

COLLABORATIVE FAMILY LAW PRINCIPLES

1. **Team approach** - The lawyers and the clients work together as a team of equals, all pulling together on the same side of the problem.
2. **Court is not an option** - Neither lawyer can commence a legal proceeding or threaten to do so during the CFL process. This provides an incentive for the lawyers and their clients to keep working together to find acceptable solutions and unleashes creative, *out of the box* problem solving. The team may include neutral experts where needed.
3. **Recognition of the interdependence of the parties** - There is a shared belief that the best possible outcome can only be achieved if the needs and interests of both parties are met. Clients are not expected to agree with each other, but to accept that the other, along with his or her perspective and belief system, is a necessary partner in creating a solution.
4. **Focus on interests** - Collaborative negotiations are interest-based, rather than adversarial. The parties exchange information and consider all available options before choosing the best solution to meet their identified interests.
5. **Law is not the only standard** - Although CFL lawyers inform their clients about their legal rights and obligations, they encourage the parties not to limit themselves to outcomes dictated by the law.
6. **Process and outcome are of equal importance** - In collaborative negotiation, the parties seek to understand and to be understood. The lawyers, in consultation with the parties, bear responsibility for creating a respectful, effective negotiation process. The parties own the outcome.