

Appendix A

CO AND PARALLEL PARENTING COUNSELING **The Center for Healthy Development** **New Skills and Choices Parenting Program**

Parents must have custody/visitation orders in place prior to referral to **Co-Parenting and Parallel Parenting Counseling.** Families suitable for this court ordered referral:

- Chronic litigators who use the court system to resolve their continuing issues;
- Parents who have difficulty making mutual and timely decisions (particularly those with young children or who have children with special needs);
- Parents with an alienated child;
- Potentially abusive situations that need structure and monitoring;
- Parents with intermittent mental illness;
- Not appropriate for families with histories of significant family violence, child abuse, or active substance abuse;
- Both parents must participate.

All families referred should have a court order to Co-parenting and Parallel Parenting Counseling. Court ordered referrals should include goals of service intervention, who is allowed to be seen, and timely procedures for resolving issues that are pertinent to safety of child. This service is a Parent Monitoring intervention and not meant to be therapy or mediation of a custody dispute.

Counseling structure:

- The counselor functions as a manager of conflict and assists the parents in carrying out their court orders.
- A legal contract is set up with the counselor and parents that reflects the court ordered referral, includes what is required and the goals of the service.
- Other family members may participate as directed by the court and when considered appropriate by the counselor;
- Collateral contacts may be made with the child's therapist and other professionals involved with the family;
- Parents will be seen in sessions together, and, when appropriate, in separate sessions.

Objectives of service: The counselor functions as a parent coordinator to manage chronic, recurring disputes such as visitation conflicts and help parents to adhere to court orders in highly conflicted separating and divorcing families. Interventions generally include helping the parents understand the affects of their conflict on the children, to help them improve and protect good relationships with their children, provide advise and assistance in implementing their visitation and custody plans, help improve communication, coordinate the safe care of their children and help children cope with the stress and fears about the visiting plan.

Fees:

Families who are FIRST 5 qualified (they have at least one child under the age of six years old) will pay a co-pay fee of \$15 per parent per session. All other parents will pay the CHD sliding scale fee according to gross income.

**SAFE FAMILIES:
A Group Intervention for Parents with Children at Risk**

**The Center for Healthy Development
New Skills and Choices Parenting Program**

SAFE FAMILIES is for families in the Family Court system that has one or more of the following: a history of domestic violence; no contact orders/restraining orders; supervised exchanges for visitation.

Class Structure:

- Classes are two hour sessions held on two different days of the week for sixteen weeks;
- The parents attend separate classes on different days;
- Both parents must attend the program.

Program objectives:

- Help parents build a safe environment for their children;
- Reduce conflict and increase child protection;
- Learn new skills in using a structured parenting plan;
- Understand the effects of conflict on their children;
- Increase accountability for parents who have been violent so that they take responsibility for the abuse, avoid using the child as a weapon in conflict and learn to appropriately support the other parent in the care of the child;
- Support the parents who have been victims of violence and provide them with skills in maintaining appropriate boundaries for protection of themselves and their children from abuse.

CLASS TOPICS

SECTION I: Introduce program objectives; Identify unsafe family practices and the effects on children; Explore choices in parenting behaviors.

Class 1 Introduction to Program: Provide an orientation and introduction to the group and its goals, begin to learn about the effects of violence on children, and begin skill building for safe parenting and protecting children from conflict.

- * Provide an orientation to the group
- * Learn about the effects of violence on children from a child's perspective
- * Build emotional self-awareness
- * Discuss Safe Families program goals
- * Learn a skill-building tool to improve safety in the home

Class 2 Defining Conflict and Violence: Identify unsafe family practices and learn the importance of maintaining appropriate boundaries for a safe environment for self and children.

- * Learn dynamics of control and dominance
- * Assess personal accountability
- * Build awareness of personal responses to control and dominance

Class 3 Children in the Middle: Focus on the difference between placing children in the middle and positive parenting and continue to build self-awareness.

