



## **PARENTS FOREVER**

### **Education for Families in Divorce Transition**

*Parents Forever is an educational program that encourages parents to work out divorce decisions without putting their children in the middle or forcing the children to choose one parent over the other.*

#### **Background:**

- Developed by the University of Minnesota Extension Service based on research about the effects of divorce on children
- Offered in 65 Minnesota counties
- Meets the 25 minimum standards for court mandated parent education required by Minnesota Statute 518.157 which requires judges to court order parents with contested custody and visitation issues into an approved parent education program

#### **Research base for Parents Forever:**

Less than 50% of the current generation of children can expect to live continually with their biological parents throughout their childhood.

#### *Children who experience family disruption:*

- Often live with parental conflict before, during and after the divorce
- Experience the absence of the non-custodial parent - often the father
- Are more likely to be poor, have emotional problems, conceive a child in their teens, get in trouble with the law, have lower academic achievement

#### *We know that the affects of divorce on children can be reduced if the parents:*

- Avoid putting children in situations where their loyalty to the other parent is threatened
- Learn new and more effective approaches to parenting
- Adjust to the role of single parent for the residential parent or
- As a non residential parent, maintain close ties and remain available to the children
- Create a plan to parent that is business like and focused on the needs of the children
- Learn to communicate with the other parent about issues related to the children and how to make the necessary joint decisions with a minimum of conflict

#### **Description:**

**Parents Forever** is a 12 hour parent education program for divorcing and unmarried parents. The program goals are to help parents:

- Eliminate parental conflict in front of the child
- Keep the child out of the middle of parental issues
- Provide access to both parents
- Put the best interests of the child first

### Parents Forever Program Content:

- **IMPACT OF DIVORCE ON ADULTS** (2 hours)
- **IMPACT OF DIVORCE ON CHILDREN** (4 hours)
- **MONEY ISSUES IN DIVORCE** (2 hours)
- **LEGAL ISSUES AND THE ROLE OF MEDIATION IN DIVORCE** (2 hours)
- **PATHWAYS TO A NEW LIFE** (2 hours)

### Evaluations of Parents Forever participants find:

- 75% reported they had made changes in avoiding conflict with the other parent in front of the children
- 38.0% reported they had “gotten better” at managing conflict with the other parent
- 65.8% reported being able to cooperate better with the other parent about the children
- 42.5% reported handling their anger with the other parent by talking it out
- 30.3% reported increasing the amount of time the children spend with the other parent

### Other products offered by Parents Forever:

- The 5 parent booklets and educator guides used in the classes are available to purchase from Extension Distribution (1-800-876-8636)
- *Padres para siempre* (parent booklets and video) makes the course available to Spanish speaking parents
- *We Agree: Creating a Parenting Plan* – this document and class for parents covers the fundamentals of creating a parenting plan

### Where to get more information:

[www.extension.umn.edu/parentsforever](http://www.extension.umn.edu/parentsforever)

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