

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT, FOURTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA, IN AND FOR BAY, CALHOUN, GULF, HOLMES,  
JACKSON AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 98-10

IN RE: PARENTING EDUCATION

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Pursuant to section 61.21, Florida Statutes, when a dissolution of marriage petition or when a paternity action is filed in circuit court involving issues of shared parental responsibility, custody and/or visitation, both parents shall attend the "Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course," unless waived by the court for good cause. All parties to a modification of a final judgment involving shared parental responsibilities, custody, or visitation may be required to complete the parenting course prior to the entry of an order modifying the final judgment. Upon completion of the parenting course, a copy of the certificate of completion shall be filed by the approved course provider with the Clerk of the Circuit Court to be placed in the court file prior to the entry of any final judgment or, if applicable, order of modification.

The "Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course" shall be a minimum of four hours designed to educate, train and assist divorcing parents understand the consequences of divorce on parents and children. All approved parenting course providers, including those listed on exhibit "A," must be in substantial compliance with the attached "Recommended MINIMUM Curriculum Standards for Parenting Courses for Divorcing Parents in the State of Florida," by June 1, 1999. Each approved course provider shall further submit an annual report to the court showing the number of participants in the course and of those participants who either received a fee waiver or reduction. The annual report shall be submitted to the Trial Court Administrator's office within 30 days following the end of each calendar year, beginning with the 1999 annual report. Approved course providers may continue to offer the "Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course" until further notice by the court. Course providers may be added or deleted from the approved list by subsequent exhibits attached hereto. See attached exhibit "A" for approved course providers.


Additional course providers may be approved as follows:

1. The prospective course provider shall request review and approval of its course by submitting to the Family Law Program Office the following documentation:
  - ▶ Curriculum (including learning objectives and estimated time frames);
  - ▶ Instructors and their qualifications;
  - ▶ Fees and procedures for fee reduction/waiver; and
  - ▶ Proposed schedule and location(s) of course.

2. The Family Law Program office will, after review of the submitted documentation, recommend to the Family Law Administrative Judge and Chief Judge approval or rejection of the course.
3. The Family Law Administrative Judge and Chief Judge shall determine final approval or rejection of the course.
4. The Family Law Program Office will notify the prospective course provider of the outcome of its request for course approval and shall indicate any deficiencies noted.

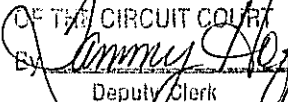
This order rescinds Bay County Administrative Order 93-06, Jackson County Administrative Order 94-01, Washington County Administrative Order 94-01 and Holmes County Administrative Order 94-03 and is effective January 1, 1999.

DONE AND ORDERED in chambers at Panama City, Bay County, Florida this 25  
day of December, 1998.

  
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JUDY M. PITTMAN  
Chief Judge

\_\_\_\_\_  
MICHAEL C. OVERSTREET  
Administrative Family Law Judge



A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY  
HAROLD BAZZEL, CLERK  
OF THE CIRCUIT COURT  
By   
Deputy Clerk

**EXHIBIT "A"**

**LIFE MANAGEMENT CENTER OF NORTHWEST FLORIDA, INC.**

Bay County  
525 East 15th Street  
Panama City, FL 32405  
(850) 769-0323

Holmes County  
801 South Weeks Street  
Bonifay, FL 32425  
1-888-785-8750 (toll free)

Gulf County  
311 Williams Avenue  
Port St Joe, FL 32456  
1-888-785-8750 (toll free)

Jackson County  
4094 Lafayette Street  
Marianna, FL 32446  
1-888-785-8750 (toll free)

Calhoun County  
143 N. Pear Street  
Blountstown, FL 32424  
1-888-785-8750 (toll free)

Washington County  
100 N. 5th Street  
Chipley, FL 32428  
1-888-785-8750 (toll free)

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**COMMUNITY SERVICES OF NORTH FLORIDA, INC.**

4878 Blue Springs Road  
Marianna, FL 32446  
(850) 526-1172

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**OKALOOSA-WALTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

100 College Boulevard  
Niceville, FL 32578-1294

Please call for the course location nearest you (850) 729-5386.



