

# No-Cost Collaborative Program (LAWNY)

## No-Cost Collaborative Program

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### Separation and Divorce

Offered in partnership with *Legal Assistance of Western New York (LAWNY)*

Qualified participants can receive free access to Collaborative lawyers for help with separation agreements and divorce.

### Tell me more...

At the beginning of the process each spouse, their respective lawyers, and any other professionals sign a Collaborative Law Participation Agreement.

The agreement requires both spouses to:

1. Exchange financial and other information openly and honestly so that each spouse can make well-informed decisions.
2. Maintain confidentiality during the process, so that each spouse can feel free to express his or her needs and concerns.
3. Strive to reach a written agreement on all issues and concerns outside of contested court proceedings.
4. Be represented by a Collaborative lawyer whose representation ends if either spouse files or restarts a contested court proceeding.

## **How the Program Works:**

- Financial eligibility for the program is determined by meeting certain income guidelines.
- Parties with actions for divorce pending in Supreme Court or unresolved petitions pending in Family Court are not eligible for the program.
- Parties with a history of domestic abuse or orders of protection are not eligible for the program.
- Both spouses must be willing to participate in the Collaborative Law Process.
- There are no professional fees paid by participants eligible for this program.
- Collaborative lawyers and other professionals are working as volunteers.
- There are no court costs for assistance with a separation agreement.
- There are filing fees associated with processing your divorce. Some participants may qualify to have filing fees waived upon application to the Court. If filing fees are not waived, participants will be responsible for paying fees to the Court.
- If the other spouse does not qualify for a free Collaborative lawyer, the Collaborative Law Process may still be used, as long as the other spouse hires a Collaborative lawyer and all participants sign a Participation Agreement.

## **How do I (We) enroll?**

- Call 607.273.3667 (Legal Assistance of Western New York) and say you are interested in a Collaborative separation or divorce.
- Ask for a Collaborative intake interview to determine your eligibility. The intake interview will happen over the phone. The LAWNY representative will tell you your

next steps.