

# suburban life



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# Family Law *Done Differently*

In the 30th year after its founding, **LaMonaca Law** continues to revolutionize the ways in which it helps clients navigate divorce and other challenging family law matters.

**G**regory P. LaMonaca has never been one to follow the crowd. Given his march-to-the-beat-of-your-own-drum approach, the Media-based law firm he founded three decades ago—the Law Office of Gregory P. LaMonaca, P.C., better known as LaMonaca Law—has long been regarded as an innovator, a pioneer, a disrupter.

Like any enterprise with a long track record of success, LaMonaca Law has endured for three reasons: the strength of its service, the passion of its team, and the

vision of its leader. Mr. LaMonaca and his ever-growing team have revolutionized how the firm helps clients navigate divorce, custody disputes, estate issues, and other challenging family law matters at every step of the way—before taking legal action, throughout the legal process, and after the dust settles.

As an example, consider the ways in which LaMonaca Law evolved as it entered into and emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic. A year before the pandemic, the firm created Virtual LaMonaca Law, outfitting all team members with laptops and access to their remote servers. This allowed them to seamlessly adapt to remote work requirements and continue meeting clients' needs without interruption. During and after COVID, the firm redefined

its structure by creating several specialty units designed to better serve clients' specific needs. These specialty units include estate planning, mediation, strategic planning, and family law coaching.

"Every client is different, so our approach



to helping each client should be different,” Mr. LaMonaca says. “We can now tailor fit the way we deliver the guidance and representation our clients are looking for.”

Mr. LaMonaca heads up the estate planning unit, whose capabilities he describes as “going well beyond” the preparation of traditional estate-planning documents such as wills and living wills, trusts, and powers of attorney. For each estate planning client, the firm undertakes a comprehensive 10-part life assessment that utilizes Mr. LaMonaca’s signature “Brutally Honest” methodology.

“We saw a clear need for estate planning, which has some overlap with family law,” he adds. “We create a team who can work with clients to do a comprehensive review of critical areas like insurance, accounting, beneficiary designations, and entity structuring. While they handle the matters within their lane, where they identify potential gaps, they work with the appropriate professionals to fill the gaps in the clients overall ‘Life Plan.’”

Chris Casserly, a partner/shareholder in LaMonaca Law, heads up the firm’s mediation unit. Mr. Casserly often represents high-net-worth clients involved in contentious family law matters, such as divorce, custody, or equitable distribution. He describes mediation, in which the two parties meet with a mediator who guides them in the negotiation toward a mutually agreed-upon outcome, as “uniquely suited” to resolving such matters. Compared with traditional litigation, mediation tends to facilitate a quicker and less costly result, often with less open conflict.

“With mediation, you can get both parties together and reach the point of resolution in four two-hour sessions,” Mr. Casserly says. “It’s not going to be an option for everyone, but in the best-case scenario, the divorce can be finalized in a matter of weeks as opposed to years, and at a fraction of the cost. Rather than going the litigation route and having to live with an order that both parties are frustrated with, you can walk out [of a mediated divorce] with something that reflects the wants and needs of both parties.”

With hundreds of years of combined divorce litigation experience, LaMonaca Law has built a team of seasoned and experienced attorney mediators from which to choose.

While most people are familiar with estate planning and mediation, LaMonaca Law’s units for strategic planning and family law coaching warrant further explanation. Strategic planning is a concierge program in which a customized team, led by Mr. LaMonaca, takes a proactive approach to helping each client plan for the future, both personally and professionally. Mr. LaMonaca describes strategic planning as a way to “map out a path forward,” so the client is exceptionally well prepared when and if

they decide to proceed with a divorce or custody matter. If they do, Mr. LaMonaca hand-selects a team tailored to the client’s specific needs.

Family law coaching, on the other hand, may be ideal for someone who is unsure of how to proceed with a delicate family law matter. Whether the individual decides to stay in the marriage or determines it’s beyond saving, Mr. LaMonaca says his primary goal is to have the individual feel informed and empowered.