- * Learn ways in which children get placed in the middle
- * Identify the price children pay for being placed in the middle
- * Develop an understanding of positive parenting practices
- * Use the Experience Log to continue to build self-awareness

Class 4 Defining Parenting: To help parents identify the parenting styles and learn skills to improve interactions with their children and others

- * Introduce basic parenting styles
- * Learn to communicate assertively
- * Begin to make change through self-focus and use of new skills

SECTION II: Recognize personal coping skills and stresses; Identify expectations and control issues; Develop new skills in changing behavior.

Class 5 Stress, Anger, and Anxiety: To help parents build self-awareness around the anger and stress in their lives, learn about the impact on their children, and improve coping skills in order to provide a more secure environment for themselves and their children

- * Increase self-awareness of anger and stress
- * Analyze stress management and coping skills
- * Learn why we turn to substances and how they affect us
- * Make changes for the sake of the children and ourselves

Class 6 Revealing Expectations: To examine and understand the expectations we have of ourselves as parents and of our children as well as the effects of parental expectations on children

- * Examine the roots of our expectations
- * Identify our expectations of ourselves and our child
- * Normalize childish behavior and understand our own behavior
- * Explore what it means to be a mother/father

Class 7 Managing Self-Talk: Identify sources of stress in self-talk and examine how stress escalates into anger, how to manage self-talk, and how to cope and change behavior

- * Introduce self-talk and its relationship to stress and anger
- * Identify types of self-talk
- * Examine self-talk and its relationship to expectations
- * Relate self-talk to the experience cycle

Class 8 Stress Management and Coping Skills: To catch up on concepts and tools from previous classes, review anger and stress, and work on coping skills

- * Introduce material from Classes 1-7 not previously introduced
- * Review anger, stress, and coping skills worksheets
- * Make changes for the sake of the children and ourselves

SECTION III: Develop empathy for positive and responsive parenting; Learn constructive relationship choices; Build skills in listening and communication; Build a practice of safe parenting

Class 9 Through My Child's Eyes: Learn to be more attuned to our child, increase awareness of our child, and experience empathy for our child's experience

- * Examine child's perspective
- * Review expectations

Class 10 Understanding Self Esteem: Examine the roots and meaning of self-esteem as well as how to build self-esteem in children

- * Introduce self-esteem
- * Identify obstacles to building a child's self-esteem
- * Identify ways to build a child's self-esteem

Class 11 The Art of the Genuine Encounter and Listening: Build awareness of genuine engagement with child and promote child's unique expression of self through active listening and creating psychological safety.

- * Identify types of interactions between parent and child that promote genuine encounters.
- * Practice active listening and observation
- * Learn how to create psychological safety for child

Class 12 Building Boundaries for Safe Parenting: Learn how to build boundaries for Parallel Parenting and develop a protocol of best practices for Safe Parenting.

- * Develop structured methods of communication and rules for parallel parenting
- * Set priorities of rules of safety and commit to them
- * Make a list of the most important Best Practices for Safe Parenting

NEW SKILLS AND CHOICES PARENTING PROGRAMS **The Center for Healthy Development (CHD)**

Terry McLarnan, Executive Director of The Center for Healthy Development (CHD)

Three new programs are now available for families who are in the process of separation and divorce. The **NEW SKILLS AND CHOICES PARENTING PROGRAMS** are:

- **Parents in Conflict** – eight weeks of group intervention for both parents;
- **Safe Families** – a twelve week group intervention for both parents
- **Co-parenting and Parallel- parenting Counseling**

The **New Skills and Choices Parenting Programs** are part of a Family Court Initiative public/private collaboration. The purpose of the **Family Court Initiative** is to ensure that children and families within the Family Court System will have the necessary health, developmental and social underpinnings to assist their success in life. The programs are a comprehensive and integrated continuum of care consisting of three levels: prevention, intervention, and intensive intervention. These multiple levels of services are provided by The Center of Healthy Development, a non-profit agency of mental health professionals, with twenty years of experience.

