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## 5 Tips for Military Spouses who May Be Thinking about Divorce

By STEPHANIE BAKER

### 3. Find an attorney with experience in military divorce.

In any divorce, it is important to find an experienced attorney, but military divorces have additional complications. All the legal processes will be the same as for a civilian couple on the state level, but there are a few federal laws like the Soldiers' and Sailors' Relief Act and the Uniformed Services Former Spouses' Protection Act, that affect military divorce exclusively. When looking for an attorney, it is crucial to find someone who has plenty of experience with the unique circumstances of military divorce and can answer any questions you may have about what to expect. Also, be sure your attorney has experience in mediation and in the courtroom.

### 4. Use military resources to your advantage.

There are many resources available to military families, and you are still part of one. Judge Advocate General (JAG) can answer some of your legal questions as long as your spouse has not already approached them, and a chaplain or military mental health professional may be available to you for counseling at no cost. The U.S. Armed Forces Legal Assistance (AFLA) is available to active, retired, and reservist military personnel and their lawful dependents free of charge depending on the availability of their staff. You will still be required to pay any court costs.

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"Coming from a divorced military family, I remember how helpful the base chaplains were for me as a child caught in the middle," says Stephen Sochor, Marketing and Advertising Professional in the Chicago area. "I would recommend that anyone in the service considering divorce discuss their position with both a chaplain and a military lawyer. Since there are a number of circumstances that hinder military marriages vs. those for civilians the best idea would be to seek a counselor who has experience dealing with military families."

### 5. Start shopping to replace military benefits you may lose.

While your children will still be covered by your spouse's health and dental insurance if you decide to get a divorce, you most likely will not be. Do your homework on this one. Research insurance plans so you can get coverage without having to pay the extra cost incurred from a lapse. Also, if you plan on collecting child or spousal support, now is a good time to look into disability insurance for your spouse in case he or she gets injured and cannot pay. [Insurancefinder.com](http://Insurancefinder.com) is a good place to shop for insurance policies, and the service is free.

*Stephanie Baker is a writer of fashion, travel and lifestyles for McClatchy newspapers and magazines in Georgia.*

I would recommend that anyone in the service considering divorce discuss their position with both a chaplain and a military lawyer.

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