

Breaking Up: Divorce in Family Philanthropy



NATIONAL CENTER FOR
FAMILY PHILANTHROPY

Sometimes staying together may not be right for a couple or a family. What happens if founders divorce, or a family foundation decides to split the foundation into two or more separate funds? What's the impact of divorce and division on family philanthropy, including grantees and the community? What are the lessons learned from those who have decided to divide rather than struggling to share?



This Passages is part one of a two-part series on divorce and division in family philanthropy, featuring tips for what board and staff members can do to prepare and cope.

Introduction	3
Anticipating the Complications of Divorce in Family Philanthropy	5
Legally Speaking: Control Over Charitable Interests is a Key Question in Divorce	11
In Times of Crisis, Slow Down Decision Making	14
Conclusion: Planning Ahead for Change	18



Introduction

Families, and the individuals that make up those families, are dynamic and ever-changing. Even the most well-intentioned families face challenges at times that, if not careful, can disrupt or derail relationships. This can have both short-term and lasting implications for a family foundation's governance, management, and potential for impact.

“ *Families are evolving systems with highs and lows, triumphs and tragedies.* ”

— GINNY ESPOSITO, FOUNDING PRESIDENT & SENIOR FELLOW,
NATIONAL CENTER FOR FAMILY PHILANTHROPY

One of the most disruptive times in *any* family is when there's a divorce and a family breaks up. Add a foundation or other family philanthropy entity into the mix, and the challenges of the situation can quickly escalate beyond the divorcing couple. It can affect the kids, the extended family, non-family board members, staff, colleagues, friends, grantees and potential grantseekers, community members—the list goes on.

What makes divorce so challenging is that there is no roadmap for how to fully prepare for one—or how to manage it in the moment. Sometimes a divorce comes as a complete surprise. In other cases, tension could be brewing under the surface for years—even decades—until, one day, it all comes to a difficult end.

Some splits are amicable (at least in a public relations sense), where a couple agrees it's best for *all* parties to go separate ways. A successful marriage may have run its course, and the couple may choose to cease all contact to start anew, or maintain/reinvent their partnership in new or limited ways. For example, former spouses may continue their commitment to the family philanthropy, and either continue to serve on the same board, or split or spend down the shared charitable entities.

In other cases, and probably more often, divorce—and the subsequent dividing of family and philanthropic assets—can be contentious and emotional. In its worst expression, divorce can get ugly and litigious, and may even leave a wake of generations and family branches that find it hard to recover.

Given the unpredictable nature of divorce, how can you—as a board, as a family, as staff or advisors to the family—plan ahead in the event of an unexpected ending (even if no one now can imagine it will ever happen)? And if you find yourself in the midst of the unexpected, how might you take pause in the decision making, and instead focus on the family's healing?

Sharing this *Passages* guide with board and staff is a good way to get this conversation started.



Anticipating the Complications of Divorce in Family Philanthropy

Divorce is never easy for any family. Family members marry, divorce, remarry, and form domestic partnerships.

When a divorce occurs within family foundations where spouses serve on the board, there is an added layer of complexity. For example: If a divorce occurs within the original donor couple, how do you decide who stays on the board, and who goes? What happens when a divorced spouse is more active on the board—and likeable—than the family member? Or when a recently remarried family member wants his new spouse and her kids to join the board?

Consider this story

A few decades ago, one family foundation board was composed of eight members: four lineal descendants of the donor, plus their four spouses. When the eldest son left his wife of 20 years and married another woman, the board adopted a policy that said “only lineal descendants and their original spouses can serve as trustees.”

When another sibling divorced 10 years later, her new spouse was not able to join the board because of the policy. One year later, yet another sibling left his wife of 30 years and remarried. He aligned with the other divorced siblings and they changed the policy so that new spouses could serve on the board. The remaining “original couple” was devastated, felt betrayed, and almost resigned from the board. They realized, though, that by leaving the board, they would deny their children a chance to participate.

These board members then decided that all children should succeed to trusteeship—both blood descendants as well as stepchildren. This led to tensions and misunderstandings among the siblings and their children that ultimately led the foundation to split into four equal foundations.

One philanthropy advisor counsels all new and seasoned foundations to discuss and develop policies on these matters early on. “Sometimes folks are somewhat shocked—saying ‘oh, we’ll never have a divorce,’ or ‘we don’t have step or adopted children, why should we talk about it?’ With some discussion, they usually see that these contingencies can and do occur, and being prepared is a wise and thoughtful approach.”



