



# COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE NIAGARA

## **Roadmap Summary for the Collaborative Settlement Process**

A separation is a life-changing event with interconnected legal, emotional, and financial aspects. Your collaboratively trained professionals will be your guides through this journey.

The Collaborative Team Process typically involves four professionals: a lawyer for each spouse, a neutral family professional, and a neutral financial professional. The work to achieve a settlement proceeds in several stages, which are outlined below.

Using the 'right professional, at the right time, for the right task,' can help save you time, money and stress. Following this roadmap is the surest way to reach your destination as efficiently and effectively as possible.

### **Stage One: Assembling the Team**

You meet with a collaborative professional, and information about the Collaborative Process is provided to you. If your spouse is not already involved in the discussions, he or she is invited to participate in the Collaborative Process, then the rest of the professional team is assembled.

### **Stage Two: Information Gathering**

With the assistance of the professional team, you and your spouse exchange all of the information necessary to make well-informed decisions about settlement options. This will likely include gathering and sharing financial information, and may also include gathering information about other topics such as parenting through separation.

### **Stage Three: Identifying Interests and Exploring Options**

At this stage, the team works with you to explore each spouse's values, goals, concerns and priorities, to maximize the likelihood of identifying a mutually acceptable outcome. Instead of being locked into positions, the team focuses on developing a variety of options for consideration.

### **Stage Four: Making Decisions**

Once all of the relevant information has been gathered and various possibilities have been identified, the team turns its attention to considering the consequences of the different options. You and your spouse weigh the possibilities and make decisions about which of them will most effectively meet each person's needs and address their concerns.

### **Stage Five: Finalizing and Implementing the Plan**

The agreement in principle reached in Stage Four is turned into a legally binding contract signed by both spouses.

Careful preparation and good communication help to keep the length of time it takes to achieve a settlement as short as possible. The precise course of your particular case will vary depending upon several factors, including your individual needs, the complexity of the finances, whether you have children and, if so, the nature of their needs, and the level of conflict between you and your former spouse.

For more information about the Collaborative Process, including a more detailed version of this Roadmap, visit [collaborativepracticeniagara.com](http://collaborativepracticeniagara.com)