

## The Threat of Divorce is Looming... How to Prepare and Plan

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By Deb Johnson, ChFC, CDFATM

On our wedding day, when we said, "til death do us part", we meant it... or so we thought. When you feel all attempts at reconciliation have failed, and it is clear that you are faced with irreconcilable differences in your marriage partnership, it is time to get organized and become knowledgeable about the financial aspects of your divorce.

- **CREDIT** - Request and carefully review your credit report. Good credit will be essential to a secure financial future and your ability to rebuild financially post divorce. Identify all open credit accounts-those that are held jointly, as well as in your name alone. You will see that only partial account numbers appear on the credit report, therefore, you will need to find statements or the actual card to properly document all account numbers. Then, since the actual credit report will not provide contact information, you will want to find detailed contact information for each creditor from the back of the card, the statement or perhaps the website. Next, you should decide what action you want to take on each account (i.e. close or freeze the account, remove unauthorized users, or leave open) and then, in writing, notify the creditors of the change in account status. If you do not receive confirmation from the creditor that your request was processed, it is prudent to follow up with them. Finally, when your divorce decree is signed, it is important to send another letter to the creditors AND each of the three credit reporting bureaus advising them that you are divorced and the date of your decree.
- **FINANCIAL DATA** - When it appears that divorce is imminent, it is time to become well informed with regard to your family's financial status. Begin by gathering and copying your financial records including most recent tax returns (personal and business), credit card statements, bank statements, check registers investment account statements, retirement account statements (make sure to get information on any pension plans), mortgage and other real estate information information, loan applications. In other words copy everything that has to do with your financial situation. Doing it now will save you time and money as the divorce process unfolds.

Divorce *is* difficult-- but it does not have to be financially devastating. It is important that you surround yourself with the right team of professionals very early in the process to guide you through the complex maze of dissolving a marriage, and to help you make informed financial decisions.

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Send questions or comments to Deb Johnson, ChFC, CDFATM  
at [deb@drcofcolorado.com](mailto:deb@drcofcolorado.com) or call (303) 468-5626.  
[www.drcofcolorado.com](http://www.drcofcolorado.com)