

STATE OF GEORGIA
COUNTY OF CHATHAM
STANDING ORDER
TRANSITIONAL PARENTING SEMINAR

FILED IN OFFICE

2010 MAR 10 PM 2:31

Valerie E. Murkin
CLERK, SUPERIOR COURT
CHATHAM COUNTY, GA.

Pursuant to the inherent powers of this Court this order is promulgated to establish the **Transitional Parenting Seminar** which will assist in the speedy, efficient and inexpensive resolution of domestic disputes involving children.

Section 1. This order applies to all parties in all divorce, separate maintenance, paternity, change of custody, visitation, legitimation, and other domestic relations actions, excluding domestic violence and contempt actions, pending on or filed after April 1, 2010, where the interests of the children under 18 years of age are involved unless the action is an uncontested change of custody or visitation in which case the parties are not required to attend the seminar if all of the children are 14 years of age or older.

Section 2. All parties shall successfully complete the program entitled "Transitional Parenting Seminar." Exhibit A of this order, which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by express reference, describes the seminar.

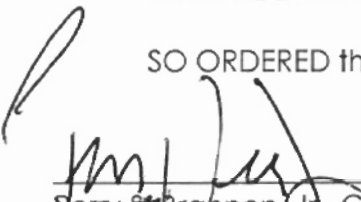
Section 3. The Seminar shall be successfully completed within 30 days of service of the original complaint upon the defendant.

Section 4. Upon a party's failure to successfully complete the seminar pursuant to this order, the assigned judge may take appropriate action, including but not limited to, withholding the final decree of divorce, attachment for contempt, award of attorneys' fees and costs and suspension of custodial rights, including visitation. A party may not invoke the court's power to enforce or modify orders and judgments so long as the party is in violation of this standing order.

Section 5. For good cause shown, the assigned judge may waive the requirement of completion of this program in individual cases.

THIS ORDER IS EFFECTIVE AS OF APRIL 1, 2010.

SO ORDERED this 10th day of March, 2010.


Perry Brannen, Jr., Chief Judge


Michael Karpf, Judge


Penny Haas Freese, Judge


John E. Morse, Jr., Judge


James F. Bass, Jr., Judge


Louisa Abbot, Judge

Exhibit "A"
TRANSITIONAL PARENTING SEMINAR

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Synopsis

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Valerie E. Murchison
CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT
CHATHAM COUNTY, GA

In cases involving minor children, attendance at a four-hour educational seminar is required of all parties in all divorce, separate maintenance, paternity, change of custody, visitation, legitimation and other domestic relations actions, excluding domestic violence and contempt actions. Administration of the program is under the Superior Court through an agreement with the Mediation Center of the Coastal Empire, Inc., who will provide qualified, counselors, trainers and educators. Participants will pay a fee of \$45.00 toward the cost of the seminar.

Description

Program Content

Section 1

The seminar focuses on the developmental needs of children, with emphasis on fostering the child's emotional health during periods of stress. The program is informative, supportive and directs people desiring additional information or help to appropriate resources.

The course content will include: (1) the developmental stages of childhood; (2) the needs of children at different ages; (3) stress symptoms children experience during divorce; (4) age-appropriate expectations of children; (5) divorce as a growth stage; (6) the grief process; (7) reducing stress for children through a "good divorce"; (8) the business of co-parenting; (9) developing positive shared parenting plans to enhance the child's relationship with both parents; (10) financial obligations of child rearing; (11) conflict management and dispute resolution; (12) anticipating tough situations; (13) how parents living apart can avoid using destructive games; keeping children out of parenting conflicts; (14) how to get help; (15) dealing with new family structures.

The Mediation Center will follow a proven curriculum that effectively addresses these topics. Each parent will receive a Parent Handbook summarizing the major points of the program, including a reference section for local assistance resources.

Program Schedule and Location

Section 2

In order to accommodate the schedules of all parties, the seminar is offered three times monthly. Each seminar will be four hours on a weekday or Saturday morning. Participants may elect to attend the session of their choice. A regular monthly schedule will be established and will be publicized in written material available in the Superior

Court Clerk's Office and the Mediation Center and through the Court and Mediation Center websites.

