



Guide to Divorce Options in Connecticut

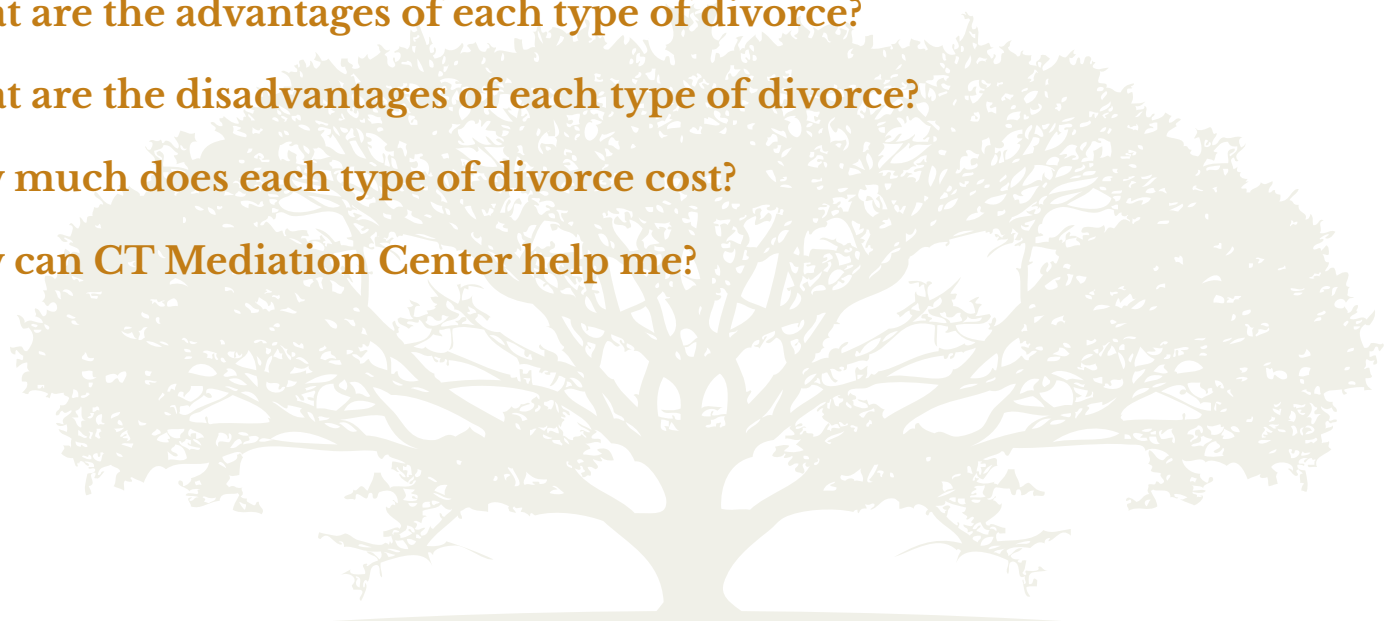
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Divorce is never an easy decision and often is one of the most painful chapters of one's life. Many people struggle with the decision for years. You have many emotions to deal with, the loss of a dream, fear for your and your children's future, anger, guilt, fear of being alone again, etc.

It's hard enough dealing with the emotions of divorce, let alone the division of assets, support agreements and parenting agreements. This guide is provided to you to begin the conversation as to "how" you will be going through the painful divorce or separation process. If unsure where to start, read this guide and share with your spouse.

In this guide we answer the following questions:

- **How do people get a divorce in Connecticut?**
- **What are the advantages of each type of divorce?**
- **What are the disadvantages of each type of divorce?**
- **How much does each type of divorce cost?**
- **How can CT Mediation Center help me?**



How do people get a divorce in Connecticut?

In Connecticut, you have four main options to process your divorce. They range from doing it yourself, to getting guidance, to having lawyers do the entire divorce on your behalf.

