



# ISBELL FINANCIAL

Forensic Financial Consulting Services



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## ✓ Financial Checklist How to Financially Prepare For Your Divorce

If you have made the decision to file for a divorce, there are a few things you should do to prepare prior to filing. Below is a checklist to help you in this preparation process:

- ✓ **Obtain a copy of your credit report.** This is very easy to do by visiting the following website: [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) This is the only authorized online source for you to get a free credit report under federal law. You can get a free report from each of the three national credit reporting companies every 12 months. It is important to understand where you stand with your credit prior to filing for a divorce.
- ✓ **Obtain a credit card in your own name.** Once your divorce is final, it may be more difficult to obtain a credit card in your name only, if you don't already have one. This will help you establish credit individually.
- ✓ **Open a bank account in your own name.** If all of your bank accounts are jointly held with your spouse, you should open a bank account in your name only.
- ✓ **Gather your documents.** Obtain a copy of all of your financial records to include: bank account statements, brokerage account statements, retirement account statements, credit card statements, loan statements, mortgage account statements, etc. It is very important to fully understand your financial status when filing for a divorce. Keep these copies outside of your house, perhaps with a friend or family member. Try to obtain at least 3 months of statements.
- ✓ **Income Tax Returns.** Make a copy of your Income Tax Returns. You should copy at least the last three years tax returns including all of the documents that were used to prepare the Returns.
- ✓ **Write out your current budget.** Understand where you stand financially and what it is currently costing you to live as a married couple.
- ✓ **Photograph your possessions.** Go through your house and photograph each room and all of your possessions. If a dispute arises regarding the existence or location of any items, this will help you to prove that it was in the house and where. Using a digital camera with a date stamp is very helpful for this, just be sure to keep the photographs in a safe place, perhaps with a friend or family member, or a secure location on the Web if taken digitally.
- ✓ **Separate Property.** If you have property you owned prior to the marriage, or received as a gift or through inheritance during the marriage, it is very important to have all of the necessary documentation to be able to prove your separate property is actually yours. You will need to gather all of your statements from the date of marriage (or date of receipt in the case of a gift or inheritance) to present in order to prove your claim. If you don't have the statements or didn't keep them, you will need to obtain them. If your property is real estate, you will need to have your closing documents from the purchase as well as bank statements associated with payments made for the purchase. Your attorney or financial professional will be able to discuss this with you further.

- ✓ **Paystubs.** If you don't keep your paystubs, you need to start. Obtain copies of the most recent paystubs for your spouse as well.
- ✓ **The Family Business.** If you and/or your spouse, own a business, either individually or jointly, you need to gather information for that business as well. Be sure to obtain copies of bank statements, income tax returns and financial statements for your business. If the business uses a financial software program, such as QuickBooks, be sure to save a backup copy and keep it in a place that will be readily accessible, perhaps with a friend or family member.
- ✓ **Find a Financial Professional to help you.** Having the help and advice of a financial professional that understands the divorce laws in Texas can be invaluable during your divorce. This person will be able to help you understand your current financial situation and can help you understand the short and long term financial impact of any proposed division of marital assets as well as potential tax implications.

*Cheryl Isbell* is a CPA, Certified Fraud Examiner, Certified Divorce Financial Analyst™ and the Owner and Founder of Isbell Financial, a forensic financial consulting services firm that provides litigation support, fraud examinations and forensic financial consulting services. Ms. Isbell has more than 25 years of experience in financial services and is a testifying financial expert in litigated matters. To contact Ms. Isbell, please email her at [cheryl@isbellfinancial.com](mailto:cheryl@isbellfinancial.com) or visit her website at [www.isbellfinancial.com](http://www.isbellfinancial.com)