All seminars are to be presented on the premises of the Mediation Center at 5105 Paulsen Street, Suite 125 D, Savannah, Georgia 31405 [at the corner of 68th Street and Paulsen Street].

Attendance and Exemption

Section 3

Attendance at the seminar is required all parties to a case where the interests of children under the age of 18 years are involved, unless the action is an uncontested change of custody in which case the parties are not required to attend the seminar if the children are 14 years of age or older.

The Court's action on a petition will not be delayed by a non-moving party's or responding party's refusal or delay in completing the seminar. A party may be exempt from the Program if:

- the party resides more than 50 miles from Savannah
- has already attended this program
- for parties coming to the Court for post-divorce action after previously attending the Seminar
- The youngest child of the parties is within six months of his or her eighteenth birthday
- The party is incarcerated throughout the period of time the action is pending [upon release, the party is required to attend the seminar if the action is still pending].

Documentation supporting the grounds for exemption must be provided to the Court and to the Mediation Center. Upon receipt of written documentation of the grounds for exemption, the Mediation will evaluate the grounds and documentation and issue a Certificate of Exemption stating the reasons for the exemption. The party will be responsible for paying to the Mediation Center a \$20.00 evaluation fee for the exemption and the Certificate. The party will be responsible for presenting the Certificate of Exemption to the Court.

Fees

Section 4

A fee of \$45.00 per person is required and is used to cover the costs of the seminar including the presenter's fees, handouts, applications and program administration. The fee may be waived if the party qualifies for a waiver or reduction of the mediation fee as determined by the Chatham County Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution. Waiver from the mediation and seminar fee can be requested by completing the Request for Fee Waiver or Fee Reduction form which is available as follows:

Chatham County Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution [ADR]
133 Montgomery Street Room 426
Savannah, GA 31401
Phone: (912) 652-7519 Fax: (912) 652-7591

Fee Waiver Form is also available at <http://www.chathamcounty.org/ADR.html> under Forms and at mediationsavannah.com under Forms.

The Fee Waiver Form must be submitted to the ADR Office at least three days prior to a mediation or Seminar. A copy of the letter from the Chatham County Office of ADR granting a waiver or reduction must be provided to the Mediation Center before attendance will be allowed without paying the fee.

Presenters

Section 5

Qualified counselors, educators, educators and trainers will present the seminars. All presenters will be required to participate in a six-hour training prior to becoming a presenter. As part of its quarterly report, the Mediation Center will provide to the Courts the current list of presenters with their credentials and the date of their attendance at a presenter's orientation.

Application Process

Section 6

Notification to the parties of their responsibility to complete the seminar or provide alternative verification is provided at the time of the filing of pleadings in the Superior Court. Applications may be obtained from the Clerk of Superior Court or through the websites of the Chatham County Superior Court Clerk's Office or the Mediation Center:

<http://www.chathamcounty.org/superiorcourt.html>
mediationsavannah.com

The application and fee must be returned to the Mediation Center prior to the seminar selected in order to insure a space in that adequate space and materials are present at the seminar and to allow parties to attend separate classes than their spouses or the other party.

Verification

Section 7

An alphabetical list of all parties participating in the seminar will be developed by the presenters prior to each seminar. This list will be utilized by the presenters and the Court. As parties report to the seminar selected by them, they will provide the presenters identification and they will be recorded as "present."

Each person successfully completing the seminar and paying full fees will be given a certificate of attendance to present to the judge at the time of their appearance. In addition, a copy of the certificate of attendance will be forwarded by the Mediation Center to the Clerk of Superior Court within five (5) working days of the seminar.

Security

Section 8

The Mediation Center will be responsible for providing security at each seminar, to provide security immediately prior to, during and immediately after each session. Security for participants and presenters will be strictly enforced.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Section 9

Each participant will be asked to complete a written evaluation of the seminar at its conclusion indicating their individual assessment of the value of the seminar and any suggestions for future seminars. Additionally, quarterly and annual reports will be submitted to the Court Administrator's Office for review by Parent and Child. This report at a minimum will include: (1) number of workshops presented; (2) number of clients attending; (3) number of clients completing; (4) fees waived; (5) fees collected; and (6) a synopsis of program evaluations.