Pro Se Divorce	Traditional Litigation	Collaborative Divorce	Divorce Mediation
<p>Pro Se means “for oneself” in Latin.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You and your spouse go to Court on your own, and file all the necessary documents. The Court staff can offer limited help in completing the documents. 	<p>You and your spouse each hire an attorney and litigate your divorce in the family court.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your attorney has an obligation to file certain court motions and to go to court on your behalf if agreements are not reached outside of the courtroom. You may have to take the stand and testify in front of a judge. Witnesses may testify either for or against you. Litigation involves filing of formal discovery motions and engaging in a discovery process (depositions, production of documents, periods of questioning, etc.). In many cases, the spouses and their attorneys go through multiple court hearings. There is generally some negotiation by the parties through their attorneys. Sometimes the case is resolved at the pre-trial conference date if an agreement is reached at that time. A high proportion of litigated divorces end by settlement just prior to or on the first day of trial. However, if the case proceeds to trial, much additional legal expense results. The legal expense increases exponentially as the attorneys must prepare for trial. 	<p>With each spouse represented by an attorney trained in collaborative divorce, you develop agreements regarding marital assets, marital debt, and parenting responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The parties and their counsel sign an agreement that says they will not litigate their divorce with their collaborative divorce lawyers. This agreement removes the threat of litigation, allowing both parties to negotiate in good faith. Your collaborative attorney serves as your legal representative, providing you with advice and counsel throughout the process. The collaborative attorneys may partner with other professionals, such as an accountant, neutral divorce coach or parenting coach, to resolve issues in the best possible way. If negative feelings make it difficult to reach an agreement, a communication or parenting coach can help each side to understand the other’s point of view. The agreement developed between you, your spouse, and your attorneys becomes a binding court order when your divorce is final. 	<p>You and your spouse utilize the services of a neutral mediator to negotiate how you’ll divide your assets, allocate your marital debt, and build a parenting plan in the best interest of your children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your mediator guides the spouses through the entire divorce starting with the filing of all legal documents, the preparation of financial affidavits, and the final document that becomes your binding court-ordered divorce decree. You work with your spouse and the mediator in a series of meetings to develop your own final agreement. Throughout mediation, your mediator remains neutral. Although the mediator may offer guidance or suggestions for creating a better agreement, you’re encouraged to have the final divorce agreement reviewed by your own attorney. In some cases, communication between spouses is so poor that they cannot work with their divorce mediator. During the initial consultation and throughout subsequent meetings, the mediator will evaluate whether the couple can successfully use the process.

What are the advantages of each type of divorce?

Pro Se Divorce	Traditional Litigation	Collaborative Divorce	Divorce Mediation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This process may be best utilized by spouses with a short term marriage and no children. This type of divorce is often driven by lack of funds. Spouses with children, joint assets and debt could encounter various complexities requiring the skills of a divorce attorney.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Litigation entitles you to a legal representative who argues your case and handles procedural issues on your behalf.• If your spouse is unfit or harmful to you or your child(ren), your attorney can serve as a buffer between you and your spouse.• Litigation may be the only option if your spouse has dissipated marital assets without your knowledge or consent.• Litigation may be the best choice when a spouse is physically abusive, dissipates marital funds, fails to disclose assets or terminates employment with the intent to lower income, custody of the children was not mutually decided or other important issues can not be agreed upon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You and your spouse remain in control of your divorce and separation.• All negotiations are private and occur in your attorneys' offices.• Rather than working with one neutral professional mediator, you have the added protection of being represented by your own legal counsel through the entire process and receiving legal advice as needed.• No pressure while negotiating with your spouse. Ample time allotted to reach mutual and workable agreements.• Spouses who have difficulty reaching decisions are supported through the process by their individual counsel.• Collaborative divorce costs more than divorce mediation; however, more often than not, it is less expensive than traditional litigation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You and your spouse remain in control of your divorce and separation.• You and your spouse co-write your divorce agreement. A divorce mediator who is also a divorce attorney will cover all aspects of divorce and separation with the spouses.• Mediation is the least expensive way to divorce.

What are the disadvantages of each type of divorce?

