

## What does a family lawyer do?

Family law deals with family-related issues and domestic relations. Most family law practices focus on representing clients in a divorce and the issues related to divorce such as the division of marital property, child custody and support, and alimony. Family lawyers also draft prenuptial and postnuptial agreements and litigate related matters. Some family lawyers represent victims or perpetrators of domestic violence in civil protection order proceedings and defend clients accused of domestic violence in criminal proceedings. Adoption and guardianship, juvenile delinquency, and child abuse and neglect are also areas of family law.

Five Maryland circuit courts have Family Divisions which adjudicate divorce, custody, alimony, child support, visitation, marital property, paternity, adoption, juvenile delinquency matters, hearings for children in need of assistance (dependent and neglected), and civil protection order cases. These cases often involve contested hearings before both masters and judges.

While there are some family lawyers who have developed a particular specialty, such as adoption law, most family lawyers have expertise in a number of practice areas. Moreover, family lawyers must have a wide range of legal skills as they draft and negotiate contracts, pleadings, and other legal documents; litigate contested matters; counsel clients on their legal rights and options; and attempt to resolve disputes. They also must have exceptional interpersonal skills and be adept in managing emotionally volatile situations.

## Where can I practice family law?

Many family lawyers work in small law firms that specialize in family law or midsized law firms with a family law practice. Others work in nonprofit legal services organizations that represent low income clients in various family law matters. Attorneys with the Maryland Office of Public Defender, Children in Need of Defense (CINA) Division, provide legal representation for parents and guardians in court proceedings regarding the abuse or neglect of a child. Most State's Attorney's offices have specialized units that handle domestic violence, child abuse and child support matters.

## How can I get a job as a family lawyer?

Choose to satisfy the Family Law Area of Concentration. Take all the courses offered on family law. Consider taking a tax course. Participate in the Family Law Clinic; the Family Mediation Clinic; the Family Law Workshop; or the Center for Families, Children and the Courts Student Fellows Program if you can. Join the Family Law Association, the Maryland State Bar Association Family and Juvenile Law Section, and the American Bar Association Section of Family Law and attend events. Develop your litigation and advocacy skills by participating in Moot Court. Become a certified mediator by taking the training course offered by UB's Center for Negotiation and Conflict Resolution. Volunteer with a nonprofit that provides family law-related legal services, such as the Women's Law Center of Maryland, the House of Ruth, or the Legal Aid Bureau of Maryland. Work as a law clerk at a law firm that specializes in family law. (You can find family law firms, as well as UB alumni who practice family law, by doing a search on [www.martindale.com](http://www.martindale.com).) Another option is to work as a judicial law clerk or intern with a Family Division judge.

## Where can I learn more?

ABA, Family Law Section - [www.abanet.org/family/](http://www.abanet.org/family/)

American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers - <http://www.aaml.org/>

Circuit Court, Baltimore City, Family Law Division - <http://www.baltocts.state.md.us/divisions/family.html>

Guide to Careers in Child and Family Policy - <http://cfp.igpa.uiuc.edu/>

The House of Ruth - <http://www.houseofruth.org/>

Legal Aid Bureau of Maryland - <http://www.mdlab.org/>

Maryland Judiciary, Department of Family Administration - <http://www.courts.state.md.us/family/index.html>

Maryland Office of Public Defender, Children in Need of Defense (CINA) Division -

<http://www.opd.state.md.us/opd/Divisions/CINA.aspx>

Maryland State Bar Association, Family and Juvenile Law Division -

[http://www.msba.org/sec\\_comm/sections/family/](http://www.msba.org/sec_comm/sections/family/)

Megalaw's Family Law Websites - <http://www.megalaw.com/top/family/famweb.php>

Women's Law Center of Maryland - <http://www.wlcmd.org/>

## Who teaches family law at UB?

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