

## **Criminal Conduct May Affect Alimony, New Jersey Family Lawyers Warn**

When Denise Clark allegedly embezzled close to \$350,000 from her family store, she forfeited her rights to alimony, a New Jersey appeals court ruled this month. The court found that her “thievery...transcends mere ‘economic impact,’ as she...kicked their economic security in the teeth by secretly draining cash”—behavior that [New Jersey family lawyers](#) say can cost her the alimony that her ex-husband and ex-business partner was ordered to pay her. Although New Jersey traditionally reduces alimony, rather than denies it, for a spouse’s economic impact on the couple, the appeals court found that Clark’s actions went above and beyond economic impact to severely destroy the future of her family business.

Clark and her husband owned Grayrock Pharmacy in Clinton, where Francis Clark ran the pharmacy, and Denise handled the bookkeeping. When they divorced in 2006, their company went bankrupt, and New Jersey courts ruled that Denise could not find employment and was unable to support herself. She received \$600 a week in alimony, until further investigation found that Denise maintained a separate savings account where she had deposited \$350,000 in company funds over the years. She was ordered to pay back half the amount she had stolen, and her ex-husband filed an appeal with the state court to relieve his alimony obligation.

Using state precedent, Francis Clark’s [New Jersey family lawyers](#) argued that *Mani v. Mani* establishes two exceptions to the “no-fault” alimony rule: if the spouse has had an impact on the couple’s economic life, and if the conduct of one spouse “so violates societal norms that continuing the economic bonds between the parties would confound notions of simple justice.”

Alimony rulings are based on individual cases, and no two couples have the exact same story. Although [New Jersey family lawyers](#) report that the Clarks’ alimony case is a rare exception to the state’s standing “no-fault” policy, there is state precedent for complete alimony forfeiture. If you are separating from your spouse, the New Jersey family attorneys at [Helmer, Paul, Conley, and Kasselmann](#) have a vast knowledge of the state’s changing policies and previous rulings, and years of experience in family law matters. Contact us today for a free, no-strings consultation.