



How to Choose Your Family Law Attorney

THE LAW OFFICES OF
SHANE AND WHITE, LLC

Kenneth A. White, Esq.
Lauren A. Miceli, Esq.

The Law Offices of Shane and White, LLC

Edison Office:

1676 Route 27
Edison, NJ 08817
P: 732-819-9100
F: 732-572-9641

www.shaneandwhite.com

lawyers@shaneandwhite.com

East Windsor Office:

685 Avon Drive
East Windsor, NJ 08520
P: 609-488-1505
F: 732-572-9641

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There a number of questions that you should ask during your initial consultation with an attorney. These questions should relate to not only the skill level of the attorney, the plans he or she has for your case, as well as their fees. Because the stakes are high in any divorce case, as children and often a great deal of money is at issue, you need to ensure that any attorney you hire is capable and confident in representing your interests. Here is a list of suggested questions that a competent family law attorney will be able to answer, and how the attorneys at Shane and White, LLC match up.

1. How many years have you been an attorney practicing family law?

Kenneth A. White and Lauren A. Miceli have 25 years experience, combined representing parties in all stages of divorce litigation as well as other family law matters, such as modification of custody, modification of alimony, and other post-judgment issues.

2. Do you exclusively practice family law?

Kenneth A. White and Lauren A. Miceli both exclusively practice family law and have dedicated their careers to this area of the law. Mr. White is a Certified Matrimonial Attorney and Ms. Miceli has experience working in multiple courthouses, all within the family law division. They each have a strong background in family law which benefits their clients immensely.

3. Are you a Certified Matrimonial Attorney?

Kenneth A. White is a Certified Matrimonial Attorney. Currently, less than 3% of active New Jersey attorneys hold any type of board certification. If you were seeking the help of a doctor to address a serious medical condition you would likely seek out a Board Certified medical professional. Your potential divorce and family law matter is no less serious or important, and for that reason you should seek the assistance of a Certified Attorney.

For more information about Supreme Court Certification please see the following:
http://www.judiciary.state.nj.us/supreme_doc/njbac/.

4. Do you participate in court sponsored programs or are you regularly appointed to act as mediator by the Courts?

At the request of the court Mr. White serves as an Early Settlement Panelist in Middlesex County. The Early Settlement Panel is comprised of two attorneys appointed by the court to arbitrate divorce cases on a volunteer basis. Mr. White has served in this capacity on a regular basis since 2001. Additionally, Mr. White has been repeatedly appointed by the Family Court to serve as a Guardian *Ad Litem* and as a Certified Matrimonial Mediator for the purpose of helping members of the public bring their family law litigation to a successful conclusion. Ms. Miceli is also a Certified Matrimonial Mediator.

5. Have you ever practiced in my county of residence?

Kenneth A. White and Lauren A. Miceli practice family law in the entire state of New Jersey. Those counties in which they most regularly appear are Middlesex County, Union County, Monmouth County, Ocean County, Morris County, Hudson County, and Essex County. Ms. Miceli has

experience clerking and interning in the family court divisions of Middlesex County, Burlington County and Passaic County.

6. What is your plan and/or strategy for resolving my case?

During your initial consultation you should expect Kenneth A. White and Lauren A. Miceli to provide you with a plan to resolve your case. That plan should include a description of the timelines for court proceedings and what you should reasonably expect by way of support, child support, child custody and equitable distribution. Mr. White and Ms. Miceli will provide guidance based upon the law and the unique facts of your case.

7. If we were to go to trial, what is your trial experience?

It is the intent to Kenneth A. White and Lauren A. Miceli to secure a final resolution of your case by settlement, as almost 99% of matters filed with the Court are resolved by way of settlement. However, if a trial is necessary, Kenneth A. White and Lauren A. Miceli regularly and routinely appear before the Court for oral arguments, plenary hearings and trials for both divorce matters and domestic violence restraining orders.

How comfortable did you feel at the end of the conversation and interview with the attorney? Did you receive direct and responsive answers to these questions? Do you feel at ease with the attorney?

Depending on the answers you received from the potential attorney, you should continue with requesting information regarding the fee structure used by the firm. All of the below questions should be addressed in the attorney's Retainer Agreement.

1. How do you structure your fees?
2. What is your hourly rate?
3. Are there different rates for different attorneys in the office?
4. Will other attorneys or paralegals be working on your case?
5. Will I be billed for additional charges, such as photocopies, faxes, mileage for travel? And at what rates?
6. Will I receive a copy of everything you do? Whether it is sent to the Court or to the other party?
7. Do I, as the client, have any obligations under your retainer agreement?

Take your time reading the Retainer Agreement, and read it carefully. It is a contract between you and your attorney. Upon signing the agreement, you will be obligated to pay for the services provided to you. Every attorney should provide you with sufficient time to review the Agreement in his/her office or, to either take the agreement home to review it with friends or relatives prior to signing.

FOR A CONSULTATION CONTACT
SHANE & WHITE, LLC
732-819-9100
lawyers@shaneandwhite.com