These situations are difficult to anticipate, and no one wants to talk in advance about the possibility of a divorce. It feels almost taboo to do so. Yet, a board that prepares for the worst today can save itself tension and trouble tomorrow. There’s no getting around the fact that a divorce will certainly affect the family—the question here is, how will it affect the work and impact of the foundation?

“Divorce can be more complicated when the divorcing couple is the founding couple or a dominant couple in the second generation. They may feel the foundation is community property,”

says Ginny Esposito, senior fellow at the National Center for Family Philanthropy (NCFP). “They may think of it not as a legal structure, but as a reflection of their personal giving or their parents’ giving. Splitting the foundation, in these cases, may be the most logical and humane thing to do.”

Esposito recalls one of the first family philanthropy conferences early on when working to build the field. “People told me families were too busy, too private, and would never come to a meeting. Yet we had about 75 people show up, and not many were talking until we came to a session focused on family,” she says. “One man told his story of his family with four siblings, each with their spouse on the board. His brother was getting a divorce, and he said ‘and we’re trying to figure out how to keep her and get rid of him.’ Suddenly, everyone wanted to tell their stories. It was an opening and a release—his story touched a vulnerability point that allowed people to wonder: maybe this isn’t dirty laundry after all? Maybe it’s not shameful to talk about my family in a way that makes them seem normal.”

Because a board can’t (and shouldn’t) plan around personalities and preferences, it’s best to spell out how the board will define family for the purposes of eligibility, and plan for how it will manage potential conflicts and family rifts. To do this, you need a well-thought-out and written policy on succession and board eligibility (even if it’s in bullet points!). This will help you avoid making rushed decisions based on a pressing family situation. Rather than focusing on the question of spouses (who’s in, who’s out), ask yourselves: *what makes someone eligible to participate, and what are our expectations of them?* (See *Choosing Who is On the Board* on page 8 for more on this.)

Many family boards avoid these topics, or wait for a forcing event to have the discussion. “Most family foundations don’t do succession planning, which makes it harder in a situation involving divorce,” says Esposito. “Some boards have unspoken agreements on who would go in the case of a divorce, yet it’s important to write it down, even if it’s something simple. I ask family boards to consider: *What do you really want for this family philanthropy? What does the philanthropy deserve?*”

Ideally, it works like this: board members sit down together, either as a whole group or within a governance committee (and sometimes with the outside help of a skilled philanthropy advisor) and raise all the “what if” scenarios they can anticipate, and how the board should handle them. One executive director said “I like to plan for the worst, and hope for the best.” (See *Who’s Eligible to Serve? 10 Questions to Ask Yourself* on page 9 for more ideas.)

When a foundation is smaller and in its first and second generations, it’s easier to be all-inclusive. As families grow larger, the numbers may become unwieldy, and it’s wise to limit the number of people eligible for the board. This makes it easier, in some ways, as the board has a larger pool of potential qualified participants. Families can design policies carefully, but also bear in mind that policies are not written in stone. Boards can—and many do—evolve its policies over time as family members and circumstances change.

Keep in mind:

A policy isn’t always a fool-proof mechanism to save the day. Policies are only as good as the people who follow them. Yet, the bottom line is this: policies *can* help people cope in a crisis by clearly defining board eligibility and process, specifically as it relates to blood relatives, spouses/in-laws, domestic partners, divorce, and stepchildren. Policies make board decisions *less personal*—and less personal can go far when it comes to upholding board and extended family relationships.

Preemptive policies about who can and cannot serve on the board can prevent the issue from becoming personal, and help people cope in a crisis.

CHOOSING WHO IS ON THE BOARD



How do you choose who is on the board? Spouses? Stepchildren? Adopted children? Life partners who aren't married?

“Rather than make judgments about a future family situation, build a board that will do great work, and have goals for family participation,” says Ginny Esposito. She recalls a story of a founder who had only a nephew and a niece, and was struggling with whom to put in charge. “I told her: don’t choose. Lay out the eligibility requirements for board participation, and that will choose for you,” says Esposito. “Governance is a huge responsibility of this incredible asset. It’s more than a personal prerogative or that you were born a member of the lucky gene club—or married into it.”

When bringing someone on the board, be sure there’s a bigger reason than “just because” they are a family member. Says one family foundation executive director: “Walk before you run, be careful and cautious. Family members and their spouses may come and go. Think about the decisions you are making and how they affect the children.”