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JUDY M. PITTMAN  
Chief Judge

Date: 12-23-98



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MICHAEL C. OVERSTREET  
Administrative Family Law Judge

Date: 12-23-98

**EXHIBIT "A"-1**  
TO ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 98-10

**LIFE MANAGEMENT CENTER OF NORTHWEST FLORIDA, INC.**

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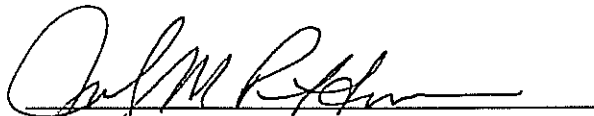
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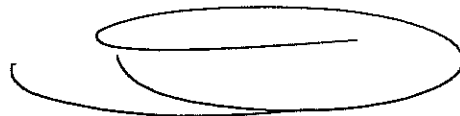
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**PARENTS, CHILDREN & DIVORCE**

Bay High School  
1200 Harrison Avenue  
Panama City, Florida 32401  
1-800-767-8193 [www.educationprograms.com](http://www.educationprograms.com)

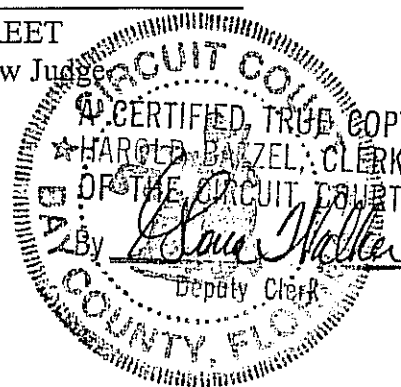
  
JUDY M. PITTMAN  
Chief Judge

Date: 6-7-00



MICHAEL C. OVERSTREET  
Administrative Family Law Judge

Date: 6-6-2000



**EXHIBIT "A"-2**  
TO ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 98-10

**LIFE MANAGEMENT CENTER OF NORTHWEST FLORIDA, INC.**

Bay County  
525 East 15<sup>th</sup> Street  
Panama City, FL 32405  
(850)769-0323

Holmes County  
801 South Weeks Street  
Bonifay, FL 32425  
1-888-785-8750 (toll free)

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**COMMUNITY SERVICES OF NORTH FLORIDA, INC.**

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(850)526-1172

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**OKALOOSA-WALTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

100 College Boulevard  
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Please call for the course location nearest you.  
(850)729-5386

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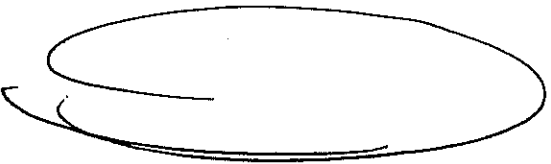
[www.educationprograms.com](http://www.educationprograms.com)

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**WWW.FLORIDAPARENTINGCLASS.COM**

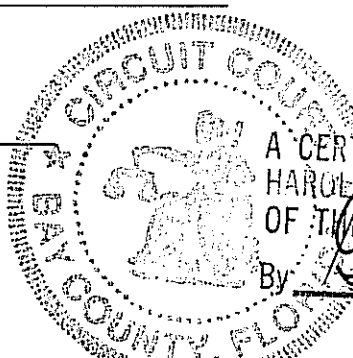
An internet course provided by:  
University of Continuing Education, Inc.  
227 S. Orlando Avenue, Suite #1-A  
Winter Park, FL 32789  
(800)771-2255

  
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JUDY M. PITTMAN  
Chief Judge

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
MICHAEL C. OVERSTREET  
Administrative Family Law Judge

Date: 8-10-01

Date: 8-9-01



A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY  
HAROLD BAZZEL, CLERK  
OF THE CIRCUIT COURT

By: Stoua Walker  
Deputy Clerk

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## Recommended MINIMUM Curriculum Standards for Parenting Courses for Divorcing Parents in the State of Florida

The following recommended MINIMUM curriculum standards for parenting courses for divorcing parents in the state of Florida have been developed pursuant to the legislative mandate contained Specific Appropriation 2136 of the 1997 General Appropriations Act. The specific content items contained in each component are recommended for inclusion in every parenting course for divorcing parents offered in the state of Florida. However, the inclusion of items under headings, the order of presentation of the items, and the suggested times in this document are not intended to prescribe the organization of actual parenting courses. In addition, the method or technique for conveying the specific content is not prescribed. Effective techniques may include lecture, group discussion, role plays, videotapes, or other instructional methods.

### I. DIVORCE AS LOSS (approximately 20 minutes)

This component should include a recognition of divorce as the loss of the current family structure and processes experienced by adults and children in working through loss. In addition, a distinction should be made between loss of the current family structure and the continuing parental role.

