

IN THE SUPERIOR COURTS OF THE APPALACHIAN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

STATE OF GEORGIA

INTERNAL OPERATING PROCEDURE 2000-31 (Revised 9-26-01)

IN RE: SEMINAR FOR DIVORCING PARENTS

ORDER

Pursuant to the inherent powers of this Court and in order to provide for the speedy, efficient, and inexpensive resolution of disputes, it is hereby ordered:

Section 1: This order applies to all parties with minor children (under the age of 18) in all divorce, separate maintenance, paternity, change of custody, child support, visitation, legitimation and other domestic relations actions as may be otherwise ordered by the Court, excluding domestic violence actions, U.R.E.S.A. cases, uncontested visitation modifications, and uncontested child support modifications. This order applies to the actions as stated above filed on or after July 1, 1994.

Section 2: It is hereby ordered that all parties shall successfully complete the program entitled “**Seminar for Divorcing Parents.**” This four-hour educational 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. Topics covered include: 1) developmental stages of childhood; 2) reactions of children to divorce, generally and at specific ages; 3) how divorce affects families; 4) grief processes and coping skills; 5) roles of divorced parents; 6) co-parenting skills; 7) financial obligations of parents; and 8) mediation as a tool to resolve domestic disputes.

Section 3: Attendance is required of all parties to a case where the interest of children under the age of 18 are involved. The seminar must be successfully completed within 31 days of service of the

original complaint upon the defendant. No final hearings nor mediation will be scheduled unless both parties present proof of attendance. However, the Court's action on a petition will not be delayed by a non-moving or responding party's refusal or delay in completing the seminar. Upon any party's failure to successfully complete the seminar pursuant to this Order, the assigned Judge may take appropriate action, including but not limited to actions for contempt.

Section 4: Participants will pay a fee of \$30.00, due at the beginning of each seminar, to cover the total cost of the seminar including the presenter's fee, handouts, applications, and program administration. The fee may be waived if a party presents a verified affidavit of poverty and it appears upon investigation that the party otherwise meets the Court's guidelines of indigency. The Ninth Judicial District Office of Dispute Resolution will administer the seminar using qualified counselors, educators, and trainers pursuant to a contract with the Ninth Judicial District Office of Dispute Resolution.

Section 5: A service of equal value may be substituted for the seminar if written verification satisfactory to the Programs Coordinator is provided to the Court by a third party indicating that the specific issues noted above have been addressed in another forum through professional or pastoral counseling, or another similar educational program. Parties may attend any four-hour Superior Court approved parenting seminar in the State of Georgia and, upon proof of attendance, substitute attendance to this seminar. **A certificate of attendance is valid for three years.** Further, for good cause shown, the assigned Judge may waive the requirement of this program in individual cases.

Section 6: A schedule of seminar dates may be obtained from the Clerk's Office, from the Ninth District Office of Dispute Resolution, or from the Ninth Judicial District's Internet website (9thjudicialdistrict-ga.org).

Section 7: Parties must attend all four hours of the seminar in order to receive credit for attendance.

Upon successful completion of the seminar, the parties will be awarded a certificate of attendance to present to the judge at the time of their court appearance. The Ninth Judicial Administrative District will provide written notice to the Superior Court Clerk for each person successfully attending the seminar.

Section 8: Security will be provided at each seminar immediately prior to, during, and immediately after each session.

SO ORDERED, this 26th day of September, 2001.

Brenda S. Weaver, Chief Judge
Superior Courts
Appalachian Judicial Circuit

Roger E. Bradley, Judge
Superior Courts
Appalachian Judicial Circuit