

After Your Divorce is Final: A Guide for Divorces in Wyoming

This guide can help answer your questions about what happens after your divorce becomes final, which means the general divorce process has been completed.

Important Note: Some of the answers on this guide are more likely to apply to divorce cases that involve minor children. If you and your ex-spouse don't have minor children together, you can still find helpful information here.

How do I know if my divorce is final?

Your divorce is final (or “finalized”) when the Decree of Divorce is signed by the Judge and filed by the Clerk of District Court. The Clerk will give you and your ex-spouse each a copy of the signed, file-stamped Decree.

Sometimes a decree has the title Judgment and Decree of Divorce. That is another name for the final order in a divorce case.

Sometimes other documents are part of the Decree. For example, if you and your ex-spouse signed a Child Custody and Property Agreement, the Judge might include that document as part of the Decree. If your Decree says another document is “incorporated,” that means it is officially part of the Decree.

It's important to keep a file-stamped copy of your Decree, and all documents that have been incorporated into it, in your records. These are important documents with a lot of specific information. There are many different reasons you might need these papers now and far into the future. A few examples include: if you update your name on your driver's license, if you refinance your mortgage, if your taxes get audited, if you need to register your children at a new school, or even if your adult children are trying to get financial aid for college.

My divorce is final. What happens now?

You and your ex-spouse are expected to follow the Court's orders in the Decree of Divorce. In most cases, the District Court will have “continuing jurisdiction” over your case. This means that, if it becomes necessary, either party can ask the Court to be involved again. Here are some reasons that you or your ex-spouse might need to file more documents in your case after the Decree is final:

- One of the parties thinks the terms of the divorce should be changed because they aren't correct according to the law. Under certain circumstances, a party can ask a new Court to review certain parts of the divorce. This is called appealing the case. In Wyoming, a

divorce appeal will mostly involve the Wyoming Supreme Court, but the District Court where you got divorced will need to be told about the appeal. You can learn more about this in the **Appealing a Divorce Decree** section below.

- One of the parties thinks the other party isn't following the terms of the divorce. If someone isn't doing what the Decree requires them to do, the other party can ask the Court to issue an Order to Show Cause. A more common name for this process is "contempt proceeding," and you might have heard of someone being "found in contempt of court." This process is used to enforce (make somebody start following) the Court's orders that are required by the Decree of Divorce. You can learn more about this in the **Enforcing a Divorce Decree** section below.
- One of the parties thinks the terms of the divorce should be changed because there has been a big change in the situation. If there has been a big change, and it affects the children, a party can ask the Court to modify the decisions in the Decree. You can learn more about this in the **Modifying a Divorce Decree** section below.
- One of the parties moves to a new home. It's common for both parties to be required to keep the Court updated on any change of address if the divorce involved child custody issues.
- One of the parties has a new employer. This is most important to the Court if an employer is withholding wages to pay child support. But both parties might be required to keep the Court updated on changes of employment. (An employer, recent employer, or someone else might file this information into your case if they are involved in withholding the wages.)
- One of the parties has new or different health insurance. This generally needs to be reported to the Court if the party is responsible for providing some or all of the children's insurance coverage. (An employer, recent employer, or someone else might file this information into your case if they are involved in providing insurance.)

Appealing a Divorce Decree

An appeal is asking a higher court to review the decision made by a lower court. Appealing a Decree means asking the Wyoming Supreme Court to look at specific things that happened in your case and decide whether those things are correct under the law. Information about the process is available on the [Wyoming Judicial Branch website](https://www.wyocourts.gov/legal-help-by-topic/appeals-to-the-wyoming-supreme-court/): <https://www.wyocourts.gov/legal-help-by-topic/appeals-to-the-wyoming-supreme-court/>

There are also special Court Rules that must be followed in an appeal. You can read those rules on the [Judicial Branch website](https://www.wyocourts.gov/court-rules/wyoming-rules-of-appellate-procedure/): <https://www.wyocourts.gov/court-rules/wyoming-rules-of-appellate-procedure/>

Why would a divorce case be appealed?

A person appealing a case must be able to state specific ways the District Court Judge failed to follow the law. If you believe the decisions in your case are inappropriate according to the law, you might choose to file an appeal.

Often, people want to appeal their case because they don't like what the Judge decided.

However, you cannot appeal the Decree just because you don't like what the Judge decided or you think it's unfair. There must be a legal problem with what the District Court did.

