

ARAB COMMUNITY
CENTRE OF **TORONTO**



مركز الجالية
العربية في **تورنتو**



NOUR

Navigating Our Rights Project

NOUR is Funded by



**The Law
Foundation
of Ontario**
Advancing access to justice

**La Fondation
du droit
de l'Ontario**
Améliorer l'accès à la justice





NOUR
Navigating Our Rights Project

FAMILY LAW PUBLIC EDUCATION GUIDE

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GENERAL INFORMATION. NOT PERSONAL ADVICE.

This guide explains general legal information only. It does not assess your facts or replace advice from a qualified professional.

Rules can change quickly. Before making any decisions, confirm current rules and instructions on official websites.



02 Navigating Our Rights (NOUR) Project

Family Law in Ontario



WHY WE'RE HERE

Family law affects real people and real families. This session helps you understand your rights, options, and next steps in Ontario.



WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

The basics of Ontario family law, key considerations, and how to access support and resources.



WHO IT'S FOR

Individuals, parents, caregivers, and anyone supporting a family through change.



KEY TAKEAWAY



Knowledge empowers you to make informed choices and advocate for what matters most, your family.

03 What Family Law Covers

Family law governs the legal rights and responsibilities that arise from family relationships, especially when couples separate or parents arrange care for children.

KEY AREAS



SEPARATION / DIVORCE

Ending a relationship
and resolving legal
matters.



PARENTING / SUPPORT

Decisions about
children, time, and
financial support.



PROPERTY / SAFETY

Dividing property
and addressing
safety concerns.



WHY IT MATTERS

Clear agreements reduce conflict and support stronger outcomes for everyone.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Parents create a parenting plan that sets out decision-making and time with each parent.

SAFETY FIRST

If you or your children are unsafe, get help right away.

04 Four laws. Different jobs.

In Ontario, family and child-related issues are guided by four complementary laws. Each law has a distinct role.



Federal Divorce Act

Divorce • parenting • child and spousal support for married spouses



Ontario Family Law Act

Property • matrimonial home • support • agreements



Children's Law Reform Act

Parenting • decision-making • contact where the Divorce Act does not apply



Child, Youth and Family Services Act

Child protection • Children's Aid Societies

05 Rights come with responsibilities



YOU MAY HAVE THE RIGHT TO



Seek child or spousal support



Ask for parenting time and decision-making



Make property or equalization claims



Seek protection from violence or harassment



YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE TO



Support children as required



Follow orders and agreements



Provide required financial information



Respect parenting arrangements



Avoid violence, threats, harassment or coercion

EXAMPLE: You may have the right to parenting time. At the same time, you are responsible for following the agreed schedule and avoiding contact that could be unsafe or intimidating for the other parent or the children.



06 | Marriage and common-law are not the same

Different legal status can change rights involving divorce, property equalization, support, and more.



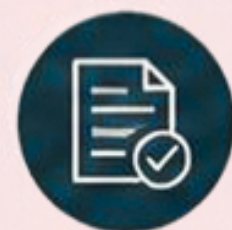
MARRIAGE

- ✓ Created through a legal marriage license and ceremony
- ✓ Recognized by law in Canada
- ✓ Rights and obligations are set out under Ontario law



COMMON-LAW RELATIONSHIP

- ✓ Based on living together in a conjugal relationship
- ✓ Recognized under Ontario law (after meeting the time requirements)
- ✓ Provides some, but not the same, legal rights



Religious or cultural ceremonies may not create a legal marriage unless formal requirements are met. Marriages outside Canada may also need a legal recognition assessment.



PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Two people who have lived together for several years may have legal rights similar to a married couple in some areas, but not in others. Knowing your status helps you make informed decisions.

07 Ending a relationship: know which process applies



01



SEPARATION

A decision to end the relationship.
No court permission is needed.



This is a personal decision, not a court order.

02



DIVORCE

A legal process that ends a marriage. A court order is required.



Only a court order can legally end a marriage.

