

PUBLISHER'S PROFILE

DIVORCE AND FAMILY LAW
AT ITS BEST

Divorce and Family Law Attorney James M. Quigley speaks out on the complexities of family law and the benefits of working with a large firm.

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When it comes to family law, James M. Quigley, Partner at Beermann Pritikin Mirabelli Swerdlove, LLP, says it consumes much more than divorce and dividing finances.

“We’re not just getting people divorced, we’re dealing with a family transitioning through a difficult period of their lives, and that’s something our firm takes very seriously,” he says. “We like to think about how to best help the family, taking into account more than just dollars and cents.”

Quigley has worked as a family lawyer for more than 25 years, first at his own firm, and for the past decade at Beermann. After obtaining a degree in Journalism from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Quigley moved on to the DePaul College of Law. He graduated in 1992 and worked with a firm representing civil servants in Chicago. He then worked for Enrico Mirabelli, where he was introduced to family law, before opening his own practice.

“When I started working with families it was a natural fit for me,” Quigley says. “I like the interpersonal relationships with clients, and this is a very relationship driven specialty.”

Quigley’s firm merged with the Beermann firm in 2005, bringing his career full circle as he and Mirabelli were now partners.

Like most great lawyers, Quigley has the ability to persuade, which has helped him in his career. But he also has a small town background that helps him speak with clients about their needs.

“I grew up in a blue collar, working class community, a lot to do with shaping my values that have stuck with me when working to find a solution that’s best for a family,” he says.

He notes that while financials are very important in a divorce, and are the area where his competitive side comes out to achieve the best resolution for his clients, they aren’t always the most important aspect.

“Financial issues are often mechanical under the law, but when it comes to children and custody issues it’s more personal. I have four kids who are the center of my life, and it’s very important to me and our firm to make sure I do as much as I can to keep family relationships intact as they relate to kids,” he says.

He often navigates difficult issues such as addiction or abuse among parents, and protecting the children is always his number one priority.

“In our practice family comes first and we take that very seriously. I think sometimes in divorce helping children through the process is something that gets overlooked, and it shouldn’t.”

After running his own practice, Quigley can appreciate the benefits of working with a larger firm, especially when it comes to family cases. With other staff able to focus on research, writing, paralegal work, and

other support, he is able to give more personal time to clients.

“In a small firm environment it’s more difficult to service the personal needs of clients, especially when on trial,” he says.

In a larger firm, even if Quigley is in court all day, there is always someone on hand to respond to clients. Communication is enhanced and it’s much more efficient.

It’s also more affordable. Maybe a client can’t afford Quigley’s hourly rate, but through involving other people in the office to handle certain tasks, he can bill the client at a lower rate, allowing more clients access to his services. Another benefit of working with a larger firm is that there are always second opinions.

“The world of divorce law is subject to interpretation by the courts, so it’s great to be in an environment where you have such talented and smart lawyers surrounding you on a daily basis. I need to talk through an issue I can go to my partners and associates and start a dialogue,” he says.

Beermann Pritikin Mirabelli Swerdlove is also the only firm in the Chicagoland area that has a business law group within the firm. This is advantageous to clients because the firm can represent business owners and provide additional service to clients who have business and estate planning services along with their more traditional family law needs. The firm also has a strong appeals and mediation department, which Quigley draws on to explore alternative disputes when necessary.

“All of this really broadens the scope of service I can provide to my clients,” he says.

Quigley is a fellow in the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, annually recognized as one of Illinois’ “Leading Lawyers,” and consistently named an Illinois “Super Lawyer.” He is part of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML), the American College of Family Trial Lawyers (ACFTL with only 100 delegates across the country) and is certified by the National Board of Trial Advocacy (NBTA). He served as Vice President of the Board of Directors at the DePaul College of Law, and regularly lectures on family law and matrimonial matters.

One piece of advice he would give to anyone looking for a family law lawyer is to interview a few attorneys before making a decision, because everyone’s style and personality varies.

“Lawyers claim to do a lot of things, and many people will say they do family law,” he says, “but it is very hard to be a family law lawyer part-time. Find someone who specializes.”

Beermann Pritikin Mirabelli Swerdlove LLP has offices on the North Shore and in downtown Chicago, and practices in several surrounding counties. The North Shore Office is located 2275 Half Day Road, Suite 350 in Bannockburn; and the Chicago Loop Office is located at 161 North Clark Street, Suite 2600 in Chicago, 312-621-9700, beermannlaw.com.