

Notice to Those Seeking Dissolution of Marriage:

In order to file for a dissolution of marriage in Illinois you will need to complete a Petition for Dissolution of Marriage, a Judgment for Dissolution of Marriage, and the Affidavit of Military Service. If both parties agreed to the dissolution the Respondent will also need to fill out the Entry of Appearance, Waiver and Consent form. All of these forms are included on our site. The Affidavit of Military Service and Entry of Appearance will need to be Notarized.

Under 750 ILCS 5/602.10, all parents within 120 days after service or filing of any Petition which requests allocation of parental responsibilities, must file with the Court, either jointly or separately, a proposed written and signed Parenting Plan. The time period for filing a Parenting Plan may be extended by the Court for good cause shown. All the information requested in the attached Parenting Plan Checklist must be included. A proposed Parenting Plan is attached. Also attached are the factors the Court shall consider in allocating significant decision making responsibilities and determining parenting time, formally called visitation.

For standard dissolutions of marriage, there is a \$316.00 filing fee paid to the Circuit Clerk's office when the case is filed, and a \$191.00 answer fee paid by the respondent. If the dissolution is agreed to the total cost is **\$507.00**, which is the filing and answer fee combined.

Each party will need to complete the Pro Se Divorce Financial Affidavit which can be downloaded from our web site. All documents in civil cases must be e-filed (link below). If you do not have access to a computer or the internet you may use the public access computer at the courthouse to electronically file your documents. The Courthouse is open Monday through Friday, from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. The Clerk's staff is available to assist with the filing process but cannot give you legal advice.

Click here to e-File

CHILDREN FIRST

Parenting Education

For Divorcing Parents of Minors
Children First Foundation, Inc.

About the Children First Parenting Education Program

If you have children under the age of 18, circuit rules require you to complete the *Children First Parenting Education Program* before a divorce will be granted by the Third Judicial Circuit Courts (Madison and Bond counties) unless your attendance is excused by the Judge. That is, a divorce judgment will not be entered until you enroll in and attend both sessions (two hours each, totaling four hours) of the *Children First Parenting Education Program*. A certificate will be presented to you at the end showing proof of completion. The Judge may excuse your attendance if you attend another approved program, or for another valid reason. You must apply for an excusal in writing.

The goals of the *Children First Parenting Education Program* are to increase participants' awareness of divorce on children's feelings and behaviors, and increase participants' knowledge in how to assist the children in coping and adjusting. Attending the four-hour class meets the court mandated parenting education requirement for divorcing parents in Illinois. **You will be reminded to put your "children first."**

How to Enroll

To register for both sessions of the *Children First Parenting Education Program*, call 618-251-6214 between 9am and noon, Monday through Friday. If you call at another time you may get an answering service. If you do, please leave a message speaking slowly and clearly, stating your name and a phone number where you can be reached. **Mention that you need to register for the *Children First* class.** You will be called the next business day.

Schedule

Monday evenings: 6-8 pm Session I
Tuesday evenings: 6-8 pm Session II

Location

Kids' Corner, Madison County Facility (*former Wood River Hospital, east side of building, enter door "B" off parking lot*)
101 East Edwardsville Road
Wood River, Illinois 62095
Phone number: 618-251-6214

Cost

The price for the four-hour class is **\$60 (sixty dollars)**. The cash payment is due at the first session (Monday) before class. Checks are not accepted. Waivers by the Court are accepted for individuals whose income qualifies them for a fee exception. The waivers must be presented at the first session (Monday) by the participant. For income eligibility information and Affidavit and Application To Sue or Defend as an Indigent Person form, which can be printed and presented to the Court, scroll down.

Instructions

- Divorcing parents will not be scheduled for the same sessions.
- Do not bring children to the sessions. You will be asked to leave.
- Do not bring unregistered adults to the sessions.
- Both parents must attend classes and get their own certificates of completion.

What to Expect from Sessions I and II

Session I: Video and guided discussion by Master-degreed moderator dealing with topics such as:

1. Disagreements in front of children
2. Using children as leverage
3. Competition between parents
4. Negative comments about the other parent
5. Discipline and behavior changes
6. Substance use and abuse
7. New relationships and adult coping
8. New relationships and children coping
9. Creating quality time
10. Missed parenting time
11. "Interrogating" the children
12. Change vs. loss for the children
13. Abandonment feelings

Guided discussion will investigate better alternatives for parents

Session II: Video, guided discussion by Master-degreed moderator, helpful brochures and handouts for future reference:

1. Normal child developmental stages
2. Awareness of how divorce affects children's behaviors/feelings
3. Assisting children in coping and adjusting
4. Warning signs of serious problems in children
5. Risk and protective factors that impact children
6. How children react
7. Children discussing parental allocation of responsibility and divorce ("Kids Helping Kids")
8. Asset development in children
9. Available area services
10. Mediation: process, video presentation and discussion

Conflicts between parents often continue well beyond court litigation. When conflict exists, it can cause long-term suffering for children. Given information and guidance from the *Children First Parenting Education* sessions, parents can move beyond their differences and put the best interest of their "children first" by anticipating and avoiding potential for future problems.

Birthdays, holidays, vacations, school events, parenting time and numerous co-parenting decisions must be anticipated and planned for. Children are often the silent victims in cases of divorce, parenting time and parental allocation of responsibility disputes. These sessions recognize the importance of parent-child relationships, and promote continued healthy co-parenting skills.