the other parent files a motion alleging immediate danger to the child. The court may not count any time the parent did not use residential time with the child because of the effect of the parent's military duties, for the purpose of determining whether the parent failed to use the residential time for a year or more. Also, the effect of a parent's military duties shall not by itself be a substantial change of circumstances that alone would be the reason for a permanent modification.

CHAPTER 9
Relocation of Children

What is the Relocation Act?

If a parent with whom the children live most of the time wants to relocate/move the children to a different residence, there are certain laws and rules that apply. The relocating parent should look at these laws as soon as they begin considering a move as there are many mandatory steps that must be taken. The law that applies is called the Relocation Act, and it can be found beginning at RCW 26.09.405. Adults have a constitutional right to move *their* place of residence. Courts can, however, order adults not to move their minor children. The Relocation Act has many requirements and is complicated. Therefore, it is very important to understand your rights and responsibilities.

Note: If the parents have equal, or substantially equal, parenting time there is not a presumption that the move will be allowed, and the court will make a decision that is in the best interest of the child, considering all of the eleven factors listed in the Child Relocation Act (see above).

How can a parent move with children?

If a parent wants to move with the children, and a parenting plan is in place, that parent must notify the other parent and others who have court-ordered time with the children. How and when notice of the move is given depends on many things, including when the move will take place, how long the parent has known about the move, whether domestic violence or another dangerous situation exists, and many other factors. If the move is outside of the children's current school district, the other parent can object to the move. There is a presumption that the move will be allowed, but the decision is made by the court based on eleven specific factors listed in RCW 26.09.530. The court will also decide what changes to the parenting plan are needed if the move is allowed.

How does the other parent object to the move?

If the non-moving parent objects to a move, that parent must file an objection within 30 days of the date the notice is received. That objection is a request for a parenting plan modification. Then the court will decide whether the move will be allowed. The objecting parent can't simply ask that the move not be allowed. A relocation case is usually also a parenting plan modification if the move is to a different school district.

What if the other parent does not object to the move?

If the other parent does not object to the relocation, and both parents agree on a new schedule for residential time with each parent, then the issue is resolved and

the moving parent can relocate with the children. Either parent may present the new agreed parenting plan to the court. If the other parent does not object to the move, but the parents disagree on a new residential time schedule, the custodial parent can move with the children, and either parent may file a court action to change the parenting plan.

What if the move is due to violence or threat of violence?

The Relocation Act has different requirements for notice if violence or the threat of violence is the reason for the move. The safety of the children is the main concern in these situations. However, if the other parent objects, the court will decide if the move will be allowed, or if it will be permanent if the move has already taken place. Also look at the Chapter 11: Domestic Violence in this handbook for legal action you can take to keep yourself and your children safe.

What if a parent doesn't follow the Relocation Law?

Failure to give proper notice or failure to properly object can have serious consequences. The court may order the return of the children. The other parent can lose the right to object if that parent misses the deadline for objecting. It can very helpful to get legal advice about relocation or objecting to relocation as soon as you learn about the situation.

CHAPTER 10
Child Support

When will a court order a parent to pay child support?

Both parents have legal duties under Washington State law to financially support their children. In a dissolution or legal separation, a court must order one or both parents to pay support for their children. Sometimes parents were not in a domestic partnership when the children were born. They may have signed a paternity affidavit naming the father. If not, parentage can be established in court. In other situations, one parent may be declared by the court to be a "de facto" parent, giving that parent all the rights and responsibilities that the other parent has. In these circumstances, the court may order that one or both parents pay child support just as if they had been in a domestic partnership when the children were born.

What does a child support order do?

Payment of child support and other expenses for children is a required part of a dissolution, legal separation, or parentage action. A child support order includes which parent will pay support, who will pay other expenses such as day care and transportation, who will provide health insurance for the children, how long child support will be paid, arrangements for college expenses, and of course how much will be paid.

Can separating parents agree not to pay child support?

If parents are involved in a legal action such as dissolution, legal separation, or a parentage action, the court is required to set a child support amount. Child support is meant to provide for the needs of children, so parents are not allowed to opt out of paying child support, even if they both agree.

How does a court determine the child support amount?

In Washington, courts use the Washington State Child Support Schedule. The Schedule takes into account each parent's income, the age of the children, and other expenses such as childcare expenses. The Schedule must be used in every county, in both judicial and administrative proceedings, and in all kinds of proceedings where child support is determined, adjusted, or modified.

The basic child support obligation is based on the combined family income after taxes, ages of the children, and the number of children in the family. The actual amount of support required is also based on the special circumstances of each family. In limited situations (such as children from other relationships), the amount of child support can be different from the Child Support Schedule, but only with court approval.

Can child support amounts be changed later?

Washington law allows child support amounts to be changed after a set period of time in many situations, including change in a child's age, changes in income, and changes in the needs of the children.

