

### **Family and Domestic Relations Law**

When families change, the emotional impact on every member of the family can make it difficult to make sound decisions. Our family law group has the expertise to guide clients through the legal issues and court proceedings that resolve those family changes. From adopting a child, to negotiating and drafting premarital agreements and navigating the legal process of dissolving a marriage, Icard Merrill's family law lawyers provide invaluable advice and advocacy to families undergoing change. Our lawyers understand that divorce need not result in financial disaster and are dedicated to preventing financial upheaval through the legal process. After a divorce, our lawyers represent clients frequently in matters involving a change of custody, modification of visitation and support issues that affect clients' relationships with their children and their former spouses. Our firm also handles stepparent adoptions.

Our family lawyers have extensive experience in the financial analysis required to justly resolve child support, alimony and property settlement disputes. We also understand that other areas of law are affected by family changes, particularly estate planning, tax, business and corporate and real estate. We work closely with other members of the firm to assist our clients in understanding and addressing the full range of legal issues that arise in family law cases. We also strive to resolve family law cases, whenever possible, through a negotiated or mediated settlement. Our skilled trial lawyers vigorously advocate our clients' interests in the courtroom if settlement is not possible or appropriate.

### **Child Custody**

Our firm is frequently involved in child custody matters, whether they be in connection with the initial divorce of the parents, in the process of paternity proceedings or subsequent to a divorce where there has been a change in circumstances since the original determination as to custody was made. Child custody can include not only a determination as to where the child would primarily reside, but the manner and method of contact and visitation which the non-custodial parent would be entitled to exercise and the sharing of parental responsibilities.

### **Child Support**

An action to determine child support is typically incidental to a dissolution of marriage or paternity proceeding. The attorneys at Icard Merrill assist persons seeking to establish, enforce or modify a child support determination.

### **Dissolution of Marriage**

We handle all aspects of dissolution of marriage, also referred to commonly as divorce, in Florida. These

proceedings would involve the identification, valuation and distribution of the assets and liabilities acquired during a marriage as well as issues of alimony and spousal support. If the parties have minor children, dissolution proceedings would also address the determination of custody and contact regarding the children and all aspects of the children's support.

### **Domestic Violence**

When physical violence occurs, or there is a threat of physical harm between persons that are presently married, formerly married, related by blood or marriage, or have a child in common, there are civil proceedings to obtain a domestic violence injunction or restraining order to prevent future violence, grant custody of children, award support, and obtain exclusive use of a home. The grant of a domestic violence injunction is available when an immediate and present danger of harm exists. Domestic violence injunctions have civil and criminal ramifications. The attorneys at Icard Merrill assist persons seeking to obtain, maintain or defend a domestic violence action.

### **Paternity**

Paternity cases involve establishing legally the identity of the natural father of a child in instances where the parties are not married. In such proceedings, all aspects of that relationship are adjudicated, including the determination of the rights and obligations of both parents in respect to the care and support of the child (or children).

### **Post Judgment Modifications**

After the entry of a final judgment of dissolution of marriage or paternity action, it may be necessary to modify the terms of the final judgment because of a change in the circumstances of the parties or their minor children. The attorneys of Icard Merrill assist persons seeking to modify the custodial arrangements, including visitation, of their minor children or modification of financial support between former spouses (alimony) or child support.

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