

WHEREAS, Divorce produces negative consequences for children in areas such as school performance, conduct, psychological adjustment, and social relations with others; and

WHEREAS, Many parents are unaware of the effects of the conflict of divorces on their children and are in need of parental education programs to help them facilitate post-divorce adjustment for their children; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Family Law

7-103.2.

(A) THIS SECTION APPLIES TO AN ACTION FOR DIVORCE IN WHICH ISSUES OF CHILD SUPPORT, CUSTODY, OR VISITATION ARE RAISED.

(B) PRIOR TO GRANTING A DECREE OF DIVORCE, THE COURT ~~SHALL~~ MAY REQUIRE ALL PARTIES TO PARTICIPATE IN AN EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR THAT IS DESIGNED TO EDUCATE PARENTS ABOUT THE EFFECTS, AND TO MINIMIZE THE DISRUPTION, OF A DIVORCE ON THE LIVES OF CHILDREN.

(C) (1) THE COURT OF APPEALS SHALL ADOPT RULES TO IMPLEMENT THIS SECTION.

(2) RULES ADOPTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS SUBSECTION SHALL:

(I) PROVIDE FOR THE CONTENT OF THE SEMINAR REQUIRED UNDER THIS SECTION;

(II) REQUIRE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE SEMINAR BY ALL PARTIES TO THE ACTION WITHIN A CERTAIN TIME AFTER THE SERVICE OF THE ORIGINAL COMPLAINT UPON THE DEFENDANT;

(III) ESTABLISH SANCTIONS FOR FAILURE TO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE THE SEMINAR REQUIRED UNDER THIS SECTION;

(IV) FOR PURPOSES OF FUNDING THE COST OF THE SEMINAR, ESTABLISH A FEE THAT:

1. SHALL BE ASSESSED AS COSTS; AND
2. MAY BE WAIVED UNDER APPROPRIATE CIRCUMSTANCES;

AND

(V) ESTABLISH CRITERIA FOR EXEMPTION FROM THE REQUIREMENT THAT THE PARTIES PARTICIPATE IN AN EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR, EXCEPT THAT A COURT MAY NOT EXEMPT THE PARTIES FROM ATTENDING THE EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR IF THERE IS ANY EVIDENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OR CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT.

(D) THE SEMINAR REQUIRED UNDER THIS SECTION MAY BE PROVIDED UNDER CONTRACT WITH A PUBLIC OR PRIVATE AGENCY.