“There is wisdom in trusting your family,” she continues. “It helps to create a situation where the children don’t feel trapped or disempowered. They need to feel supported by other people who are there to protect them.” She recommends bringing in potential board members for one-off events to start, and ensuring they are invested in their own giving and family connections before inviting them on the board. She concludes: “Take the time to make sure they have the same values as the family and the foundation.”

WHO'S ELIGIBLE TO SERVE?

10 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELVES

When developing a board policy on who is eligible to serve, consider these questions:

- 1 Is eligibility for board service a birthright for blood family members? If so, are there minimum (or maximum) age limits?
- 2 What criteria must members meet (age, education, skills, service, geography) before becoming eligible to serve? What are the terms of service and rotation policies?
- 3 Can spouses/in-laws participate? If so, do they have the same status as family members?
- 4 Can domestic partners participate? If so, do they have the same status as spouses?
- 5 What happens in the case of a divorce or break-up with a domestic partner? Must the divorced spouse/partner resign immediately, or are they invited to continue participating for some length of time?
- 6 Will the board allow new spouses of previously divorced family members to participate? Will the board allow stepchildren and adopted children to participate?
- 7 In the case of remarriage, must the new spouse be part of the family for a certain number of years before becoming eligible to participate?
- 8 How and when/in what circumstances would we add or remove board members? What happens in a situation where the board member becomes disabled or unable to participate effectively?
- 9 Will non-family members be invited to serve? If so, will non-family members and family members have equal voice and vote in decisions?
- 10 How will the board address leadership transitions?

Adapted in part from [Families In Flux: Guidelines for Participation in Your Family's Philanthropy](#), NCFP, 2004.



HIS CAMP/HER CAMP: HOW DIVORCE AFFECTS THE STAFF

In family philanthropy, a divorce of the founders not only significantly affects the family, but also the foundation staff. Because staff are often engaged in a family's personal life, they may hear about the divorce before members of the family office or business, or even extended family members, close colleagues, and friends. This can feel stressful or awkward, and perhaps even more so if the foundation staff is a family member. Staff may feel personally upset or traumatized by the divorce, or insecure about their job going forward. In times of a foundation crisis, it's important for family and non-family staff to seek the space and support they need to recover.

Here's a story about how a divorce rippled negatively into relationships with staff, and how the staff handled the situation.

Consider this story

A couple years before a planned foundation sunset, a founding couple unexpectedly divorced, and the non-family staff found themselves caught in the middle of what felt like "his camp and her camp." The couple's feud affected the grantmaking, as well as the asset management. "We as staff could feel that some of their actions and decisions were retaliatory, and they would use the foundation to confront their differences," one former staff member recalls. "All the rules changed for the whole organization."

Internally, things were no easier. "The founders would show up to meetings tense, angry, or emotional to the point of tears, which made it incredibly difficult to engage them in much-needed decision making. Eventually the husband stopped coming to board meetings, and would send statements through me. It caused an uncomfortable situation."

The staff worked with attorneys to close the foundation, and then launched two new foundations. "We didn't attempt to split the foundation into two. That would have felt like another divorce. Because of the complexity of their asset separation, it made more sense to start two new foundations from scratch."

What helped the staff get through this arduous time?

"The situation was traumatic, and it negatively affected my relationship with one of the founders. My greatest disappointment was when my close relationship with the founder ended because of it," says the former director. "I did seek out some personal therapy, which helped me through it. It also was a great solace to have one colleague that I could talk with about it candidly. I had to be careful what I said to the other staff members, yet I needed a trusted sounding board with whom I could vent. Overall, I tried to keep the staff focused on the work of the foundation."

Meanwhile, the situation caused rightful concerns about the future and the staff's job security.

She says it helped on a governance level when the board appointed a neutral non-family member as a board chair, rather than one of the spouses. "This gave staff an extra layer of neutrality when trying to support both spouses. Our actions could be presented more as 'in support of the family's interest' versus inadvertently seen as taking one side or the other."



Legally Speaking: Control Over Charitable Interests is a Key Question in Divorce

In times of divorce, dividing the couple's philanthropic assets can be a complicated financial transaction. "It's important to note that the assets held by philanthropic entities are not considered the property of the parties in a divorce case, or part of the marital estate. The philanthropic entity owns them, and neither spouse owns the charitable entity," writes Michael D. Sevin, partner at Beermann LLP, in [What Does Divorce Mean For a Couple's Philanthropy](#). Nevertheless, he continues, spouses may take certain positions around who will control a charitable entity or funds set aside for charitable purposes, and they may not agree.

