

# Things You Should Know About Parent Education Class



**This booklet is designed to give you general information about the state of Arizona's mandated Parent Education Program.**

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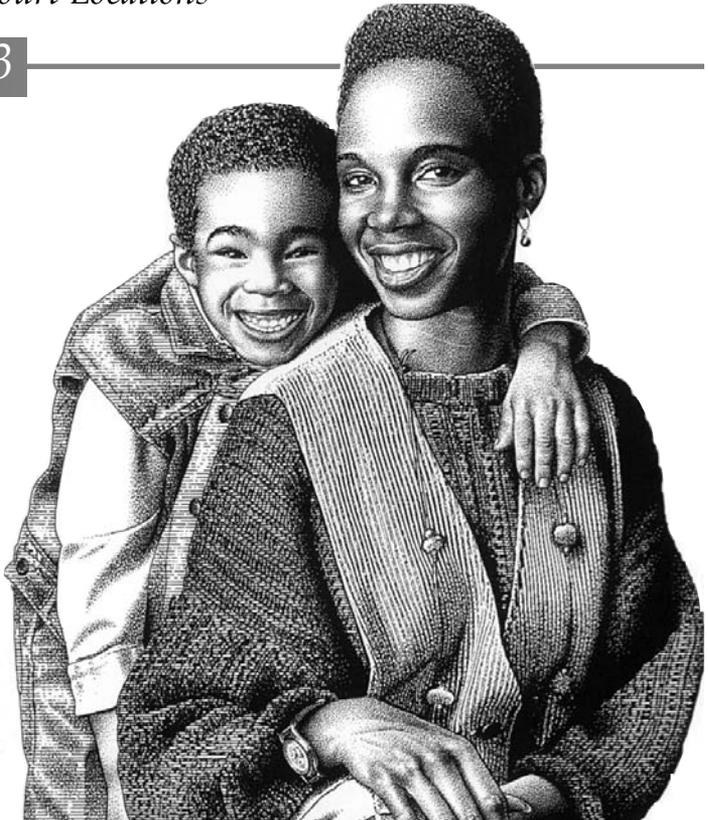
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# Parent Education Classes

On April 18, 1996, the Governor of Arizona approved a law to establish Domestic Relations Education on Children's Issues Programs throughout the state. This law (Arizona Revised Statutes § 25-351 et seq.) requires *every parent* of a natural or adopted unemancipated minor child who files for divorce, separation, parenting time/custody, or any paternity proceeding in which a party has requested that the Superior Court determine custody, specific parenting time or child support to attend a Parent Education class. The Court may order attendance when parents are involved in a child support case or seek to change an order for custody or parenting time. This booklet answers commonly asked questions about the class.

NOTE: This booklet is intended to provide general information about Parent Education classes in Arizona. It is not a complete nor authoritative review of this subject and reflects the law of the State of Arizona only as of the date of its publication.

Other available booklets in this series include:

- Child Support Payments
- Covenant Marriage
- Custody and Parenting Time
- Divorce in Arizona
- Establishing Paternity for Your Child in Arizona
- Protective Orders
- Child Support Modification in Arizona

# Questions & Answers

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Below is a list of commonly asked questions regarding the Parent Education class.

Q. What is a Parent Education Class?

A. The class (called the Parent Information Program in some counties) has been designed for the purpose of sharing information with parents about the impact that divorce, the restructuring of families and the court's involvement in your case can have on your child. The class provides parents with an opportunity to explore the following topics:

- What parents can do to help their child adjust to the divorce or separation
- Emotional effects of divorce or separation on parents and their child
- Harmful effects of parental conflict on children, including domestic violence
- Ways parents can reduce parental conflict
- Avoiding and dealing with problems
- Factors that contribute to a child's healthy adjustment, including the value of parenting plans
- Domestic relations court procedures and available community resources
- Common reactions by children and parents to divorce or other legal proceedings between the parents such as paternity

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- Helpful and harmful parent behaviors
- Communication and co-parenting skills
- Children's reactions to divorce and separation at different stages
- Warning signs of children having serious problems
- Emotional and financial responsibility of parents

Q. Why does the court require people to attend a Parent Education class?

A. The period of divorce or separation is often a very difficult time for children as well as parents. Studies conducted by nationally renowned researchers indicate that parents who attend a Parent Education class are better able to work cooperatively for the benefit of their children, and that such classes may keep them from having to return to court in the future. Both parents and courts around the country report Parent Education classes are helpful and appear to be of great benefit to children and parents.

Q. I am not interested in communicating with my child's other parent and therefore do not need to build communication skills. Why must I still take the class?

