

RHODE ISLAND FAMILY COURT

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 2000-04
(Administrative Order 98-9 is amended as follows)

RE: PARENTING EDUCATION FOR DIVORCING PARENTS

Commencing November 1, 1998, all parties with children who file a complaint, answer and/or counterclaim for divorce, custody or visitation, separation or divorce from bed and board in Providence and Bristol counties must attend a parenting education program. The program will be provided at no cost to the parties. This administrative order does not apply to domestic abuse filings where there is a request for custody.

Upon the filing of a complaint, answer and/or counterclaim for divorce, custody or visitation, separation or divorce from bed and board, the Domestic Clerks' Office will mail this administrative order and a notice to the party informing him or her of the schedule of the dates and times that the program is offered. The notice will also apprise the party that he or she must attend the program prior to a hearing on the merits.

Approximately 50 minutes in length, the program consists of videotaped and written materials. The videotaped sessions will be shown on a daily basis in the Garrahy Judicial Complex. A scheduling clerk will monitor attendance. After the program, a certificate of completion for each party in attendance will be filed by the scheduling clerk in the Domestic Clerks' Office. A party should be prepared to give the party's name and case number to the scheduling clerk upon arrival.

Parties with divorce filings in counties other than Providence and Bristol may be ordered by the court to attend the videotaped presentation. Space permitting, parents from other counties may elect to attend a session of the program.

No matter shall be heard on the merits until the file contains a certificate(s) of completion of this program.

At the hearing on the merits, the attorney for the plaintiff should state on the record that either or both parties, as the case may be, have or have not attended the parenting education program. If both parties have not attended the program prior to the scheduled hearing on the merits, the court may impose sanctions, including a stay of the proceedings to allow a party(ies) to attend.

A party who is not a resident of Rhode Island may file an affidavit stating that he or she is not a resident and cannot attend the program without undue financial or personal hardship.

A party may not waive the requirement of attendance; but the court, only upon appropriate motion and a showing of undue hardship, may find good cause to excuse a party from attendance.

8/24/00
Date

Jeremiah S. Jeremiah Jr.
Chief Judge