Questions may arise, such as: Who will maintain control over the charitable entities? Which spouse stays on the foundation board, and which spouse goes? Who will advise grants from the donor-advised fund?

According to Brigit Kavanagh and Cecilia Chung in [Dividing Philanthropy on Dissolution of Marriage](#), Family Law News (Volume 38, Issue 3, 2016), these control issues can be resolved in a number of ways, including closing

the private foundation and creating two new foundations, spending out the foundation endowment, dividing the donor-advised fund, and more. Each of these solutions has complex tax consequences. To avoid unintended consequences, spouses involved in a divorce should consult with their family law attorney, accountants, and estate planners, as well as counsel experienced in nonprofit and tax-exempt organizations law. “A family law practitioner is well-advised to consult with counsel specializing in the areas of tax, estate planning, and nonprofit law to fully understand, analyze, and ultimately ‘divide the spouses’ control’ over charitable entities on dissolution of marriage.”

DURING A DIVORCE: KEEP THE KIDS IN MIND

Many times, staff leaders get to know and even grow close to the children of family members involved in the family foundation. How can staff support the kids during their parents’ divorce, without overstepping their role?

Focus on the practical, says one foundation executive. “In times of divorce, some young adult kids may turn to staff for emotional support, however, that is outside of the staff role,” she says. “Yet there are other ways to support the next generation that are appropriate and helpful.”

For example, in one foundation, the divorcing parents allocated each of their adult children a certain amount for them to grant. “When the foundation closed and new ones started, we let the next-gen kids know: ‘You have this much from Mom, and this much from Dad. Here are the rules.’ Yet it was confusing for the kids because there were different amounts, and different rules from each parent. We helped them navigate those rules.”

Staff helped the kids by tracking the allocations for them, and behind the scenes, making sure they met the parents’ requirements. This kept the burden off the kids as much as possible, allowing them to focus on the joy of giving without getting entangled in their parent’s differences.



HOW DIVORCE AFFECTS GRANTEES AND THE COMMUNITY

When a philanthropic couple divorces, its ripple effect can extend beyond the family and close associates. In the rarest of cases, the couple may stay committed to their shared philanthropic mission, and continue their work of giving together. Yet, more often, there can be real implications for grantees and the community—and grantees may have legitimate concerns about whether and how the divorce will affect their funding. For example, the couple may pause grantmaking until after the divorce is finalized, or they may choose to split the charitable entity or change funding direction entirely. In the worst case scenario, a feuding couple may use the philanthropy to pit against each other, at the expense of grantees.

For philanthropies with staff, it's often the staff's job to communicate the news of the divorce to grantees and the community, and in some cases, the couple's colleagues and friends. According to one former executive director, "I had to explain that the foundation had planned to sunset, and the timing of the divorce was coincidental. Community members asked me a lot of questions that I couldn't answer: 'Will they start new foundations? How do I reach them? Will you put in a good word for me?' There is no guidebook for something like this."

While the family and staff may not have all the answers upfront, the most respectful thing to do in a difficult situation is to communicate with grantees as transparently as possible. This may be challenging, as the family may feel the divorce is a private matter. In the words of one former executive director: "When speaking to the community, we had to hide the fact that there was any animosity between the divorcing couple. Our talking points were that the founders were still friends, they believed in the work of the foundation, they stood for it and stood with their kids, and they were committed to closure. There was a big difference between what was real versus what we were expected to say."

Grantees don't need to know the details of the divorce—yet they do need know how it will potentially impact them. Whether in a statement or one-on-one conversations, the kindest thing you can do is to keep grantees apprised, early on, of any changes to funding and the timing, and to incorporate exit strategies as needed. For more on that, see [Saying Goodbye: Strategic Exits for Family Funds](#), NCFP, 2006.





In Times of Crisis, Slow Down Decision Making

During a divorce, a foundation split, or another life-changing event, it's common that people may make decisions they will later regret or that result in actions they don't intend. For this reason, it's important to pause any big decision making, particularly as it relates to foundation programs, and focus instead on healing as a family.

"People feel incredible pressure to make decisions when they are dealing with family trauma," says Ginny Esposito. "There is pressure, or one family member makes a power play, and everyone panics."