- a. Divorce as a loss: The participant will recognize that the divorce may be viewed as a loss for every family member.
- b. Stages of grief in adults: The participant will identify how adults process losses in their lives.
- c. Stages of grief in children: The participant will recognize how the processing of loss may be different for children than adults.
- d. Loss of the marriage but not of the parental role: The participant will differentiate between loss of the marital relationship and the on-going parental role.

### II. PERMANENCY OF PARENTAL ROLE / SHARED PARENTING (approximately 10 minutes)

This component should include information about how children are positively impacted by a continuing relationship with both parents and the types of support children need from both parents.

- a. Children's need to maintain a relationship with both parents: The participant will identify the benefits to children of maintaining a positive relationship with both parents after a divorce and the possible negative consequences of the loss of a relationship with one parent as a result of a divorce.
- b. Parents' responsibility to continue providing support: The participant will understand the importance of each parent contributing to the emotional and economic well being of the children after the divorce.

### III. DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES (approximately 40 minutes)

This component should include information about how children in traditional families typically develop as they grow, as well as how a divorce may impact development, what parents can do to minimize the impact, and when to seek additional help for a child experiencing problems.

- a. Typical developmental stages of children: The participant will understand general information about child development from infancy to eighteen years old.
- b. Impact of divorce on children at each of the developmental stages: The participant will

- recognize common reactions to divorce of children at each developmental stage.
- c. What parents can do to lessen the impact of divorce: The participant will recognize parental behaviors that may reduce or eliminate the reactions of children to divorce.
- d. Indicators of more serious problems with children: The participant will be able to identify children's behaviors and attitudes that may indicate professional help is necessary to address the children's reaction to a divorce.
- e. Sources of help for serious problems with children: The participant will obtain a list of local school, religious, community and professional resources which are available to assist parents with children who are having difficulty in adjusting to a divorce. The list may include resources itemized on page seven of this document, in section IX. WHERE TO FIND ADDITIONAL HELP, and the list should contain a non-endorsement statement that states the programs and resources are not monitored or endorsed by the circuit court.

#### IV. COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILDREN (approximately 30 minutes)

This component should include information about discussing divorce-related issues with children and how to discuss these issues, including appropriate and inappropriate content and effective and ineffective methods.

- a. Talking with your children about the divorce: The participant will identify the general issues about both the content and method of discussing divorce with children. The participant will understand that discussing divorce with children should include age appropriate information about residential and visitation issues, the expected economic impact on the children, reassurances of the love each parent has for the children, and an opportunity for the children to ask questions.
- b. Encouraging children to express their emotions: The participant will recognize the importance of allowing children to express their concerns and feelings about divorce and will learn methods of handling emotional content.
- c. Keeping the lines of communication open: The participant will identify methods that facilitate on-going communication between parents and children and understand the importance of parental attitudes to open and effective communication.

#### V. COMMUNICATING WITH THE OTHER PARENT (approximately 30 minutes)

This component should include the negative impact of a parent expressing anger toward the other parent in front of the children, the benefits to children of keeping them out of the middle of parental conflict, and how to establish a relationship with the other parent which will minimize the children's exposure to parental conflict.

- a. Acknowledging the possibility of existing anger between parents: The participant will recognize that there may be unresolved anger between the parents and will be motivated to work through their issues outside the children's presence for the benefit of their children.
- b. Benefits of not placing the child in the middle of parental conflict: The participant will recognize how children benefit from parental communication which does not make them the messenger and will recognize the negative impact of parental conflict concerning the children's needs.
- c. Avoiding child exposure to any parental conflict: The participant will acknowledge the impact on children of seeing or hearing parental conflict.
- d. Optimal parental relationship after divorce: The participant will identify the benefits to the children of both parents establishing a goal of being friends, or, at a minimum, maintaining a business-like relationship between parents.

#### VI. ABUSE (approximately 10 minutes)

This component should include a brief discussion of the local community resources available for victims and perpetrators of spouse abuse and a brief discussion of what types of child abuse should be reported to the Child Abuse Hotline and the penalties for false abuse reports.

- a. Spouse abuse: The participant will recognize behaviors that are abusive, the civil and criminal remedies available, and the local community resources available to assist both perpetrators and victims.
- b. Child abuse: The participant will identify types of child abuse appropriate for reporting to the Child Abuse Hotline, will obtain the telephone number (1-800-96ABUSE) and will understand the penalties for filing false child abuse reports.