A. Not communicating with the other parent may make you feel better. However, it can

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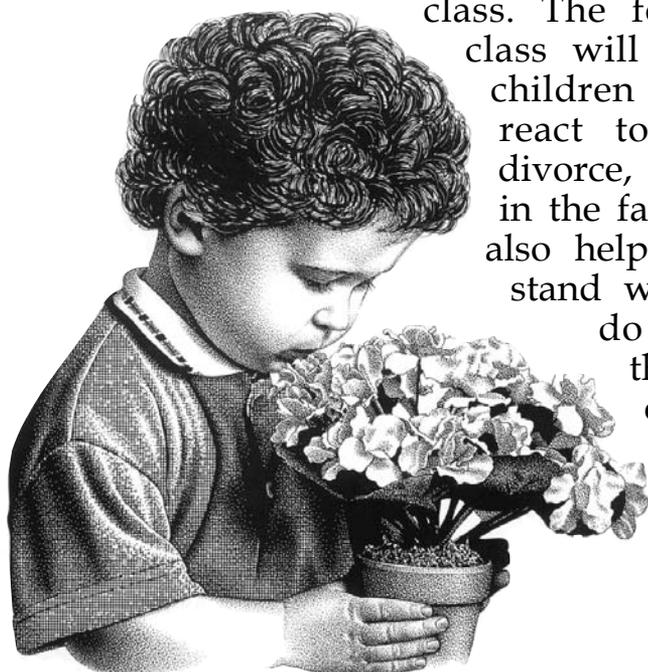
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create an uncomfortable situation for your child. Children are aware of unspoken tension. When there is absolutely no communication between parents, children become messengers delivering messages from one parent to another. Even if you do not like your child's other parent, the class teaches you ways to develop a business relationship with that parent ... the business of raising healthy children. Putting your child in the middle of parental conflict adds more stress to their lives.

**Q.** Is this a class that teaches parenting skills?

**A.**

This is *not* a parenting skills class. The focus of this class will be on how children and adults react to separation, divorce, and changes in the family. It will also help you understand what you can do to make those changes easier for your children.



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Q. I'm already a good parent! Do I have to attend this class?

A. Yes. Having to attend this class doesn't mean you aren't already a good parent, or even a great parent. The court wants you to attend the class in order to get as much information as possible to assist you in helping your child through what may be a very difficult period of adjustment.

Q. Will I have to attend the class with the other parent?

A. No. The court recognizes that for some people this would be an uncomfortable situation. If you do not wish to attend class with the other parent, steps can be taken to ensure that you are not scheduled to attend the same class.

Q. What if a parent doesn't attend the class as ordered?

A. State law provides that the court cannot grant the request of a parent who does not attend the class. For example, if you are the parent seeking a divorce, you must attend the class in order to obtain your divorce decree. If the other parent does not attend, the divorce may still be granted. However, if the other parent later requests a new or modified order from the court, that parent first must attend the

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class. In some instances the court may hold a party in contempt of court or impose other sanctions for refusal to take the class.

**Q.** I don't know where the other parent lives and have served the other parent by publication. Do I still need to take the class?

**A.** Yes. Even parties seeking a default divorce must take the Parent Education class.

**Q.** My time is limited as I work two jobs. How will I be able to fit the class into my schedule?

**A.** The class usually takes up to 4-6 hours to complete and has a minimum length of two hours. It is offered early in the divorce process and is available at different and flexible times including evenings and weekends.

**Q.** I have a good working relationship with my child's other parent, and we agree completely about custody and parenting time. Do we still have to attend?

**A.** The law requires all parents to a case (as described earlier in this booklet), unless waived by the court, to attend a class. The class is not just for those parents who are fighting over parenting time or custody.

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Working together is just one of several topics covered by the class. There are many other topics discussed in the class that even parents who are getting along can benefit from when raising their children.

**Q.** My child's other parent currently does not reside in Arizona. Do they have to come back to Arizona to take this class?

**A.** If you or the other parent no longer live in Arizona, you both may be able to satisfy the requirements of the Parent Education class by attending a comparable class in the area where you each reside. There are hundreds of such parent education classes around the country. You may wish to contact the court in your jurisdiction for information about programs available in your area.

**Q.** The other parent has never been involved in my child's life and doesn't want to be. Do I still have to attend the class?

**A.** Yes. The situation of an uninvolved parent can pose problems for children as well as unique challenges for the custodial parent. The Parent Education class will provide information and suggestions that may be useful to you in raising your child.

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Q. My child and I have been going to counseling about my divorce. Do I still have to go to this class?

A. Yes. The importance of counseling is one of the topics discussed in a Parent Education class. Although your counselor might help you with some of the issues mentioned in the class, the Parent Education class may provide you with information not provided in counseling and may complement whatever information you are given during your counseling sessions.

