



Diocese of Providence
Office of the Tribunal

Annulment Referrals: Guidelines for Interviewing the Petitioner

Part I. Petitioner's Family Background

Areas to explore or that might surface in questioning. Give examples whenever possible.

- The Petitioner's parents' marriage: harmonious, contentious, good marital role models? Petitioner's relationship with them?
- Was there divorce, infidelity, mental illness, substance abuse, other abuse?
- Family's ethnic and cultural background, close-knit, religious practice?
- Siblings: how many, any divorces, Petitioner's relationship with them.
- Petitioner's educational background, behavior problems, accomplishments or difficulties.
- Any traumatic childhood incidents that affected Petitioner's self-esteem or caused distress in his/her life (e.g. parents' divorce/death, physical, emotional or sexual abuse)?
- Social activities and ease in forming friendships.
- Did the Petitioner experience any mental health difficulties or unusual physical problems? Counseling and/or Medications?
- The Petitioner's previous dating experience, engagements, including former marriages.
- Problems in adult life before marriage: e.g., alcohol, drugs, gambling, handling money, arrests, etc.
- Personality traits: e.g. nervous, quick tempered, moody, jealous, selfish, or anxious? Would others consider Petitioner to have good judgment in everyday situations?

Part II. Respondent's Family Background

Using the questions in Part I, ask about the Respondent's background up to the time the parties began dating.

Part III. Description of Parties' Courtship and Engagement.

Ask and record:

- How they met and what attracted them to each other; approximate date they began dating;
- Quality of sharing and communication; time by themselves getting to know each other.
- How did they relate to others (friends, families, other couples)?
- Problems in dating: any serious arguments, break-ups, how relationship resumed.
- Why did the parties want to marry; date and circumstances of engagement
- Families' reaction to engagement.
- Problems during engagement

- Was there a pre-marital pregnancy – effect it had on decision to marry?
- Attitude of each party toward children; toward fidelity; toward divorce.
- Was there any pressure on either party to marry?
- Did anyone advise against marrying? Reasons? Your reaction?
- Was sexual intimacy part of the courtship/engagement. Cohabitation?

Part IV. Problem Areas in Marriage.

Ask and record:

- Attitude and feelings of each party on day of wedding. Any unusual incidents?
- Place and length of honeymoon; was it a good experience for both; when was the marriage consummated?
- Attitude of each toward domestic chores and the sharing of responsibilities.
- Attitude toward and frequency of sex in entire marriage; sensitivity to each other's needs. Attitude toward children and their care.
- Describe any differences and/or conflicts about religion.
- Physical/emotional abuse? Abandonment? Absenteeism? Selfish behavior?
- Sharing of interests and concerns; use of leisure time; use of money.
- Part played in marriage by parents; When did problems arise and over what issues?
- Any use of counselors, psychiatrists, or other professional help? Explain.

Part V. Cause of Breakup of Marriage

Ask and record:

- What caused final separation?
- Any attempts at reconciliation? Please explain. Who filed for divorce?
- Who received custody of the children?
- **In your opinion**, what was the major reason the marriage failed?