03



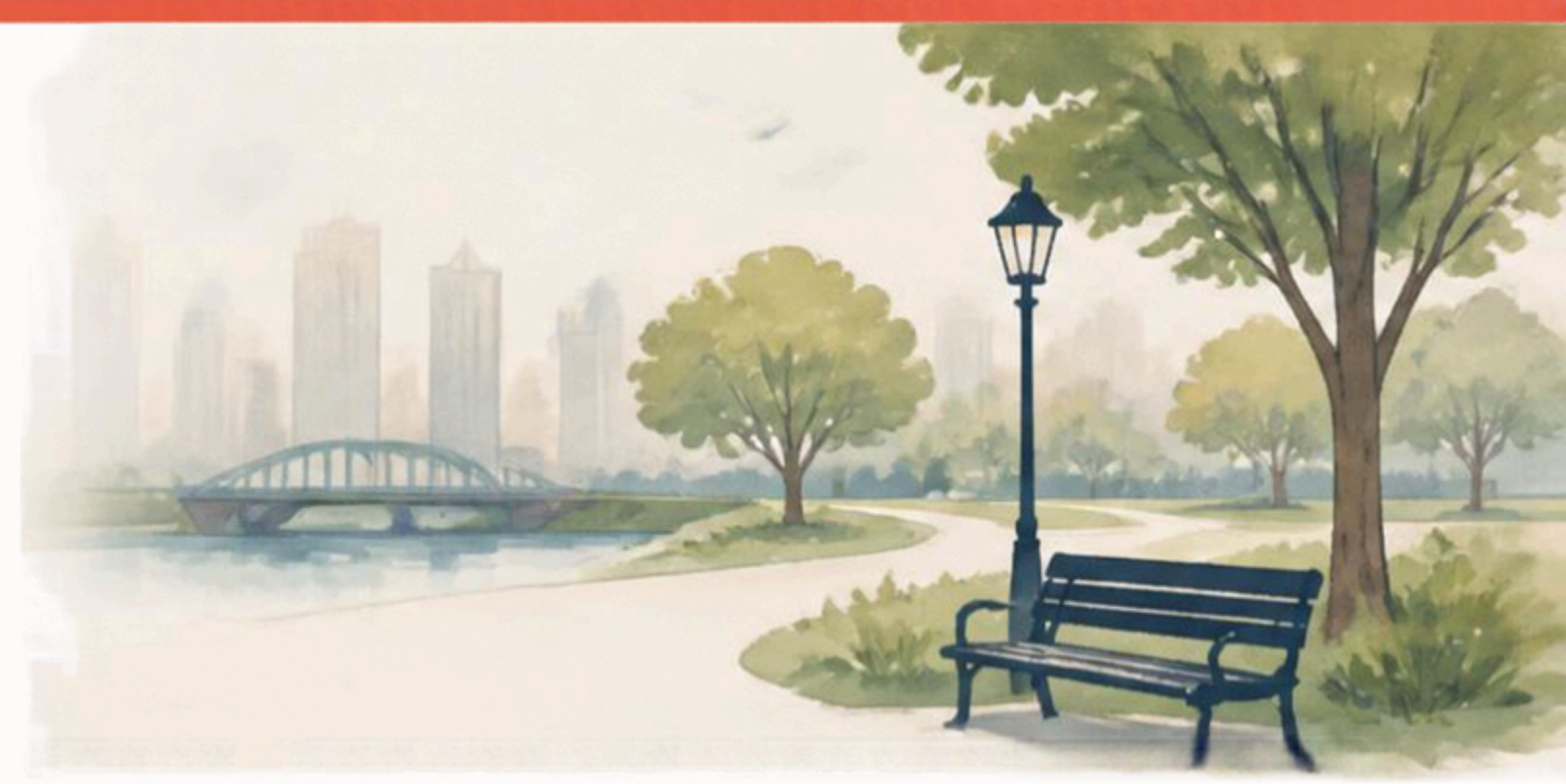
RELIGIOUS DIVORCE

A separate faith-based process. It may not end the legal marriage.



This addresses faith matters, not legal status.

08 The Different Agreements



MARRIAGE CONTRACT

Property, asset ownership and spousal support terms



WHY IT MATTERS

Clarifies rights and responsibilities before problems arise.



COHABITATION AGREEMENT

Property, debts and financial obligations if the relationship ends



WHY IT MATTERS

Helps avoid confusion and conflict if you separate.



SEPARATION AGREEMENT

Property, debts, living arrangements, support & parenting



WHY IT MATTERS

Sets clear plans for your family's next chapter.



SAFETY FIRST: Seek independent legal advice before signing.



09 How Ontario law treats net family property at separation.

MARRIED

Net family property is generally shared through an equalization payment.

KEY FACT:

Special rules apply to the matrimonial home.



WHY IT MATTERS

Understanding your status determines your rights and guides the legal path ahead.

COMMON-LAW

There is no automatic equalization right. Ownership, agreements and contributions may shape a claim.

KEY FACT:

Entitlements depend on legal ownership and the specifics of any agreement.

10 The Two Types of Supports



SPOUSAL SUPPORT

Not automatic. It can depend on relationship length, family roles, economic disadvantage and childcare responsibilities.



WHY IT MATTERS

Spousal support is about fairness between partners after separation.



CHILD SUPPORT

A child's legal right. Special expenses, such as childcare, medical or education costs, may be added.



WHY IT MATTERS

Child support ensures children benefit from the financial resources of both parents.