"In times of crisis or grief, the family should be priority number one. I advise families in crisis: if you have to make decisions, make them as interim decisions. Agree as a board on something that will work for 12–18 months, and revisit any decisions you make after that time. Give yourself space as a family for that healing and recovery to occur."

An example: One family foundation founder divorced his wife, who also served on the board. The wife resigned immediately from board service. At the next board meeting, the founder announced his unexpected decisions to dissolve one of the foundation's programs, and let go several staff members.

"There was no discussion, no exit strategy. As a board and staff, we were caught unaware," says a former board member. It happened so fast, she says, that it was difficult for trustees to stand up to the founder. "If I had been braver, I could have stood up in the moment and said 'wait, we need a pause before voting on this.' But I didn't. No one did," she says. "It was a done deal before we got there."

After that, there was a lull in the foundation that lasted for a few years. In the case of this foundation, they couldn't reverse the decisions that had been made—yet as a board, and as family staff, they took time after the fact to heal.

"We all needed healing to take place. We took a pause and kept things simple until we could figure out what's next. I maintained close relationships with others on the board, and reached out to them, with a focus on supporting each other."

“*In times of crisis or grief, the family should be priority number one. I advise families in crisis: if you have to make decisions, make them as interim decisions. Agree as a board on something that will work for 12–18 months, and revisit any decisions you make after that time. Give yourself space as a family for that healing and recovery to occur.*

– GINNY ESPOSITO



HOW TO SUPPORT SOMEONE GOING THROUGH DIVORCE

It's hard to watch someone suffer. When a family or board member is going through a divorce, you might struggle with what to say and how to best offer your support. Here are some ideas that may help in a situation where you are not directly involved (but nonetheless affected):



- **Divorce is not an event, it's a process.** Remember it takes time for anyone to transition out of a marriage and reprioritize relationships, including the relationship with themselves. Try not to judge where a person is on any given day, and, as much as you can, meet them with patience and compassion.
- **Encourage optimism, not pessimism.** Divorce is overwhelming. Be a source of reason and reassurance, rather than adding to the person's anxiety. Listen to them, and say things like: "That must be so frustrating," or "I'm sorry you had to deal with that," and "Yes, it must be incredibly difficult for the family at this time."
- **If you're not their lawyer, don't give advice.** You may have the best intentions, but you have no idea what spouses should or should not do. Divorces are fluid situations, and what the couple wants or needs today might change.
- **As tempting as it is, don't badmouth one of the spouses, take sides, or gossip** with your fellow board members or staff. Be a source of quiet support, and in your conversations, keep the focus on a healthy and positive outcome for all involved. You never know what might happen. Divorced couples can—and do—sometimes get back together!
- **Offer specific and appropriate support**, based on your relationship with the divorcing person. Suggest they seek professional help when needed.

“

Be mindful of how terrified a person going through divorce might be, as they are venturing into this new life as their old one slowly crumbles away. They're going to have strong and confident days, while other days they will be angry, tired, and weak. It's part of their mourning process.

– NICOLE AMATURO, PERSONAL GROWTH AND MINDSET COACH

FOR THE BOARD AND STAFF LEADERSHIP: HOW TO HEAL IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

- **Support each other through individual conversations.** Commiserate...but keep the focus on reaffirming your commitment to the foundation, beyond what has happened.
- **If and when possible, stay out of the fray.** Know that when relationships fail, there is often fall-out, and peripheral relationships can suffer. If you, as a board or staff member, find yourself caught in the middle of the divorcing couple, you might ask to connect with each of them individually (depending on their state of mind). Keep in mind that their issue is not about you—and that you can't fix it.
- **Once the initial crisis has subsided, share constructive, one-on-one feedback with the founder(s) about how it could have been handled differently.** Use “I” statements, explain your perspective, and share how the situation affected you and your work for the foundation.
- **Take care of your own mental health.** Separate your story from theirs, take care of yourself, and seek your own support as needed—such as therapy and/or confiding in colleagues you trust.
- **Know that healing takes time.** When in the middle of a crisis, it's hard to tell which way things will go. Take a collective pause, as a board, to process what happened. Keep things simple, and regain energy when you and the board are ready.
- **Keep looking forward to what's next.** Know that there will be a next: whether that's the next generation who comes on board, or another iteration of the foundation or philanthropy.

