



FAMILY LAW TERMS

ADAPTED FROM BLACK'S LAW DICTIONARY, SEVENTH EDITION (1999)

These are scaled down versions of those definitions and are for informational purposes only. Nothing herein should be considered legal advice.

Alienation of Affections:

A tort claim for willful or malicious interference with a marriage by a third party without justification or excuse.

Alimony:

An allowance that one spouse pays to another for the maintenance and support which continues after divorce.

Annulment:

A judicial or ecclesiastical decree that a marriage is void – that the marriage never existed.

Condonation:

An implied forgiveness of an offense by treating the offender as if there had been no offense; a spouse's forgiveness implied by continuing to live normally with the other spouse after that spouse has committed an offense that would otherwise be grounds for a divorce.

Criminal Conversation:

A tort action for adultery against the third party.

Divorce:

The legal dissolution of a marriage by a Court.

Divorce from Bed and Board:

A partial or qualified divorce by which parties are separated and forbidden to live or cohabit, without affecting the marriage itself.

Equitable Distribution:

The division of marital property by a Court under statutory guidelines that provide for a fair, but not necessarily equal, allocation of the property between spouses.

Marital Property: Property that is acquired from the time when a marriage begins until one spouse files for divorce – or is separated with the intent for it to be permanent. (This is a complicated concept that can be explained further by an attorney.)

Marriage: The legal union of a man and a woman as husband and wife.

Separate Property: Property that a spouse owned before marriage or acquired during marriage by gift or inheritance from a third party, or property acquired after the spouses have begun living apart with the intent to be permanently separated. (This is a complicated concept that can be explained further by an attorney.)

Separation: An arrangement whereby a husband and wife live apart from each other while remaining married.

Separation Agreement: An agreement between spouses in the process of divorce concerning alimony, property division, child custody and support, etc.