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## Family law practice sees demand rise as cultural shifts complicate custody and domestic disputes



Senior Associate Lynn Salvatore (left), CEO and Founder Paola Parra Harris (center) and Attorney John Joseph Clark (right) are the three attorneys that make up Parra Harris Law, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary in 2026.

PARRA HARRIS LAW



By [Mauricio La Plante](#) – Reporter, Jacksonville Business Journal  
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As Northeast Florida grows, so does demand for legal services that deal not with transactions or development deals, but with the unraveling of families.

That reality has helped firms like Parra Harris Law PLLC carve out a durable niche in Jacksonville's legal market, where founder and CEO Paola Parra Harris has spent the past 10 years building a boutique practice focused on family law's most difficult and emotionally charged disputes.

The work has only gotten more complicated. Changes in Florida family law, shifting cultural norms around marriage and parenting, and growing fear among some immigrant clients are reshaping the cases coming through the firm's doors. For Parra Harris, those changes underscore why family law remains a demanding but necessary specialty in a region where business and population growth are fueling demand for legal services.

"It's a niche that if you ask most lawyers, they're like, 'oh, you do that?' and they really want to stay away from it," Parra Harris said.

Parra Harris, who founded the firm a decade ago, said the challenges of family law stretch well beyond the law itself. The practice often requires attorneys to confront the messiness and ugliness that can come with divorce, child custody fights, domestic violence cases and other forms of abuse, while helping clients navigate an unfamiliar and emotionally draining process.

She leads the boutique litigation firm alongside Senior Associate Lynn Salvatore and Attorney John Joseph Clark. Together, the team works in a practice area that

Parra Harris said continues to hold its place as a smaller, niche ecosystem within the broader legal market.

For Parra Harris, the difficulty is not only understanding the law, but also explaining it and guiding clients through it.

That challenge can be especially pronounced among immigrant clients, a growing segment of the firm's client base. Parra Harris said many are not necessarily struggling because of language barriers, but because they are used to legal systems outside the United States.

Florida law itself has also changed in significant ways around child custody.

As of 2023, courts in the Sunshine State presume that splitting up parenting 50/50 for married and unmarried parents is in a child's best interest when negotiating custody. Parra Harris said that presumption can be difficult for many immigrant families from across the world to adjust to because they have lived with different norms of domesticity.

"In a traditional family or traditional marriage, you have the wage earner, typically the man," Parra Harris said. "And you have the stay-at-home parent, typically the wife, the mother, and to now say, 'well, by the way, now you've been the stay-at-home with the kids 90% of the time, you have to give your kids 50% of the time to this man who probably doesn't even know who the pediatrician is, or where they go to school, or anything else.' It's hard."

That legal shift is arriving alongside broader anxieties among some immigrant clients over immigration enforcement. Parra Harris said that even though she has not seen direct effects in her cases, she has seen growing hesitancy and fear among immigrant clients about working with the legal system to resolve domestic violence cases, abusive situations or relationships that have run their course, all of which they would have a right to regardless of immigration status.

Beyond national immigration headlines and recent changes in family law in Florida, Parra Harris said she expects other cultural changes to shape the firm's work as well. Among them is a reduction in couples getting married while still buying property together and having children, a dynamic that can create a different set of legal complications.

The mechanics of legal practice have changed too. A large number of hearings and meetings are now conducted over video call, which Parra Harris said depletes some of the benefits of doing things in person but also saves clients time and money.

In what she described as a brave new world compared with when she first opened her practice, Parra Harris said she and her team remain focused on delivering top-tier service.

“We're proud to be experts in the area of family law litigation,” Parra Harris said. “We're award winning. We've been very blessed over the last 10 years that I've received a bunch of wonderful accolades and recognitions. We are looking to continue that excellence in representing men and women in all aspects of family law in Northeast Florida.”

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