

From Filing to Finalizing

An Overview of the Washington State Divorce Process



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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **Petition for Dissolution of Marriage:** The official legal document filed with the court to initiate a divorce.
- **Service of Process:** The procedure of formally delivering legal documents to the spouse in a divorce case.
- **Uncontested Divorce:** A divorce where both spouses agree on all terms without disputes.
- **Contested Divorce:** A divorce where the spouses disagree on key issues such as child custody or asset division.
- **Temporary Orders:** Court-issued orders that temporarily resolve matters such as child support and living arrangements until the divorce is finalized.
- **Parenting Plan:** A legal document that outlines how divorcing or separating parents will share responsibilities and time with their children.
- **Discovery Phase:** A step in contested divorces where both parties exchange necessary information and documents, such as financial records, to resolve disputes.
- **Mediation:** A process in which a neutral third party helps divorcing spouses resolve issues without going to trial.
- **Final Orders:** The court's official decisions on all matters in the divorce, including the division of assets, custody arrangements, and support orders.

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WASHINGTON STATE DIVORCE PROCESS: STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

STEP ONE

Petition for the Dissolution of Marriage

The first formal step in the **divorce process in Washington State** is filing a **Petition for Dissolution of Marriage**. This involves completing and submitting the necessary forms to the **Superior Court** in the county where you or your spouse resides. Working with an experienced **divorce lawyer** ensures accuracy in these forms, which include preferences on **child custody, parenting plans, and the division of assets**.

STEP TWO

Service of Process

After filing the petition, you must serve your spouse with the documents. This step, called **Service of Process**, is often handled by a process server. Your **divorce attorney** can guide you on the most efficient way to notify your spouse, depending on whether they are likely to accept service voluntarily.

STEP THREE

Uncontested vs. Contested Divorce

If both spouses agree on the divorce terms, the process may be uncontested. However, in a contested divorce, your spouse has 20 days to respond. Temporary orders may be necessary to address issues like **child support** and **parenting plans** while awaiting the final court ruling.

STEP FOUR

Parenting Education Seminar

Parenting Education Seminar In Washington State, parents going through a **divorce** must attend a seminar on the impact of divorce on children. This course is valuable for learning strategies to minimize stress on children and improve communication between parents during and after the divorce process.

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STEP FIVE

Discovery Phase

In a contested divorce, the **discovery phase** allows both parties to gather important information, such as financial records and details relevant to child custody or asset division. Your attorney will typically handle this step, requesting necessary documents from your spouse or third parties.

STEP SIX

Mediation

Mediation is often a recommended option in **Washington State divorces**, allowing couples to resolve disputes without court intervention. A neutral mediator helps both sides reach agreements on key issues, which can save time and money.

STEP SEVEN

Divorce Trial

If mediation fails, the divorce will proceed to trial. During the trial, both sides present their arguments to a judge, who will make the final decisions on unresolved issues. While necessary in some cases, divorce trials are costly and should be avoided when possible.

STEP EIGHT

Final Orders

The final stage involves the court issuing **Final Orders** to conclude the divorce process. These orders cover everything from the **Decree of Dissolution** to **child support** and **parenting plans**. Whether resolved through mediation or a judge's ruling, this step legally finalizes the divorce.

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If you are considering or facing divorce in Washington State, you don't have to navigate the complexities of the **divorce process** alone. At **Bliss Law Group**, our experienced attorneys are here to provide you with the guidance and support you need. Whether you're in **Tacoma, Olympia**, or anywhere in **Pierce** or **Thurston County**, we are dedicated to ensuring your legal rights are protected and that you achieve the best possible outcome for your family.

Call us today at:

- **Tacoma:** (253) 844-4412
- **Olympia:** (360) 469-0602

We're ready to help you take the next steps and get back to living your life. Leave the legal work to us.

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