CONSIDER THIS STORY

EX JOINS THE BOARD AND RE-ENGAGES THE FAMILY

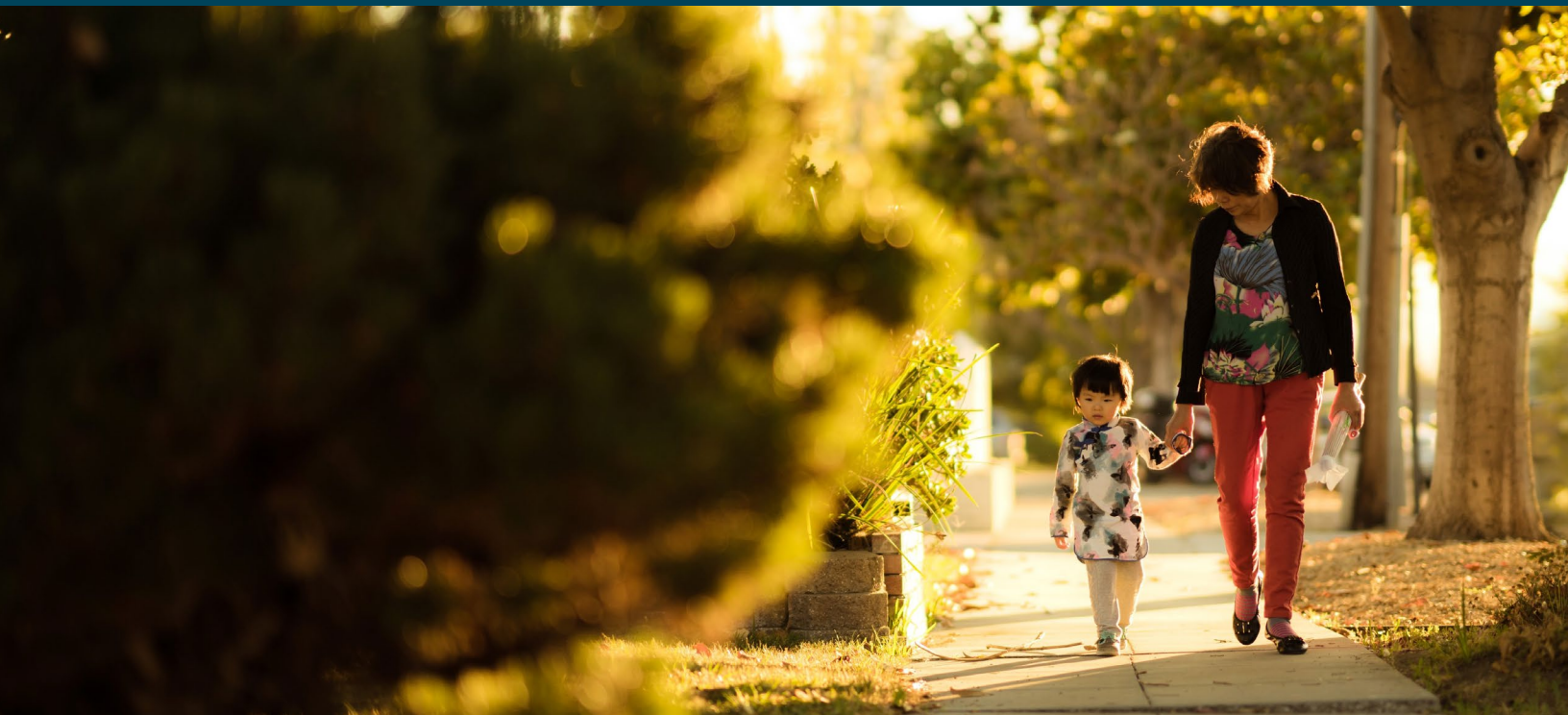
Divorces are common. The best situation is when the divorced couple can continue to co-parent and work together in productive ways.

In one small family foundation, the founder and his wife divorced before he started the foundation. Twenty years into the foundation, he invited his ex-wife to join the board. “For a few years prior, he had invited her as a guest to several foundation meetings and events. He saw her as a sounding board and personal advisor—someone who could challenge him in a healthy way,” says the executive director. “At that point, there were three adult children in their 30s and 40s on the board. Mom didn't join for any prestige; she simply wanted to be there for her kids.”

It was awkward at first, considering Dad's new girlfriend also served on the board, she says. “Yet there was something about having the nuclear family back together that worked. It certainly engaged the adult children in a new way.”

