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pg. xx

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FEBRUARY 2016



Focused on Family

Local leaders in family law

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Conflict Resolution

Williams Family Law helps clients achieve the best possible outcomes in matters of divorce, child custody and other family law cases PAGE xx

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ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE PHILADELPHIA SUBURBS

by JENNIFER UPDIKE
photography by ALLURE WEST STUDIOS

It is probably no surprise that family law—divorce, child custody, child support, spousal support and more—can be one of the most contentious and emotional areas of legal practice.

What may come as a surprise to those outside the legal profession is just how significant a role conflict of interest plays when seeking an attorney. In family law, perhaps more so than any other practice area, people looking for a top-caliber divorce attorney or child custody attorney may find themselves out of luck if they haven't secured representation as soon as a dispute arises.

That is because once an attorney from one firm has agreed to represent a party in a family law matter, no other attorneys in that firm may represent the opposing party. In other words, if you need a great divorce attorney, you need to act quickly.

"This is something we see quite frequently," says Jeffrey M. Williams, founder and managing partner of Williams Family Law, P.C. "Someone will call us looking for a divorce lawyer in Bucks County, but their spouse already beat them to the punch. It becomes a race to hire the best divorce lawyers in town."

For Bucks County families seeking legal counsel from a family law attorney, the landscape shifted considerably earlier this year. In January, leading Bucks County divorce attorney Susan J. Smith joined Doylestown-based Williams Family Law. Widely recognized as one of the top family law attorneys in Bucks and Montgomery counties, Smith previously headed the family law group at Fox Rothschild's Bucks County office.

For years, Smith and the attorneys of Williams Family Law represented clients on opposite sides of the negotiating table and the courtroom. Now, however, Smith and Williams, who are among Bucks County's most respected family law attorneys, will be working at the same firm.

"Once we agree to represent a client, we are committed to that client completely," says Smith. "That means that whichever party secures our services first gets our representation, and our track record of success in high-stakes, high-conflict, high-income family litigation speaks for itself."

Smith joined Williams and the strong team of associates at Williams Family Law in January. The move came after decades of working in family law in Bucks County, often sitting with a client facing Williams' attorneys as he or she represented the other party.

"Susan's reputation for pragmatic yet aggressive advocacy for her clients precedes her," he says. "She's the perfect complement to the litigators at Williams Family Law, and with the addition of Susan, our collective knowledge and experience in the area of family law is unparalleled."

Together, the five attorneys at Williams Family Law—Williams and Smith, along with associates Robert J. Salzer, Adam H. Tanker and Jennifer R. Ryan—form an interdisciplinary team that can support clients facing even the most complex family law situation.

"Whether they are facing a bitter divorce, seeking to value retirement benefits



Conflict

Jeffrey M. Williams, founder of Williams Family Law, with Susan J. Smith, a prominent divorce attorney who recently joined the firm



for matrimonial litigation or looking for a powerful advocate in a child custody dispute, clients come to us with a wide variety of legal concerns,” says Salzer, a former Bucks County prosecutor who is no stranger to contentious litigation.

The attorneys work together to support each other on each client’s matter, regardless of which attorney is the lead on the case. Strategy meetings are common, and every attorney knows that the others are available for consultation on a regular basis.

“Each of us brings different strengths to the mix,” says Tanker, another former Bucks County prosecutor who also serves as a child advocate and guardian for the Montgomery County Child Advocacy Project.

One of the competitive advantages Williams Family Law offers clients is the firm’s depth of knowledge of the family court system in Pennsylvania in general and Bucks County in particular.

Williams has been a leader in family law in Bucks County and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania since being admitted to practice in 1981. An active member of the Pennsylvania Bar Association’s Family Law Section, he has served as a section officer, including chairing the section, for many years. Most recently, he lent his support to the effort to pass House Bill 380, which would reduce Pennsylvania’s waiting period for a contested, no-fault divorce from two years to one year.

Recognized over the years with many honors and awards, Williams was named the Best Lawyers 2015 Family Law “Lawyer of the Year” for the Philadelphia metro area. Only one lawyer in each practice area in a designated metropolitan area is named Lawyer of the Year, making it a singular honor.

Williams Family Law offers clients the largest family law practice of any Bucks County firm and has been headquartered in Doylestown, the county seat and home to the Bucks County courthouse, since its inception. Prior to that, Williams was a partner in a Bucks County law firm from which two of the partners went on to become county judges.

“We know Bucks County’s family law system inside and out, and we are focused on providing our clients with the most effective legal counsel possible,” says Williams. “When they come to us, they know they are getting our firm’s full commitment, provided by the most skilled and experienced attorneys Bucks County has to offer.” ■



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—Jeffrey M. Williams, shown here with fellow attorneys (left to right) Robert J. Salzer and Adam H. Tanker

Resolution

Williams Family Law helps clients achieve the best possible outcomes in matters of divorce, child custody and other family law cases