Who can file an appeal?

The law does not limit which party can appeal the Decree. It could be the Plaintiff/Petitioner or the Defendant/Respondent. But the party who appeals has to be able to name specific things that they believe the District Court did wrong.

When can an appeal be filed?

No one can appeal the divorce case until it is final. The opportunity to appeal starts the day the Decree is filed and lasts for 30 days. (The filing date will be stamped on your copy of the Decree.) The appeal is considered started on the day the Notice of Appeal is filed. That step must be taken before the 30 days run out.

Where does the appeal process happen?

The Wyoming Supreme Court decides appeals of Wyoming divorce cases. Before that happens, you are required to let the District Court in the county where you got divorced know about the appeal.

How does the appeal process get started?

You will need a document called a Notice of Appeal. You must file the Notice at the Clerk of District Court's Office in the county where you were divorced. You need to send a copy of the Notice to your ex-spouse (or their attorney). You also must send a copy of the Notice to the Clerk of the Wyoming Supreme Court.

What happens in an appeal?

After one party files a Notice of Appeal, both sides will have opportunities to share with the Justices of the Wyoming Supreme Court information about what happened in the District Court and what decisions were made in the divorce case. Each party will get to share the parts of the record (the Court file) that that party believes are important for the Justices of the Supreme Court to consider. The parties also give the Justices documents called Briefs that are detailed reports about what happened in the case and each party's legal arguments about why they think the District Court's decision was wrong.

Sometimes the parties or their lawyers will have a formal, in-person session when they will meet with the Justices in a courtroom to present each side of the appeal. These formal sessions are called "oral arguments" and they give the Justices a chance to ask each party questions about the case. Nobody will present new or additional evidence during oral arguments. The Justices will consider only what happened when the divorce case was at the District Court and what decisions the Judge made.

After the Wyoming Supreme Court Justices have had the opportunity to think about each party's view of the case, and to research how the law applies to the concerns in the case, the Supreme Court will issue a document called an Opinion. The Supreme Court might conclude that the concerns the appealing party raised were not problems according to the law. In that situation, the Supreme Court "affirms" the District Court's decision, which means the Decree won't be changed. Or the Supreme Court might conclude that the concerns the appealing party raised are problems according to the law. In that situation, the Supreme Court "reverses" some parts or all of the District Court's decision, and then gives instructions for what needs to happen next.

Enforcing a Divorce Decree

Starting a case to enforce a Decree means asking a Court to try to make the other party do what they're supposed to do according to the Court's orders. Information about the process and forms you can use for it are available in **Family Law Packet 9 (Order to Show Cause)** on the

Wyoming Judicial Branch website forms page: <https://www.wyocourts.gov/self-help-forms/#tabV3>

Important Note: If the issue you're dealing with is about child support, you can start by contacting the [Wyoming Child Support Program](https://childsupport.wyo.gov/) (<https://childsupport.wyo.gov/>) to find out if they can help you.

Why would a party start an enforcement case?

One party might ask the Court for help if the other party isn't following the Court's orders in the Decree.

A person who asks the Court to enforce a Decree must be able to state specific ways the other party broke the Court's orders. If you believe your ex-spouse chose to violate the Decree (break the Court's orders), you might decide to file an enforcement case.

Who can ask the Court to enforce a Decree?

The law does not limit which party can ask the Court to enforce the Decree. It could be the Plaintiff/Petitioner or the Defendant/Respondent. The party who asks the Court for this help must be able to name specific things that they believe the other party is doing wrong according to the Decree.

When can someone ask the Court to enforce a Decree?

There are no time limits on this. If your ex-spouse is not following the Court's orders in the Decree, you are allowed to ask the Court for help.

Where will an enforcement case happen?

An enforcement case will usually happen at the District Court where your divorce was finalized.

How does an enforcement case get started?

To ask the Court to enforce your Decree, you must file a Motion and Affidavit for Order to Show Cause. You need to serve a copy of the Motion and Affidavit to your ex-spouse (or their attorney). You will also give the Court an Order to Show Cause, which a Judge can fill in.

What happens in an enforcement case?

An enforcement case is formally called a Show Cause Action. The words "show cause" can be confusing, and Courts use them in two different ways. A Court might tell a party to "show

cause why you failed to comply with the Decree.” Or a Court might tell a party to “show cause why you should not be held in contempt.” These two things are a little bit different, but, in general, an Order to Show Cause means the party is required to go to Court and explain why they should not be in trouble for violating the Decree. Some people may refer to a show cause action as a “contempt hearing.” Contempt is the word Courts use when someone is in trouble for breaking the Court’s orders.