“When Mom formally joined the board, the way the kids perceived the foundation changed. It felt less like ‘Dad's money’ and more like a true family foundation,” she says. “The kids had taken time off from the board when they were in their 20s and 30s, and once Mom joined, they never missed a meeting.”

“The kids are now running the meetings and finding their voice in a way they never have. I'm impressed that they have this bond. They are there to take care of their parents, and move the foundation forward in a thoughtful way.”



Conclusion: Planning Ahead for Change

Think of planning ahead for a possible divorce as being similar to basic disaster planning. Just as you back up your computer, keep your important records in a safe spot, and have your emergency contact list ready. You and your board can:

- Talk about possible problems before they occur,
- Put policies into place to protect the board/foundation, and
- Develop a plan for how to respond, in the unfortunate event that you need to.

Whether you are planning ahead for the unexpected, or you find yourself in the throes of a crisis, be sure to seek outside support from a philanthropy advisor or trusted colleagues. Know that although the situation may feel incredibly personal, many others have been through something similar, and you are not alone.

Divorce, as difficult as it may be for families, can ultimately lead to new beginnings and can even perhaps offer an opportunity for learning and growth. In time, family members move on—many expanding their own philanthropic footprint, and bettering the world in new and meaningful ways.

To Plan Ahead for Divorce or Family Disruption, Ask Yourself...

- How can we build the board in a way our philanthropy deserves, as well as what the communities we partner with deserve?
- How do we define family for the purposes of board eligibility? What policies do we have in place on board eligibility—particularly when it comes to spouses, extended in-laws, domestic partners, divorce, remarriage, and stepchildren?
- What ground rules can we set, as a group, to prevent board blow-ups and rash decision making in times of divorce or disruption? How can we slow down or agree to interim decisions in the midst of a crisis?
- What support do we need to call in when a divorce or disruption creates conflict, tense relationships, and unproductive communication among board and/or staff?
- How might we ensure more neutrality on the board, particularly in the board chair role, in the event of a divorce?
- What is the appropriate role of non-family staff and board members during a family crisis such as divorce? How can these non-family representatives serve the best interests of the foundation overall?
- Who will be responsible for communicating big changes within the family or foundation? Who will determine and approve talking points, as applicable, for press and the community?
- How will we support the healing of the board and staff during and after a divorce or other crisis?



Additional Resources

Kavanagh, Brigit, and Chung, Cecilia. [*Dividing Philanthropy on Dissolution of Marriage*](#). Family Law News, Volume 38, No. 3, Issue 3, 2016.

NCFP Content Collection: [*Avoiding Avoidance: Managing Family Dynamics in Family Philanthropy*](#). National Center for Family Philanthropy.

[*Families in Flux: Guidelines for Participation in Your Family's Philanthropy*](#). National Center for Family Philanthropy, 2004.

[*Giving Together: A Guide to Managing Family Dynamics*](#). National Center for Family Philanthropy, 2017.

[*Giving as a Couple*](#). Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

[*Healthy Divorce: How to Make Your Split as Smooth as Possible*](#). American Psychological Association.

Credits

About the National Center for Family Philanthropy

NCFP is a network of philanthropic families committed to a world that is vibrant, equitable, and resilient. We share proven practices, work through common challenges, and learn together to strengthen our ability to effect meaningful change. Our range of programs and services support family philanthropy at its many points of inflection and help families embrace proven practices and advance momentum. Explore our resources, all rooted in a Family Giving Lifecycle, by visiting www.ncfp.org.

About the Author

Elaine Gast Fawcett is a philanthropy advisor and communications strategist serving family foundations, nonprofits, and grantmaker associations. For 20 years, she has shared the stories and best practices of family philanthropy as the published author of 12 field-respected books for grantmakers, and hundreds of articles, tools, case studies, and guides. Elaine is a contributing writer for NCFP, a 21/64 multigenerational facilitator, and principal of [PhilanthroComm](#).



NATIONAL CENTER FOR
FAMILY PHILANTHROPY

© 2022 National Center for Family Philanthropy. All rights reserved. This essay may be reproduced or excerpted with source credit to the National Center for Family Philanthropy. The information in this paper should not be taken as qualified legal advice. Please consult your legal advisor for questions about specific legal issues discussed in this essay. The information presented is subject to change, and is not a substitute for expert legal, tax, or other professional advice. This information may not be relied upon for the purposes of avoiding penalties that may be imposed under the Internal Revenue Service.