When does child support end?

Child support usually ends when a child turns 18 or graduates from high school, whichever happens later. Sometimes support can be ordered past that time if the child has been found to be dependent. Support for college or vocational education expenses can be ordered.

How does a parent enforce a child support order?

There are different ways to enforce a child support order. A parent who is not receiving court-ordered child support can file a contempt motion in court. The Washington State Division of Child Support can help a parent with child support enforcement, including wage assignment (garnishment) and revoking driver and other licenses.

Where can information about child support be found?

For more information about child support, see the Washington State Division of Child Support Child Support Resource Center at www.dshs.wa.gov/dcs/ or call your local child support office.

CHAPTER 11
Domestic Violence

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence, which is also called intimate partner abuse, is a pattern of physical and/or emotional abuse used to control another person with whom the abusive person has an intimate relationship. Domestic violence is serious, and help is available for both victims and those who abuse. Domestic violence does not discriminate. A person of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender can be a victim, or perpetrator, of domestic violence. It can be present in any form of intimate relationship, such a marriages, partnerships, intimate shared living situations, and dating relationships. Domestic violence affects people from all socioeconomic backgrounds and at all education levels. It can be very difficult for a victim to leave an abusive relationship, and it is a very personal choice. If you are thinking about leaving an abusive relationship, it may be helpful to speak with a trained domestic violence advocate, and if possible an attorney, in order to adequately prepare and help ensure your safety. Information regarding these resources can be found on the last page of this handbook.

Is domestic violence a crime?

The social definition of domestic violence is very broad and includes emotional and psychological abuse and control. Many forms of domestic violence are against the law in Washington State, particularly when they involve physical harm, the threat of physical harm, or stalking. Domestic violence can be charged as a felony or misdemeanor assault, punishable by jail and/or imprisonment.

How can I protect myself and/or my children from domestic violence?

There are several court processes that may help provide protection from domestic violence.

Domestic Violence Protection Order: If you, or your children, have been threatened, assaulted, or stalked by someone you have been in a relationship with, or lived with, you can ask the court for a “domestic violence protection order.” The order can provide temporary immediate protection for you and/or your children, and will usually prevent the other party from having any contact with you. You will return for a hearing within two weeks for the court to determine whether to grant longer term protection. A domestic violence protection order may be requested on its own, or within your family law case. This process is free, and you do not need a lawyer. However, if you are able to hire a lawyer or obtain advice, it can be helpful, particularly when submitting evidence of the abuse to the court. Many local domestic violence programs can help provide paperwork assistance. The police must help you enforce your order, and if the other person violates the order, it is a crime.

Restraining Order: If you have filed a family law case, or are planning to do so, you can also ask the court for a "restraining order" within that case, to order restraints as appropriate. The police must also enforce this order.

Police Report: You can also report any threats or assaultive behavior to the police. If you did not call the police at the time of the incident, you can call later. If the other person is arrested, and charges are filed, you may receive a criminal no-contact order, banning all contact with you while the criminal case is being decided. If the case results in a criminal conviction this protection may be extended.

Crime Victims Assistance: If you need medical care for your injuries or your injuries kept you from working, you may be entitled to money from the Crime Victims' Compensation Program if the crime was reported to law enforcement within one year.

Local Domestic Violence Shelter: Your local domestic violence shelter can also provide assistance. Shelters provide services such as safety planning, temporary shelter, legal advocacy, and counseling. The Statewide Domestic Violence Hotline, **1-800-562-6025**, can help you find the program closest to you.

Legal Information and Representation: The Washington Law Help website, www.washingtonlawhelp.org, can provide very useful information regarding all of these types of legal protections, as well as forms and do-it-yourself packets. Also see the Legal Resources chapter at the end of this publication for information on how to find a lawyer to represent you. Helpful information for deciding which order may be right for you can also be found at: http://protectionorder.org.

What if the other person has guns or access to guns?

In domestic violence cases, the court can require that the other person give up their firearms if certain criteria are met. You can also ask the court to require the other person to surrender their weapons by filing a "Motion for Surrender of Weapons" within your family law case. These forms can be found at: www.courts.wa.gov on the "Forms" tab, under "Protection Order."

How can I get help if I am or might be an abuser?

If you have engaged in domestic violence, one part of changing may involve willing participation in a certified batterer intervention program that focuses on behavior, reflection, and accountability. A list of certified treatment agencies for domestic violence abusers is available on the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) website at: https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/community-services-offices/domestic-violence-intervention-treatment.

CHAPTER 12
Child Abuse and Neglect

When will the state step in to protect children from harm?

Generally, the government does not interfere in family matters, but there are laws that allow the government to step in to protect a child from harm within the family. Sometimes this will result in a legal action called a “dependency” where a child can be removed from the home. A dependency proceeding is usually, but not always, started by the state after an investigation by a Child Protective Services social worker. The goals of such legal actions are safety of children and reunification and preservation of families.

