



## **HARRIS DIVORCE & FAMILY LAW**

### **HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO HIRE AN ATTORNEY?**

“How much?” is usually the first thing anyone wants to know when hiring an attorney. Every case differs in its facts and complexity so attorneys are not likely to be able to tell you exactly how much your case will cost you. This is why attorneys utilize retainers. Attorneys listen to a brief summary of what the client believes to be the major issues of their case. Based upon the summary, the attorney can estimate how much time and effort it will take to resolve the case and will quote a retainer. The retainer is a lump sum that the attorney’s firm holds on behalf of the client. The firm will bill against the retainer for every hour of work done on the case, using the hourly rates of each employee. Attorneys charge different hourly rates. Firms generally reserve the highest hourly rates for their most experienced attorneys, while charging a mid-range rate for the associate attorneys. Paralegal rates will fall somewhere below the associate’s rate. A firm that is conscientious of keeping expenses low will generally have an associate attorney or paralegal do the bulk of the document drafting and administrative work.

Family law matters are uniquely personal and emotional issues. As such, the parties sometimes take unreasonable positions on the issues. While this is understandable, it is not beneficial. Any time one party becomes unreasonable, the litigation becomes lengthier; thereby, becoming more expensive. It is always helpful to have the guidance of an attorney to set reasonable expectations. For more information on avoiding litigation, see our handout on the Amicable Divorce Network.

**The cost of an attorney depends upon the facts and complexity of your case**

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**Family law attorneys generally charge hourly fees, billed against a retainer**

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**The attorney’s fees should be laid out in your Attorney-Client Agreement**

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**Clients with unreasonable expectations create protracted litigation**

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295 West Crossville Rd.  
Suite 540  
Roswell, GA 30075

404-437-7597

[www.harrisdivorcelaw.com](http://www.harrisdivorcelaw.com)