## VII. LEGAL CONCEPTS (approximately 25 minutes)

This component should include general information about Florida family law, including references to statutory definitions. Parenting course instructors should be careful to avoid giving legal advice by emphasizing general legal concepts and deferring specific factual questions to a licensed attorney. Reading out loud the following statement (or one containing similar content) is recommended:

This component of the parenting course will discuss general Florida family law principles. The presentation of this material is not intended to constitute legal advice. Your instructor is not able to answer specific legal questions in this forum and you are encouraged to discuss specific questions about your individual case with a licensed attorney of your choice.

- a. Best interest of the child: The participant will understand the statutory factors that courts consider in ruling on shared parental responsibility and primary residence [§61.13(3), Florida Statutes (1997)].
- b. Shared parental responsibility: The participant will be able to explain the rights and responsibilities of shared parenting [§61.13, Florida Statutes (1997)].
- c. Sole parental responsibility: The participant will be able to identify the standard for awarding sole parental responsibility and will recognize that an award of sole parental responsibility does not preclude the court from entering an order for child support or visitation [§61.13, Florida Statutes (1997)].
- d. Primary residential parent (contrasted with custody): The participant will be able to distinguish between primary physical residence and custody and will recognize that, after considering all relevant facts, both parents shall be given the same consideration in determining who is the primary residential parent [§61.13, Florida Statutes (1997)].
- e. Secondary residential parent: The participant will be able to explain the rights and responsibilities of secondary residential parents [§61.13, Florida Statutes (1997)].
- f. Child support: The participant will be able to locate the statutory child support guidelines, will understand the methods for paying child support, and will understand the possible consequences for failure to pay child support [§§61.1301 - 61.13017, 61.14, 61.17 - 61.182, 61.30, Florida Statutes (1997)].
- g. Visitation: The participant will recognize the rights of the secondary residential parent to visitation, will recognize the remedies available for failing to honor visitation rights, and will understand that child support and visitation are unrelated [§61.13(4), Florida Statutes (1997)].
- h. Mediation: The participant will understand the advantages of mediation and that nearly all contested family law cases are referred to mediation prior to trial [§61.183, Florida Statutes (1997)].
- i. The role of a guardian ad litem: The participant will understand the role and responsibilities of guardians ad litem appointed in family law cases [§§61.401 - 61.405, Florida Statutes (1997)].
- j. Final Judgment: The participant will understand the types of issues decided and the effect of a final judgment in a dissolution of marriage.
- k. Modification: The participant will recognize the procedures for filing for a modification of a final judgment and will understand the standard for modification is an extraordinary and substantial change in circumstances.

### VIII. VISITATION (approximately 20 minutes)

This component should include information about the benefits to children of maintaining a stable and consistent relationship with both parents, suggestions about how to develop a parenting plan, and effective communication between parents about visitation.

- a. Quality time spent with both parents is essential: The participant will understand the benefits to children of spending quality time with both parents, including techniques for effective single parenting.
- b. Formulating a parenting plan: The participant will recognize what content may be included in a parenting plan, and emphasizes the importance of keeping parenting plans and visitation schedules simple, routine, and age-appropriate.
- c. Cooperative attitude between parents: The participant will recognize the importance of non-conflictual communication between the parents, including keeping children out of the middle of disagreements concerning visitation.

### IX. WHERE TO FIND ADDITIONAL HELP (approximately 10 minutes)

This component should provide a local list of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of persons and agencies who may provide assistance to divorced parents of children, and the list should contain a non-endorsement statement that states the programs and resources are not monitored or endorsed by the circuit court.

- a. Sources of referrals
  1. Family doctor or Pediatrician
  2. School guidance counselors
  3. Clergy
  4. Family members
  5. Friends
- b. Local resources
  1. United Way
  2. Telephone Hotline
  3. Parent support groups
  4. Telephone yellow pages for Mental Health Professionals
  5. Big Brothers / Big Sisters
  6. Boys' and Girls' Clubs
  7. Boy Scouts / Girl Scouts
  8. 4-H Clubs
  9. YMCA
  10. Domestic Violence shelters
  11. Drug and alcohol abuse services
  12. Legal aid or local bar association pro bono program

### X. REFERENCE LIST (approximately 5 minutes)

This component should provide a list of books, articles, periodicals, and videos which support and expand upon the material contained in the parenting course.

- a. Materials for adults
- b. Materials for children and adolescents