What is Child Protective Services?

Child Protective Services (CPS) is a division of the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families. CPS investigates allegations of abuse and neglect, assigns social workers to help parents overcome problems that are harmful to their children, and participates in certain legal actions regarding children and youth. If a child has been found to be dependent, Child Welfare Services workers become involved to provide services to the family and the child. Those services provide for the child’s safety and are designed to achieve a permanent plan for the child, including reunification of the child with the parents where appropriate.

Are there different procedures for youth?

While older youth can be the subject of a dependency proceeding, there are two other types of proceedings that can be used. They are “Child in Need of Services” and “At Risk Youth” proceedings. The court, the child, the family, and sometimes the Department of Children, Youth and Families work together to help families and youth resolve their problems, with services and court orders. To learn more about these procedures, contact your local juvenile court or an attorney experienced in juvenile law.

What about criminal penalties?

In addition to the civil legal actions explained above, after a police investigation, the state may also file criminal charges against parents for assault or criminal mistreatment. A parent convicted of a crime against a child can face imprisonment, jail, and/or fines, depending on the nature of the crime. It is also criminal to make a false report of alleged abuse or neglect. Such false reports are misdemeanors, punishable by imprisonment in the county jail, or by fines, or both.

CHAPTER 13
Community Resources

Community Health Departments

The health department (sometimes called health district) that serves your community may offer clinics, classes, and other services for you and your children. Some health departments host online bulletin boards on topics such as child care, parenting strategies, and dealing with stress. The Washington State Department of Health's website includes a directory of community health departments and districts. For more information, go to www.doh.wa.gov and click on "Local Health Departments" under Partners, or call the health department or district listed in your local telephone directory.

Department of Social and Health Services

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) offers an array of services, such as child support enforcement, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, disability support, youth services, medical assistance, housing costs, and many others. For assistance, go to https://www.dshs.wa.gov/ or call your local DSHS Office.

Department of Children, Youth, and Families

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is a newly created state agency that oversees many services previously offered by DSHS and the Department of Early Learning. The DCYF oversees Child Protective Services' investigations and Family Assessment Response, licensed foster care, adoption support, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program for preschoolers, Working Connections Child Care, and Home Visiting. In July 2019, DCYF will also administer programs offered by the Juvenile Rehabilitation division and the Office of Juvenile Justice. Those programs include juvenile rehabilitation institutions, community facilities and parole services. https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/

Support Groups

Many communities have support groups that can help with dissolution or separation difficulties, alcohol or drug addiction, families in crisis, health concerns, and many other issues. Your doctor, counselor, or local community center may also be a good resource for finding an appropriate support group. Schools sometimes offer peer counseling or support groups such as "Banana Splits" for children of separating or divorcing parents. Many religious organizations sponsor support groups or ministries that address issues faced by divorcing or separating families.

CHAPTER 14
Legal Resources

- The Moderate Means Program provides low-cost attorneys to those of limited financial means, www.wsba.org/for-the-public/find-legal-help.
- Legal information and do-it-yourself packets on a variety of topics, including family law, are available free of charge at www.washingtonlawhelp.org/.
- Legal advice and representation for low-income individuals is available through the Northwest Justice Project's toll free CLEAR hotline, for those who live *outside* King County, **1-888-201-1014**. Persons 60 and over may call CLEAR*Sr at 1-888-387-7111, regardless of income.
- A list of legal service providers for those with low income who live *within King County* can be found online at https://nwjustice.org/ or by calling **211.** The local number is 206-461-3200. The toll-free number is 1-877-211-9274, from King County only.
- Court forms and instructions can be downloaded from the Washington Courts website at www.courts.wa.gov and from http://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/.
- Courthouse Facilitators can assist those without attorneys with paperwork and basic court information. Courthouse Facilitator programs are listed on the Washington Courts website at www.courts.wa.gov, on the "Court Directory" page under Other Directories, or on the "Programs & Organizations" page under Programs.
- Guardian ad litem information is included on the Washington Courts website at www.courts.wa.gov, on the "Programs & Organizations" page under Programs.
- Domestic violence advocacy organizations can help with protection orders and in some cases family law matters. For a directory of resources near you, call the Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-562-6025** or check the website for the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence at www.wscadv.org. Forms and instructions for domestic violence protection orders can be found on the Washington Courts website at www.courts.wa.gov/forms/, and your County Clerk's office has a domestic violence clerk who can help you apply for a protection order.
- Ask a family member, friend, or co-worker for a referral to an attorney.
- Contact the local bar association in your county for information about free Volunteer Lawyer Program clinics.
- Consult the Washington State Bar Association website to find an attorney at www.wsba.org**,** under "Legal Directory."

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