

LAW OFFICE OF
SUSAN CASTLETON RYAN, P.C.

I WANT A DIVORCE, BUT I'M TOO BROKE TO MOVE OUT!
by Melaney G. Hodge, Esq.

Given the current economic climate, many divorcing couples are forced to continue to reside in the same residence solely for financial reasons. When the case is resolved, you and your spouse will likely not continue to reside together, but at the initial stages of the divorce, coexisting may be a viable alternative to one party obtaining a temporary residence. Divorce alone is stressful, but maintaining a shared residence presents unique and stressing challenges. The following suggestions will assist you through the process and remove some tricky situations from arising:

1. Get a P.O. Box for Personal Mail

It is a federal crime to interfere and/or open mail addressed to someone other than yourself. Despite that, many married individuals open correspondence addressed to their spouse. Those same individuals may continue the pattern after the filing of a divorce complaint. In order to prevent disclosure of your private information from your spouse, obtain a P.O. Box. Make sure you go outside of the town/area you and your spouse reside. Have your individual bank statements, work records, attorney communication, etc., sent to the P.O. Box rather than the address shared with your spouse.

2. Establish Boundaries

Because you and your spouse are parting ways legally, you need to establish some physical separation as well. If you have a spare bedroom, you or your spouse should move personal belongings to that area. Provided you and your spouse agree to your "areas," you should consider placing a lock on the door to establish your privacy. If you disagree, wait until a court hearing and explain to the judge your desire to obtain some privacy.

LAW OFFICE OF
SUSAN CASTLETON RYAN, P.C.
676 BEDFORD STREET

ABINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02351-1922
TEL: (781) 982-8850 • FAX: (781) 982-8872

WEB SITE: scryanlawofficesma.com • EMAIL: SCRYANLAW@VERIZON.NET

3. Create a Definite Parenting Plan

Divorce is a very unsettling experience for children. The uncertainty and tension in the house can lead to behavioral problems and emotional distress. In order to calm your children, avoid arguments, and work towards the ultimate resolution of your divorce, you and your spouse need to designate specific days when each will be responsible for the childcare responsibilities. Taking a calendar, designate the specific dates either parent will be responsible for cooking, helping with homework, etc. On those days, the other parent should not be present, either in another room, or ideally outside of the home. This technique allows for the children to adjust to a “single” parent lifestyle while in the comfort of their own home.

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