If you file a Motion and Affidavit for Order to Show Cause, you’re telling the Court that you believe your ex-spouse intentionally broke the Court’s orders. You’re asking the Court to require your ex-spouse to come to a hearing and explain why there should be no consequences for the issues you raised in your Affidavit. The other party might say that they didn’t break the Court’s orders, or that they didn’t do it on purpose, or that they had a good reason to do it. The Judge will consider what your ex-spouse says, and what you have to say, and then decide what should be done next. The Judge might determine that your ex-spouse didn’t violate the Decree or didn’t violate it in a way that caused serious problems.

If the Judge thinks that something should be done to correct the situation, they can choose what to do. A Judge *can* send someone to jail for being in contempt, but it is important for you to understand that Judges often choose other ways to address the issues. Some examples are warning the ex-spouse not to break the Court’s orders again or making the ex-spouse pay a fine to the Court.

Modifying a Divorce Decree

Starting a case to modify a Decree means asking a Court to change the orders the Court created in the Decree. The Court might be able to change custody, the schedule and terms for visitation, the child support amount, or some other parts of the Decree. Information about the process and forms you can use for it are available in **Family Law Packets 5 through 8** on the [Wyoming Judicial Branch website forms page](https://www.wyocourts.gov/self-help-forms/#tabV3): <https://www.wyocourts.gov/self-help-forms/#tabV3>

Who can ask for a modification?

The law does not limit which party can ask the Court to modify the Decree. It could be the Plaintiff/Petitioner or the Defendant/Respondent.

When can a party ask for a modification?

Usually, people ask for a modification because there has been a big change in the life of one party or both parties or the children, and the change affects the children. This kind of big change is called a “material change in circumstances.” (“Material” here means that the change *matters*.) In these cases, the Court will expect a party to demonstrate that there has been a material change in circumstances or else the Judge won’t consider making changes to the Decree.

Under Wyoming law, a party can also ask the Court to review the child support amount, specifically, if at least three years have passed since the last time the Court considered the child support. It may be appropriate to order a different amount because time has passed.

Why would a party start a modification case?

One party might ask the Court to change the Decree because it makes sense to revisit what was originally ordered now that the material change in circumstances has happened.

A person who asks the Court to modify a Decree must be able to clearly state what big change has happened and why modifying the Decree will be best for the children.

Where will a modification case happen?

A modification case will usually happen at the District Court where your divorce was finalized.

How does a modification case get started?

To ask the Court to modify your Decree, you must file a Petition for Modification. You need to formally serve a copy of the Petition to your ex-spouse (or their attorney).

What happens in a modification case?

The modification case will be very similar to the original divorce case. The party who filed the modification will first have to show that there was a material change in circumstances after the Decree was issued (or that at least three years have passed), and then each side will have the chance to tell the Court what they think should be done. Both sides will need to fill out documents about finances, employment, and the children. Some of those documents will be filed with the Court, and others will be exchanged between the parties but *not* filed with the Court. The Judge may decide to hold a hearing. If so, both parties will be expected to

attend and discuss their current situation. The Judge will decide whether it is appropriate to change the Decree.

If one party does not take part in the case, the other party can start “default proceedings” to ask the Court to go ahead with the case anyway.

Wyoming Statutes and Court Rules

You can read about Divorce processes in Title 20 of the Wyoming Statutes. That part of the laws is called “Domestic Relations.” You can read the statutes [online by visiting the Legislative Service Office website: https://www.wyoleg.gov/stateStatutes/StateStatutes](https://www.wyoleg.gov/stateStatutes/StateStatutes)

It’s also important to understand the special rules that apply to divorce cases. These are in the [Wyoming Rules of Civil Procedure, which are available on the Judicial Branch website: https://www.wyocourts.gov/app/uploads/2025/01/Wyoming-Rules-of-Civil-Procedure-August-2024.pdf](https://www.wyocourts.gov/app/uploads/2025/01/Wyoming-Rules-of-Civil-Procedure-August-2024.pdf)

Your [local county library \(https://library.wyo.gov/community/directory/\)](https://library.wyo.gov/community/directory/) has print versions of Wyoming Statutes and Court Rules. Reading the statutes and rules there can be helpful because the print books include additional relevant information.