

The Collaborative Process: A Guide for Separating Couples

What happens at collaborative six way meetings?

- A six-way meeting is when you, your spouse/partner and your respective collaborative practitioners come together. The first six-way meeting is where you all become acquainted and start the process.
- Personal and ethical commitments to collaborative practice are explained. You explain why you have chosen collaborative practice and what your highest expectations are for the process.
- You and your spouse/partner each read out your mission statements. Self-determined decision making are discussed and distinguished from conventional negotiations.
- The unique role of the collaborative practitioner (guide to negotiations, facilitator of deep resolution, conflict manager, peace maker) is discussed.
- The role of the law is explained.
- The importance of acting in good faith is explained.
- Participation in the process is reviewed e.g.
 - Good preparation and follow-through are essential.
 - Planning agendas carefully and sticking to them.
 - Taking homework assignments seriously.
 - Honouring interim agreements and understandings.
 - Not acting unilaterally outside meetings.
 - Confining separation/divorce related efforts to the collaborative process and constructive respectful efforts to find mutually acceptable solutions are expected from you, your spouse/partner and your collaborative practitioners.
 - Not hiding facts or information and not concealing goals and concerns.
- Collaborative participation documents are reviewed, discussed and signed.
- Urgent matters are identified and a process for attending to them is agreed upon.

- The agenda for the next meeting is set, homework assignments distributed, and the schedule of forthcoming meetings is put in the calendar.
- After the meeting one of the collaborative practitioners prepares and distributes the Minutes of the meeting as soon as possible afterwards.

Subsequent meetings

- Meetings begin with a review of the agenda and the Minutes of the last meeting.
- Minutes are approved.
- Homework assignments are discussed.
- At the second and perhaps third and fourth meetings if necessary, documents and financial information are exchanged and discussed.
- Goals and priorities are identified and discussed.
- When all financial and other information has been gathered and exchanged to everyone's satisfaction, agreement on the order in which issues will be addressed is reached.
- Brainstorming possibilities for creative resolution of each issue takes place.
- Discussion about the approaches to resolution that are available to judges as contrasted with the broader range of choices available to you in a collaborative process.
- Measuring settlement options against the goals and priorities and values of each participant.
- Arriving at a framework for resolution of all issues.

The final six way meeting

- Reviewing, discussing and signing the Settlement Agreement and any necessary paperwork to support the agreement.
- Review of the successes during the process.
- Helping the participants anticipate future challenges and plan for a collaborative resolution of them.
- An opportunity to acknowledge a job well done.