

**TO: PARENTS WITH AN ORIGINAL FILING OF DOMESTIC-RELATIONS CASES IN
DISTRICT COURT, DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA**

DEAR PARENTS:

If you are a party to a Dissolution of Marriage with children, a Paternity Action involving custody, parenting time, visitation, or other access issues, the Douglas County District Court requires you to attend a parent education program, **What About the Children**, within 10 days of filing or receipt of service. The seminar is offered by Douglas County Conciliation & Mediation Services on alternating Thursdays from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., and reservations must be made for the session you plan to attend. Please call **402-444-7168** to obtain the schedule of dates and to reserve space or you can sign up through our website: www.dc4dc.com/conciliation-a-mediation. **Each party needs to call in their own reservation and leave the Case ID number and current address and phone number information.** A \$50 FEE MUST BE PAID TO THE CLERK OF THE DISTRICT COURT PRIOR TO YOUR SCHEDULED CLASS DATE. IF YOU DO NOT ATTEND ON YOUR RESERVED DATE, YOU WILL BE CHARGED A \$25 CANCELLATION FEE. The clerk's office is located on the 3rd floor of the Hall of Justice.

The class will provide information to help you to recognize the harm that can be done to children by inappropriate communications and behaviors by parents. The class will also provide suggestions to help ease a child's adjustment to going back and forth between two homes. You will learn some of the ways children act out their anger and grief, and methods for dealing with their emotions. You will be provided contact information about local resources available to separated and divorcing parents and their children.

Before your case can be concluded, court rule 4.3 requires the parents to negotiate a parenting plan or **attempt to mediate** a Parenting Plan. The parenting seminar will provide an overview of the requirements. After your attendance at the seminar, you should determine as soon as possible if a parenting plan can be successfully negotiated with the other parent or if it will be necessary to participate in mediation. ***Please advise your attorney of the date you attend the seminar.*** If you are mediating, please prepare for this process by discussing with your attorney the statutory definitions of legal custody, physical custody, parenting functions, parenting time, and the financial obligations required of each parent. It is helpful in mediation to bring your work schedule, your children's activity schedules, and any other information that will assist you in the discussing a parenting schedule. There will be a fee charged for this process however it may be reduced if you are low income and request a reduced fee. All court approved mediators are trained professionals who have completed the required education and training in family mediation. If you or your attorney does not advise us that you are negotiating parenting plan, then the Conciliation Court will assign a mediator to your case within 7 business days of your attendance at the seminar.

A trial or hearing date for a final decree will not be set until the parties have attended the seminar, a full parenting plan has been submitted by attorneys, or you have participated in an effort to mediate a parenting plan.

These procedures are intended to provide information to help you ease this painful process for your children, minimize the hostility between parents, and provide effective tools for determining how your parenting issues can be effectively resolved for parenting from separate homes after entry of your divorce decree or paternity order.