



COLLABORATIVE
LAW ALLIANCE
— of NEW HAMPSHIRE —

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**COLLABORATIVE LAW PROCESS TO HELP EASE THE CURRENT CRISIS IN THE
STATE'S FAMILY DIVISION**

*Child-friendly, no-court approach is rapidly changing
the face of Family Law in New Hampshire.*

The Collaborative Law Alliance of New Hampshire (CLANH) announces a solution to the current crisis in the family division of the New Hampshire Court System. On July 25th, Circuit Court Administrative Judge Edwin W. Kelly sent the following urgent message to the New Hampshire Bar Association via e-bulletin regarding the lack of judicial officers available to hear family law cases:

"The Circuit Court will be selecting locations and cases for continuances to accommodate the shortfall of judicial officers. This allows us to give those courts most impacted by the marital master shortage at least some marital hearing time.

I also encourage you to work collaboratively with each other to settle the cases that you can either on your own or using alternative dispute resolution methods, and if you do to notify our courts immediately so that hearing time can be given to others who are waiting."

The CLANH is an association of family law attorneys, mental health practitioners and financial professionals that practice and promote a method of family law practice based on cooperation among the parties rather than confrontation in the courtroom. The Collaborative approach prioritizes the interests of children and seeks to reduce the financial and emotional damage that a litigated case often causes.

Lisa Forberg, a Manchester family law attorney, who is co-chair of CLANH, has been offering Collaborative divorce to her clients since 2006.

"In most cases, everyone benefits when divorcing parties and unmarried parents in conflict resolve their issues without going to court. Preventing emotional damage to children, keeping a privately-held family business going and shielding a company's confidential information from public scrutiny, being able to structure an agreement that considers the authentic needs of both parties, and even the special needs of children, these are outcomes best reached through an out-of-court process based on a model of respect and constructive communication, not warfare."

"We're finding that as more families hear about Collaborative practice, it is fast becoming the preferred choice for many people in this area who are seeking divorces or sorting out parenting

plans, child support, post-divorce and parenting modifications, and other often emotion-laden issues,” said Kimberly Weibrecht of Dover, a family law attorney who is also co-chair of the CLANH.

Collaborative Law is an effective way to solve the problems raised in Judge Kelly’s bulletin since it resolves issues privately, with both parties being fully represented by an attorney. In Collaborative Law, the attorneys pledge at the outset not to go to court. In addition, the parties and their attorneys use independent experts, where appropriate, to help manage the emotional and financial aspects of the case. Parties reach agreement completely outside the court system. Final paperwork is submitted to the court after the negotiation is done, which eliminates the need for any hearings or court events from start to finish.

Collaborative Law is growing rapidly in the state of New Hampshire, and a new group of professionals was recently trained at a two-day training held in Manchester. More than 80 New Hampshire family law attorneys and other professionals have undergone training, which qualifies them to handle Collaborative cases under New Hampshire law. (See the list of practitioners on the web sites at www.collaborativelawnh.org or www.collaborativepractice.com.)