

## **PARENT EDUCATION MINIMUM STANDARDS**

Approved by the Minnesota Supreme Court July 16, 1997

Amended by the Minnesota Supreme Court March 21, 2012

Amended by the Minnesota Supreme Court September 20, 2024

**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.** Parent education programs may be operated by non-profit or for-profit organizations and may be approved for implementation in each county, or in a group of counties, or an entire district. 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.** For in-person programs, childcare must be available.
- G. Length and Nature of Program; Online Programs.** Both online and in-person parent education programs are acceptable. Both formats should be readily accessible and allow parents to work at their own pace and in a timeframe that meets their needs.

Parent education programs should be at least four to eight hours in length and cover the topics set forth below in paragraph K. Parent education programs that originate in a state other than Minnesota must clearly state in their application how they will comply with those portions of the curriculum that require knowledge of Minnesota's community resources, judicial process and proceedings, and legal issues specific to Minnesota.

- H. Instructors.** Parent education program sessions should be conducted 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 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 stepfamilies

**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. Each approved program shall, every two years, submit an abbreviated application to confirm their program remains in compliance with the minimum standards. Programs shall also submit data that reflects who used their program, what program was completed, and what county the case was in.