

Matrimonial Project

New York Legal Assistance Group



Mission of the Matrimonial Project

NYLAG's Matrimonial Project makes a difference for low income families encountering difficult times. Project attorneys provide consultation, advocacy and representation to low-income clients seeking assistance with matrimonial issues, including contested and uncontested divorces.

Divorce can be one of the most significant events in a person's life, with some of the longest lasting ramifications. However, the law does not provide a right to counsel in divorce matters. Many of the legal issues attendant to divorce are complex, involving families' financial and emotional well being. Matrimonial Project attorneys provide assistance to the most vulnerable litigants, including battered women and non-monied spouses seeking their fair share of assets and custody of their children. NYLAG is one of the few organizations offering experienced representation in both contested and uncontested divorce matters.

For our clients, many of whom are domestic violence survivors, divorce is the final step in achieving autonomy and a life free from violence. The Matrimonial Project helps vulnerable spouses secure safe and equitable divorce outcomes, including child support, division of marital debt and the distribution of marital assets.

Project Services

NYLAG's Matrimonial Project provides legal assistance and representation services, including:

- Pursuing divorce judgments in contested and uncontested matters
- Resolving issues of equitable distribution, maintenance, child support, exclusive occupancy and child custody
- Obtaining and enforcing orders for child and spousal support
- Securing awards for child custody and safe and appropriate visitation

450 W. 33rd Street, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10001

Phone 212.613.5000
Fax 212.750.0820

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www.nylag.org

Economic Empowerment for Long-term Stability

For low-income spouses facing divorce, the long-term implications of can be great. The legal issues impact their most fundamental needs, such as where they will live, how to support and feed their children, and achieve long-term self-sufficiency for themselves and their families.

NYLAG provides legal assistance to indigent and working poor litigants facing financial issues attendant to divorce, including securing and enforcing child and spousal support orders, and money judgments. The Project also offers the opportunity to improve clients' financial literacy, access to benefits, and job readiness resources, all critical for long-term self-sufficiency.

Changing Lives: True Stories

Mrs. B, a 50-year old woman, was married to her husband for 26 years. During their marriage, Mr. B refused to provide financial assistance for household expenses and hid his money in a variety of accounts. Mrs. B worked outside the home, but was unable to make ends meet, particularly with the added health expenses of caring for a mentally disabled child. At the time of her divorce, Mrs. B discovered that her low-paying job disqualified her from free legal assistance from other legal aid programs in New York City, but that attorneys from NYLAG could help her. NYLAG represented Mrs. B and successfully negotiated a settlement that allowed her to keep her home, thus providing a stable environment for her mentally disabled 18-year old son. She also received a financial settlement that covered the outstanding marital debts and allowed her to live free from the fear of poverty.

Community Outreach, Advocacy and Education

Matrimonial Project attorneys participate in community outreach and education to lawyers, social service professionals, advocates and community members. They offer educational programs and information resources to organizations serving low-income and at-risk populations.

NYLAG attorneys also serve on coalitions and task forces shaping legal reform. Matrimonial Project attorneys have been actively engaged in proposing changes to laws, including fair and workable no-fault divorce and establishing maintenance guidelines. They work closely with advocates, provide recommendations to lawmakers, and work in forums to ensure that the rights of vulnerable litigants will be protected.

How to Contact Us

NYLAG's Matrimonial Project case handlers are available for consultation in divorce matters on Tuesdays and Fridays from 9:00am-3:00pm.

Please call our main number at 212.613.5000, ext. 2.