HOW CHILD SUPPORT IS CALCULATED

1



PAYING PARENT'S
GROSS INCOME

2



NUMBER OF
CHILDREN

3



ONTARIO
TABLE

4



BASIC TABLE
AMOUNT



PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Two parents share parenting time. One parent earns \$70,000 and pays support for one child. They use the Ontario Table to find the basic table amount.

PLAIN LANGUAGE TAKEAWAY

Different tests. Different focus. Same goal: fair support for everyone involved.

11

Best interests of the child come first

Ontario law focuses on what supports a child's safety, security, stability, well-being and development, now and in the future.



DECISION-MAKING
Important decisions for the child



WHY IT MATTERS
Clear decisions help children thrive with direction and care.



STABILITY
Home, routines and relationships



WHY IT MATTERS
Consistency builds confidence, connection and belonging.



SAFETY • SECURITY • WELL-BEING
The foundation of every decision.



PARENTING TIME
Time in a person's care



WHY IT MATTERS
Regular, meaningful time strengthens bonds.



DEVELOPMENT
Emotional, physical and psychological needs



WHY IT MATTERS
Children grow best when their needs are met.

12 Before a move changes the parenting plan

Moving can affect parenting time, decision-making, and daily routines. Take these steps to protect your rights, and your children's stability.

01



ASSESS

Will the move affect parenting time or decision-making?

02



REVISIT

Review the agreement or court order.

03



GET ADVICE

Rules depend on the facts and the law involved.



13 Family violence is not only physical



PHYSICAL

Hitting, pushing, blocking or restraining.



EMOTIONAL / PSYCHOLOGICAL

Insults, humiliation, threats, gaslighting.



FINANCIAL / ECONOMIC

Controlling money, denying access to funds, preventing work or study.



HARASSMENT / STALKING

Repeated unwanted contact, monitoring, following, showing up uninvited.



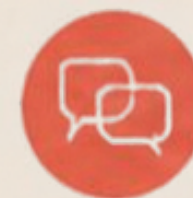
COERCION / CONTROL

Manipulation, isolation, controlling choices, making all the decisions.



YOU HAVE RIGHTS. YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

Help is available. Reach out to a trusted person, community organization, or support service in your area.



PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Controlling the family budget so you can't buy necessities or keeping you from seeing friends or family can be forms of abuse.

14 Protective Measures



RESTRAINING ORDER

Family court order that can restrict contact or require someone to stay away.



WHY IT MATTERS

Helps prevent contact and provides immediate protection.



PEACE BOND

Criminal court order requiring a person to keep the peace and follow conditions.



WHY IT MATTERS

Sets conditions for behaviour to reduce future risk.



SAFETY PLANNING

Practical, personalized steps developed with trained professionals to reduce risk.



WHY IT MATTERS

Gives you a clear plan and connects you to support.

15 Dispute Resolution Options

01



NEGOTIATION

Talk directly with the other person to reach an agreement.

02



COLLABORATIVE

Work with both lawyers in an respectful problem-solving process.

03



MEDIATION

A neutral mediator helps you reach common ground.

04



ARBITRATION

An arbitrator listens to both sides and makes a decision.

05



MED-ARB

Part mediation, part arbitration—a hybrid approach.

06



COURT

A judge makes the final, legally binding decision.



16 When to Seek Legal Help

1



Children or parenting arrangements
Where children live, time with each parent, and schooling or daily routine.

2



Personal safety or children's safety
Concerns about violence, threats, harassment, or being unsafe.

3



Immigration effects of relationship breakdown
How separation or divorce could affect your or your family member's status.

4



Property, assets, debts or finances
1/2omes, savings, investments, debts, and how costs will be shared.

5



Preparing, reviewing or signing legal documents
Agreements, court forms, and other papers that affect your rights.



**EARLY ADVICE CAN
PROTECT YOUR OPTIONS**

**Understanding your situation
early helps you make informed
decisions, protect your rights,
and plan your next steps.**

Myth or Truth?



- 01** Common Law partners have the same rights as married couples. ❌
- 02** Parents can agree that neither parent will pay child support. ❌
- 03** Parenting decisions focus on the best interests of the child. ✅
- 04** Separation and divorce are not the same thing. ✅
- 05** Separation needs a court order to become official ❌
- 06** A religious ceremony does not automatically create a legally recognized marriage. ✅

Thank you for joining the NOUR Project Family Law Session.

Questions?



GET HELP

Connect with a qualified legal professional or a trusted community organization in Ontario.



YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Support is available. Reaching out is a strong step toward clarity and peace of mind.



STRONGER TOGETHER

Community knowledge builds confidence. We're here to help you move forward.

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