

QUESTIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED BY PARENTS

1. **I have been ordered to attend a Parent Education Class. Where do I go to attend?**
To learn about the various locations where and the times when the Parent Education class is held, contact the Superior Court in your county.
2. **Do I have to attend the Parent Education Class with the other parent?** No, in fact it is strongly recommended that you and the other parent attend separate classes. Attending separately encourages an open exchange among participants and instructors regarding parenting and issues you are experiencing and helps you take full advantage of this opportunity.
3. **What is a Parent Education Class?** 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 family litigation, the restructuring of families and the court's involvement in your case can have on your and your child. The class provides parents with an opportunity to explore the following topics:
 - Common reactions by children and parents to divorce or other legal proceedings between the parents such as paternity
 - Options available as alternatives to divorce.
 - Resources available to improve or strengthen marriage.
 - The legal process and options available for mediation.
 - Resources available after your case has concluded
 - Harmful effects of parental conflict on children, including domestic violence
 - Factors that contribute to a child's healthy adjustment, including the value of parenting plans
 - Basic Arizona Family Court or Domestic Relations Court procedures
 - 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
 - Issues surrounding continued access to maternal and paternal relatives
 - Notification requirements regarding A.R.S. 25-403.05(B)
4. **Why does the court require people to attend a Parent Education class?** 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.
5. **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?** Not communicating with the other parent may make you feel better. However, it can 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.

6. **Is this a class that teaches parenting skills?** 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.
7. **I'm already a good parent! Do I have to attend this class?** 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.
8. **What if a parent doesn't attend the class as ordered?** 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 must first attend the class. In some instances the court may hold a party in contempt of court or impose other sanctions for refusal to take the class.
9. **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?** Yes. Even parties seeking a default divorce must take the Parent Education class.
10. **My time is limited as I work two jobs. How will I be able to fit the class into my schedule?** 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.

If the judge assigned to your case permits, you may also be able to take an online course approved by the court.

11. **I have a good working relationship with my child's other parent, and we agree completely about legal decision-making and parenting time. Do we still have to attend?** The law requires all parents to a case, unless waived by the court, to attend a class. The class is not just for those parents who are fighting over legal decision-making and parenting time. 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.
12. **My child's other parent currently does not reside in Arizona. Does the other parent have to come back to Arizona to take this class?** If the other parent no longer lives in Arizona, s/he may be able to satisfy the requirements of the Parent Education class by attending a comparable class in the area where the other parent lives. There are hundreds of such parent education classes around the country. The other parent may contact the court where s/he reside about programs available there.
13. **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?** Yes. The situation of an uninvolved parent can pose problems for children as well as unique challenges for you. The Parent Education class will provide information and suggestions that may be useful to you in raising your child.

- 14. My child and I have been going to counseling about my divorce. Do I still have to go to this class?** 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.
- 15. Who teaches the classes and what are their qualifications?** 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.
- 16. Will I be required to pay for this class?** State law permits the court or program to charge a class fee of not more than \$50.00 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.
- 17. How do I show the Court that I have taken the class?** 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 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.