

MAR 21 2012

STATE OF MINNESOTA
IN SUPREME COURT
ADM11-8006

FILED

**In Re the Establishment and Amendment
Of Parent Education Minimum Standards**

ORDER

WHEREAS, in 1995, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § 518.157, subd. 2, the Legislature requested that “[t]he Minnesota Supreme Court should promulgate minimum standards for the implementation and administration of a parent education program”;


WHEREAS, in July 1997 the Minnesota Supreme Court promulgated Parent Education Minimum Standards; and

WHEREAS, technology has improved greatly since the Minimum Standards were promulgated such that online parent education programs are now available;

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT: The Parent Education Minimum Standards are amended as noted in Attachment A to permit parents to complete an online parent education program that otherwise complies with the Minimum Standards.

DATED: March 21, 2012

BY THE COURT:



Lorie S. Gildea
Chief Justice

ATTACHMENT A

PARENT EDUCATION MINIMUM STANDARDS

Approved by the Minnesota Supreme Court July 16, 1997

Amended by the Minnesota Supreme Court March 21, 2012

Parent education programs shall include the following minimum standards for program implementation and administration.

- A. **Purpose.** The purpose of a parent education program shall be to serve as an early intervention mechanism to encourage cooperation between parents before adversarial behavior and conflict has a chance to develop. Among other goals, the parent education program should educate parents about positive communication techniques, the impact that divorce, the restructuring of families, and judicial proceedings have upon children and families, methods for preventing visitation conflicts, and dispute resolution options, and should encourage parents to always place the best interests of the children above what they may perceive as their own "rights."
- B. **Implementation and Administration.** The plan submitted to the Judicial Council Conference of Chief Judges by the chief judge of each judicial district, or designee, shall include a plan for funding the program(s) within the district. Parent education programs may be implemented and administered in each county or in a group of counties or for the entire district. Education programs may be operated by the judicial district, counties, private or government agencies, or non-profit or for-profit organizations. Existing parent education programs may be utilized, so long as the programs comply with these minimum standards.
- C. **Certificate of Completion.** A certificate of completion shall be provided by the program to each participant or, at the direction of the court, to the court to verify completion of the program. The certificate of completion shall, at a minimum, include the court case number, the participant's name, and the date(s) of attendance.
- D. **Safety.** Consideration shall be given to the safety of the parent education program participants.
- E. **Fees.** Each person who attends a parent education program shall pay a fee to defray the cost of the program. Participant fees shall be as inexpensive as possible. A party who qualifies for waiver of filing fees under Minn. Stat. § 563.01 is exempt from paying the parent education program fee and the court shall waive the fee or direct its payment under § 563.01. Program providers shall implement a sliding fee scale.
- F. **Child Care.** Child care should be available.
- G. **Length and Nature of Program; Online Programs.** The parent education program sessions should be offered at least monthly, be available at flexible times (i.e., days, evenings, and weekends), and be at least four to eight hours in length to adequately cover the topics set forth below in paragraph k. In lieu of an in-person class, parents may complete an online parent education program that otherwise complies with the Minimum Standards.
- H. **Instructors.** Parent education program sessions should be conducted by one male and one female instructor using interactive teaching approaches (e.g., role playing, group discussions, etc.). Each instructor should have training or experience in family life education, family dynamics, domestic relations, marriage and family therapy, counseling, psychology, social

ATTACHMENT A

services, child welfare, or a closely related field. Training for instructors should include information on the dynamics of domestic violence and sexual assault and their impact upon children.

- I. **Solicitation for Other Services.** Providers and instructors who offer private mediation or other services are prohibited from soliciting program participants as clients.
- J. **Language and Cultural Needs.** The parent education program should take into account the language and cultural needs of the participants.
- K. **Curriculum.** While additional topics may be covered, all parent education programs shall include information on the following topics:
- Resources in the community to obtain additional help
 - Overview of judicial process and proceedings (dissolution and paternity)
 - Overview of legal issues (dissolution and paternity)
 - Overview of the function of the court (dissolution and paternity)
 - Alternatives for settling custody/visitation disputes
 - Phases of divorce/paternity proceeding
 - Role of custody study
 - Role of attorney
 - Role of guardian ad litem
 - Role of mediator/mediation
 - Developmental needs/stages of children
 - Impact of divorce/separation/conflict upon adults
 - Impact of divorce/separation/conflict upon children
 - Dynamics of domestic violence and sexual assault and impact upon children
 - Communication skills
 - Co-parenting skills
 - Conflict resolution skills
 - Keeping children out of the middle of conflict
 - Cost of raising a child
 - Emotional and financial responsibilities of parents
 - Coping with stress
 - Safety planning
 - Child support issues (obligations/services)
 - Visitation issues (planning and problems)
 - Impact and realities of step families
- L. **Evaluations by Participants.** After completing a parent education program, participants should provide feedback, including an evaluation of the topics discussed, course content, timing, instructors, satisfaction, and other issues. In addition, at fixed intervals following completion of a course, program personnel should conduct follow-up evaluations to monitor whether participants have successfully incorporated into their lives the tools and concepts learned during the parent education program.