

Executive Level Spouse & Divorce in California

My wife is a homemaker and I hold an executive level position (CFO) at a Fortune 500 organization. During the divorce process, is there anything I need to pay special attention to as it relates to my job?

This is a good question, as the answer is “yes”. Executives going through the divorce process in California are unique on several fronts. Skilled family law attorneys experienced with these cases handle each with a modified approach:

Expert Witnesses

Majority of executives are either [self-employed](#) or [compensated in a manner that is different from the average individual](#). For this reason, experienced divorce lawyers will typically retain a [forensic accountant](#) early on to determine the cash flow and income figures as they may apply to [child support](#), [spousal support](#) and/or attorney’s fees.

Marital Balance Sheet

Executive divorces are typically more complex in estate finances, so preparation must be done early on, and is usually preceded with the preparation of a marital balance sheet. A marital balance sheet identifies assets, including the value of each, any [separate or community property](#) claims to the asset, proposed division, and any reimbursement claims that exist. This marital balance sheet is subsequently used to ensure mandatory disclosures are done properly.

Child custody

Executives have busy, sometimes unpredictable schedules. As a result, the time an executive spends with the children can vary weekly and monthly. Therefore, it’s important that custody issues be resolved quickly and efficiently. Over time as divorces are litigated, we’ve seen drama, games and bitterness enter into the equation. The idea is to avoid this altogether.

Attorney Fees

Chances are high that [your spouse will ask for her attorney’s fees to be paid by you](#). This is a common occurrence in cases like yours unless the spouse has a similar income. Planning and preparing for this is critical. We usually look at any community property funds that can be divided with your spouse early on in attempt to avoid attorney fee requests.

Unethical lawyers

There are lawyers and law firms who may claim to have your best interests as a priority, but ultimately have your billing as their focus. Beware of any lawyer that tells you that court litigation is the only option, or litigation is best to “defeat” your spouse during the divorce process. California family law protects the lesser earning spouse. If your wife has a good attorney, unnecessary litigation tactics will backfire, including significant attorney fee orders against you.