Pro Se Divorce	Traditional Litigation	Collaborative Divorce	Divorce Mediation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Filing "pro se" may not be wise if you have children, a residence, retirement assets, joint debt or other joint assets or real-estate. If something is missed or not correctly addressed, numerous problems can arise later. There can be a need later for an attorney to fix or correct outstanding issues missed during the initial divorce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Litigation makes it difficult to collaborate with your spouse on future issues, such as co-parenting, because you and your spouse do not establish the framework for healthy communication and problem solving. The litigation process itself takes over and determines your outcome. The power and control is in the hands of the court and the attorneys involved. Often, spouses are given ultimatums while negotiating under stress and emotional pressure in crowded court hallways. Changing one's mind after an agreement being reached may not be possible. A divorce settled through the litigation process can become expensive very quickly. If both parents dispute child custody, the cost can become financially ruinous. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative divorce may not work if financial or emotional or physical abuse exists, although you can use neutral financial or communication coaches to support you throughout the divorce process. If you do not reach an agreement, then you will have to hire new attorneys and proceed to litigation and trial. Fortunately, the majority of collaborative divorce cases settle without litigation and trial. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mediation may not work if financial, emotional, or physical abuse exists. Spouses do not receive individual legal representation from the mediator because the divorce mediator remains neutral. The divorce mediator provides legal and financial information only, not individual legal advice. The spouses have the option to meet with their individual attorneys, if and as needed, and as often as needed, to offer them independent legal advice. The spouses have the option to also meet with a child psychologist or parenting coach to address high conflict custody, if needed. The spouses have the option and time to consult and obtain information from other experts, such as accountants, business valuers, pension valuers, retirement specialists, financial planners, college planners, etc. Knowledge is power, and a well-informed client is the best mediation client.

How much does each type of divorce cost?

Pro Se Divorce	Traditional Litigation	Collaborative Divorce	Divorce Mediation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CT court fees are the same for all spouses who file for divorce or custody in Connecticut.• No additional legal fees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each case starts with a minimum initial retainer. The retainer amount varies in CT for different attorneys.• The overall total cost can reach \$20,000 or more per person. Custody arguments usually result in much higher costs. As needed, each spouse hires his or her own separate experts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hourly rates vary per attorney in CT, but they usually range between \$250 and \$450 per hour.• Total collaborative divorce costs usually amount to between \$7,000 and \$20,000 or more for each spouse.• You can split the total cost of collaborative divorce evenly with your spouse.• You may have to pay additional fees if financial professionals or other divorce professionals are needed during the divorce process, rather than each of you retaining separate experts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hourly rates in CT range between \$250 and \$450 per hour.• The total mediation cost, depending on how many meetings are required, usually ranges between \$1,500 and \$6,000 or more. You may incur additional costs if you need other professionals to help you settle marital financial issues.• You split the entire cost with your spouse.• If you're uncomfortable with a single mediator, you can also choose co-mediation. This process pairs both you and your spouse with two mediators, a gender neutral team, one male and one female, to give you a safer feeling throughout your negotiations. Employing two mediators will increase your hourly costs.

How can CT Mediation Center help me?

At CT Mediation Center, we specialize in divorce mediation, collaborative divorce and amicable and peaceful divorce. We have specialized training in collaborative divorce, mediation and negotiations as well as specialized training in all financial aspects of divorce. As divorce attorneys and divorce financial professionals, we have both practical and educational legal training and experience in all aspects of divorce such as, parenting coordination, handling all complex financial aspects of divorce, such as pension valuations,

retirement divisions, child and spousal support calculations, and overall division of the marital asset and debt. We prepare all the legal documents from the start of a divorce to the conclusion. We try to avoid serving divorce papers through a state marshal in all the Courts that allow such process. We will go to Court with you at the end of the case to present your agreement to the Court, and we utilize the same software as the CT Courts.

We focus our entire legal practice in collaborative family law and divorce mediation. We ONLY practice constructive, peaceful divorce. Our specialized training, practical and professional experience will help you and your changing families create a new beginning without the emotional and financial cost of litigation.

For more information, email, call or complete the information on the “Contact Us” page of our website. For in depth information regarding amicable, constructive, peaceful divorce through the process of mediation or collaborative divorce, visit CTMediationCenter.com.

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We have 4 professionally trained and experienced mediators and 5 office locations in CT:

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16 Granite Street New London, CT 06320	100 Riverview Center, Suite 318 Middletown, CT 06457	