Q. Who teaches the classes and what are their qualifications?

A. The Arizona Supreme Court has established standards for Parent Education classes, including minimum qualifications for program presenters. The program must be conducted by at least one presenter who possesses a graduate degree in a related field and has relevant experience in a number of areas, including child welfare and family dynamics. Each presenter shall have experience working in the areas of family law, family protective orders, child welfare, family dynamics and domestic violence issues.

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Q. Will I be required to pay for this class?

A. State law permits the court or program to charge a class fee of not more than \$30.00 for attending a Parent Education class. Persons of limited financial means may file an application with the Clerk of Superior Court requesting the fee not be charged or that it be paid in installments. Application forms for fee waiver (forgiveness) or deferral (postponement) are available at the office of the Clerk of Superior Court in each county.

Q. Where are these classes taken, and at what times are they scheduled?

A. There are Parent Education classes located in each county. Classes are offered at various times of the day or evening, during the week and on weekends. For a list of class locations, as well as the days and times the classes are offered, please contact the Clerk of Superior Court in your county.

Q. How do I show the Court that I have taken the class?

A. In most counties, the instructor of the class will have forms which verify your attendance available for you to return to the Clerk of Superior Court for filing in your county. In a few counties, the instructor forwards the forms

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to the Clerk of Superior Court directly. Check with your individual instructor about the method which is used by your county. The form must contain your court case number, your date(s) of attendance, your name and the name, address and telephone number of the instructor.



# Helpful Tips For Parents

Children whose parents are separating or who are already divorced must make a big adjustment. They need lots of special attention. The good news is that it is possible to protect, love, and nurture your child even though you are no longer together with the other parent! Here are a few tips to help you identify your child's particular needs. With a little extra "know how," you can personally help your child succeed now and after your separation or divorce.

- Listen To Your Child

Always remember: Your child's statements are important. Children's feelings of fear, confusion and anger during the separation or divorce are often reflected in their statements.

Be sure to listen when your child talks to you. Let your child know they can share their happy, sad, or angry feelings with you. Children won't share their feelings if they are afraid of hurting one of their parents.

- Talk To Your Child

Your child may not understand that the separation or divorce was not his or her fault. In fact, some children blame themselves for the problems that parents experience with each other. Help your child understand that the

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divorce or separation is not their fault, and that your child is not being “divorced” by the parents.

- Be There To Comfort

There will be times when your child will display behavior that may appear disruptive. Remember that your children will need to know they are loved, they will be cared for, and that both parents will still be their mom and dad.

- Protect Your Child From Disagreements

If you include your child in conversations or disagreements about the other parent, your child will become insecure and uncomfortable around you. Children should never be placed in the middle of a disagreement between parents or made into messengers, or overhear you making derogatory remarks about the other parent.

# Helpful Tips For Parents

- Praise Your Child

Praising your child will help them grow up feeling very good about themselves. When children feel good about themselves, it is easier to understand that although their parents are no longer together, both parents still love them.

- Have Fun With Your Child

Your child needs to spend quality time with you regardless of how difficult your divorce or separation may be. Having fun allows parents and children to feel good about their relationship.

# Superior Court Locations

## **Apache County**

70 West 3rd South  
St. Johns, AZ 85936  
(928) 337-7550

## **Cochise County**

County Courthouse  
Bisbee, AZ 85603  
(520) 432-9364

## **Coconino County**

200 N. San Francisco  
Flagstaff, AZ 86001  
(928) 779-6535

## **Gila County**

1400 E. Ash  
Globe, AZ 85501  
(928) 425-3231

## **Graham County**

800 Main St.  
Safford, AZ 85546  
(928) 428-3100

## **Greenlee County**

County Courthouse  
Clifton, AZ 85533  
(928) 865-4242

## **La Paz County**

1316 Kofa Ave., Suite  
607  
Parker, AZ 85344  
(928) 669-6131

## **Maricopa County**

201 W. Jefferson  
Phoenix, AZ 85003  
(602) 506-3676

## **Mohave County**

County Courthouse  
Kingman, AZ 86402-  
7000  
(928) 753-0790

## **Navajo County**

County Courthouse  
Holbrook, AZ 86025  
(928) 524-4188

## **Pima County**

110 W. Congress  
Tucson, AZ 85701  
(520) 740-3201

# Superior Court Locations

## **Pinal County**

County Courthouse  
Florence, AZ 85232-2730  
(520) 868-6296

## **Santa Cruz County**

Santa Cruz County Complex  
2150 North Congress Drive  
Nogales, AZ 85621  
(520) 375-7700

## **Yavapai County**

County Courthouse  
Prescott, AZ 86301  
(928) 771-3312

## **Yuma County**

168 S. 2nd Ave.  
Yuma, AZ 85364  
(928) 329-2164



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