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With a new year on the horizon, family law attorney **Sheryl R. Rentz** stands ready to help clients contend with an ever-changing legal landscape and fight new battles as they come. page 68



Looking Forward

With a new year on the horizon, family law attorney Sheryl R. Rentz stands ready to help clients contend with an ever-changing legal landscape and fight new battles as they come.

by LEIGH STUART

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The turbulence of the past year has stretched into nearly all facets of human life. Sheryl R. Rentz sees examples of this tension and tumult every day.

"Many families are now all home together, and people are trying to balance work and school and fears of cut hours or total job loss," she Rentz, who leads a thriving family law practice in Ardmore that handles legal matters involving everything from taxes and retirement to the dissolution of marriage, the division of assets, and more. "Finances might be an issue for the first time. There are whole new areas that have never been dealt with before."

Many families find themselves increasingly divided over the same issues that have splintered the nation as a whole. Virtual schooling, for example, has provided a bold new frontier for some stu-

dents, but distinct challenges for others. Likewise, Rentz has seen parents who are in disagreement about the seriousness of the pandemic spar over their children's involvement in sports or other socialization activities.

"Everything that used to be natural is now a thought process," she shares. "*Do I let my children play with friends? Is it even safe to go out of the house? Do I travel? How do I handle the holidays?* People are questioning everything."

In other words, families are feeling the effects of the widespread anxiety, uncertainty, and discord that have run rampant this year. Incidences of domestic violence rose throughout 2020, and people are seeking reassurance and steadiness during this chaotic time. For her clients, Rentz strives to provide a sense of calm within a storm.

"Clients, especially new clients, need

a lot of attention,” she shares. “They need to understand the process and know my office is always available to them. This year more than ever, people are more anxious in general. Clients need to know we are there for them and to explain the new processes especially as they evolve.”

“I will listen to my client, and advocate for my client,” she continues. “Sometimes, a client is better off taking a deal versus waiting six months to see a judge; some clients just want to be heard. I talk to clients with honesty and ask: What are you feeling?”

According to Rentz, it’s often better in the “long run” to avoid stoking contention over every possible issue that could arise. To put it another way, pick your battles. Rentz advises flexibility and adherence to orders for those who currently find themselves in contentious situations—and when in doubt, look to the experts for guidance.

“The best time for a client to contact me is as soon as possible when they are considering divorce or custody,” she says. “If someone gets served with support, he or she should contact me quickly.”

Brighter Days Ahead

Looking ahead to 2021, Rentz predicts that the COVID-19 vaccine will become another point of contention for some families. This is just one more thing that can deepen fissures in a relationship already on unsteady ground.

“I have parents who fight over the flu vaccine every year,” she shares. “With news of some people getting allergic reactions to the COVID vaccine, what will happen when one parent believes in the vaccine, but the other parent wants more testing? Now, a judge might be involved.”

Luckily for her clients, Rentz has been a member of both the New Jersey and Pennsylvania bar associations since 1992, and a member of the Philadelphia County Bar Association for just as long; as such, she remains on the forefront of developments in law in the Greater Philadelphia Area and beyond.

Additionally, Rentz has amassed an enviable network of professionals from various fields who can help in a client’s time of need: divorce coaches, forensic accountants, and business valuers to custody evaluators, therapists, and financial advisors, among others.

“I spend a lot of time with potential new clients understanding their case,” she adds. “When we speak, I discuss what information is needed based on their individual case to move forward. From there, I take each case as it comes.”

This adaptability has served Rentz well throughout her career, helping her



stay agile in the courtroom and ready to take on the challenges of a future marked by uncertainty.

“There will be many people who never recover from COVID-19,” Rentz says. “Not just the illness, but the effects on all areas of life. Everybody has their own personal misery [related to the pandemic]—a lost job, a sick relative, a lot of anxiety—and those issues need to be taken into account. I think the bigger question and issue is: *Where are we heading?*”

This, perhaps, represents the most valuable aspect of the steady guidance provided by an attorney such as Sheryl Rentz: helping individuals who are going through times of darkness and contention see a new day dawning on the horizon. ■

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—SHERYL R. RENTZ



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