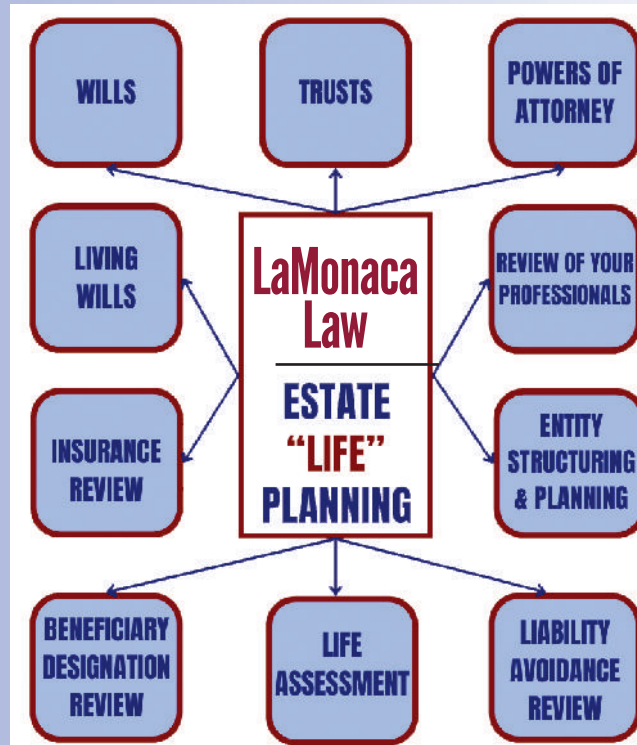
“Family law coaching is often a good place to start,” he adds. “Rather than receiving legal advice about your specific case, you’re working with a certified coach so you can be empowered in your decisions.”

The client can choose between Mr. LaMonaca himself, his long-standing practice manager, Kristy Panella, who has been with the firm for 24 years, or a combination of both.

“If you decide you want to take legal action, then we can proceed to strategic planning and you’re ready to move on with the rest of your life,” Mr. LaMonaca says. “I have one client who said to me, ‘This literally saved my life.’ That’s why I love what I do. We spend our days helping people, and we get to do it in an innovative way.”

Mr. LaMonaca cites the specialty teams he created, each devoted to a specific aspect of family law: trial lab, child custody, interstate and international child abduction, forensic support, protection from abuse, and appeals. Trial lab, for example, utilizes state-of-the-art media technology to make audiovisual recordings of clients that mimic the courtroom experience. In the process, clients have the opportunity to see how their body language and speech may be perceived in a hearing or a trial well in advance of their actual courtroom appearance.

“You might see some large personal injury firms that do this, but I’ve never seen it used in the context of family law,” Mr. LaMonaca says. “When you’re going into the courtroom with good intentions, the last thing you want to do is give off something completely different. With our trial lab, you can see how you might be perceived, either positively or negatively, and make adjustments



LaMonaca Law has several specialty units, including one for estate planning, to better serve clients’ needs. Each estate planning client receives a comprehensive 10-part life assessment that utilizes Mr. LaMonaca’s signature “Brutally Honest” methodology.

to amplify the positive aspects of how you present yourself while correcting any identified flaws.”

At LaMonaca Law, evolution and innovation are baked into the firm’s DNA. The firm has already adopted artificial intelligence technology in ways that might create an advantage for its clients. Given his propensity for thinking five or 10 years down the line, Mr. LaMonaca long ago forecasted how next-generation technology might revolutionize his profession. He can easily see a world in which virtual courtrooms help ease the years-long case backlog exacerbated by the pandemic.

“We can’t be afraid of technology or of doing things differently,” he says. “Thinking outside the box can help you move forward, but you don’t change just for the sake of changing; you have to change in ways that help you better serve your clients. I’m happy to say we’ve been doing that for 30 years, and I don’t see that ever stopping.” ■

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