

Cut-Off Agreements in Divorce

When couples decide to divorce, the traditional first step is filing a Complaint for Divorce with the court. While this is sometimes necessary, there is another option that can save time, money, and stress: the **Cut-Off Agreement**.

What is a Cut-Off Agreement?

A Cut-Off Agreement is a written agreement between spouses that serves the same essential function as a Complaint for Divorce - it sets the **official end date of the marriage** for legal purposes, such as determining assets, debts, and other financial matters.

Unlike a formal court filing, a Cut-Off Agreement is done **outside of the court system**. This means couples can continue working toward a resolution without triggering immediate court involvement.

Why Use a Cut-Off Agreement?

Cut-Off Agreements are a valuable tool in cases where both parties desire to resolve their divorce amicably outside of court - through **direct negotiation or mediation** - instead of costly and stressful litigation.

The benefits include:

1. Avoiding Unnecessary Court Appearances

By not filing a Complaint immediately, the parties avoid the formal court process and the multiple court dates that can follow. This reduces the emotional toll and disruption to daily life.

2. Saving Time and Money

Court appearances are expensive, because attorneys must prepare and attend. A Cut-Off Agreement allows spouses to focus their resources on settlement discussions rather than court battles.



3. Encouraging Cooperative Resolution

Because the process is less adversarial, it often fosters better communication and collaboration, which can be especially important for co-parents.

4. Maintaining the Legal Protections of a Complaint

Even though the agreement is not filed in court, it still establishes the “cut-off” date for marital issues - protecting both parties’ rights if settlement talks break down and a Complaint must be filed later.

When Are Cut-Off Agreements Appropriate?

This approach works best when:

- Both spouses are willing to negotiate in good faith, or
- There is commitment to exploring mediation or other alternative dispute resolution methods, or
- There is no immediate need for court intervention (e.g., for emergencies, restraining orders, or urgent support issues).

Our Approach at Lawrence Law

At **Lawrence Law**, we use Cut-Off Agreements as part of our commitment to helping clients navigate divorce with efficiency, dignity, and respect. By keeping matters out of court when possible, we give clients more control over the process and help them reach out resolutions that work for their families.

If you are considering divorce and want to explore whether a Cut-Off Agreement is right for you, contact us to schedule a confidential consultation. Together, we can determine the approach that best protects your rights while minimizing unnecessary conflict.

