**What happens after I have filed for divorce?**

You signed your Petition or Motion and now we’re filing your case. What happens next?

Once your Petition for Dissolution of Marriage or Motion to Modify has been filed with the court we have to initiate service. What does that mean? This means that in order to move forward with your case the other side has to be served with the papers that we filed with the court on your behalf.

Service can be accomplished in many ways. The papers can be served by the sheriff. The papers can be served by a special process server. The papers can be sent to the opposing party’s attorney who will accept service. The opposing party can come to our office and sign a waiver of service acknowledging that they received the papers and that they do not want to be served by the sheriff. This doesn’t mean they agree with the filing; it just means they acknowledge that they don’t want to be served by the sheriff. You cannot just give the papers to the opposing party. That is not valid service.

It is our practice to initiate having the opposing party come sign a waiver of service if that is at all possible. If not, we generally have the sheriff or a special process server initiate service. Our special process server is a retired Columbia Police Detective who if given proper addresses for service will take the paperwork to the opposing party.

How long does this take? The process of service takes anywhere from 2-4 weeks. During this time you should be gathering the documents in the document checklist and working on providing us with as much information related to your case as possible.

What happens after service? From the date the opposing party is served (signs the waiver, is served by the sheriff, is served by special process server, or the paperwork is sent to the opposing party’s attorney) they have 30 days to file a response with the court. There is nothing that can be done to speed up the 30 day time frame. During this time it may seem as if nothing is happening on your case. What should be happening is that you continue to gather documentation, think about what documents you need to review before you would be comfortable settling your case, and that you think about what possible settlement of your case you would consider.