The following is a description of each of three new programs provided by The Center for Healthy Development:

1. PARENTS IN CONFLICT: Families referred by the Superior Court to the Parents in Conflict Group Intervention include:

- Parents in conflict over their children;
- Children in family are in stress due to parental conflict and separation;
- Parents are entrenched in litigation;
- Both parents must participate in the classes.

Classes are not appropriate for families with a history of domestic violence, active substance abuse or serious mental disorders. Parents are referred at any time during the court process.

Class structure:

- Classes are two hour sessions held once a week over an eight week period;
- Both parents must attend and are separated two different classes on different days;
- The two groups are a mix of fathers/mothers and custodial/non-custodial parents.

Program objectives: To help parents build new skills in communication and parenting and to make constructive choices for their family. Group interventions include role plays, videos, peer learning and didactic information to assist them in learning the ability to:

- Develop empathy for children and the other parent;
- Learn constructive ways to solve problems;
- Learn new communication techniques, especially clarifying and listening;
- Learn value of parallel parenting when appropriate;
- Understand effects of conflict on children and on each other;

- Recognize ways that stress, anger, violence, substance use, and emotions cause problems.

2. SAFE FAMILIES is a twelve-week skill-building group intervention program for families in the Family Court system whose children are at risk due to domestic violence and/or who have one or more of the following: a history of domestic violence allegations; no contact orders/restraining orders; supervised exchanges for visitation. Both parents must attend the program. The two hour classes are held on two different days of the week and the parents attend separate classes on different days.

Program Objectives:

- 1. Help parents build a safe environment for their children:** Parents are asked to commit themselves to protecting their children from any exposure to violence or abuse by either parent or anyone else in their home.
- 2. Reduce conflict and increase child protection:** Both parents will:
 - Follow their court orders exactly as written;
 - Keep to the written schedule and support the child's time with the other parent;
 - Not allow any harassment or bad mouthing of the other parent;
 - Not allow any discussion of the court case by anyone in the presence of their children;
 - Not use their child to send messages or to report on the other parent.
- 3. Learn new skills in using a structured parenting plan:** Parents will learn how and when to communicate specific information about their child in a way that is safe for the whole family.
- 4. Understand the effects of conflict on their children:** Parents will learn about the problems children have developed after living with conflict and violence in their families. Some of these problems are: delinquency, substance abuse, depression, physical/medical complaints,
- 5. Increase accountability for parents who have been violent so that they take responsibility for the abuse, avoid using the child as a weapon in conflict and learn to appropriately support the other parent in the care of the child:**
 - Parents who have been abusive will identify specific incidents that have occurred in their family and will hold themselves responsible for their own actions;
 - They will learn appropriate behavior that supports protecting their child from violence and conflict;
 - Parents will model for their child the importance of respect and support of the other parent.

6. Support the parents who have been victims of violence and provide them with skills in maintaining appropriate boundaries for protection of themselves and their children from abuse:

- Parents who have been victims of violence will learn about setting up a structured plan and keeping rules of communication that protect the safety of the family;
- Parents will help their children feel secure by maintaining a consistent, predictable environment.

3. CO-PARENTING AND PARALLEL PARENTING COUNSELING: Parents suitable for this counseling intervention:

- Chronic litigators who use the court system to resolve their continuing issues;
- Parents who have difficulty making mutual and timely decisions (particularly those with young children or who have children with special needs);
- Parents with an alienated child or potentially abusive situations that need structure and monitoring
- Not appropriate for families with histories of significant family violence, child abuse, or active substance abuse;
- Both parents must participate.

Referrals to Co or Parallel Parenting Counseling are only be made after a court order for custody and a visitation plan is in place. Court ordered referrals include goals of service intervention, who is allowed to be seen, and timely procedures for resolving issues that are pertinent to safety of child.

Counseling structure:

- The counselor functions as a manager of conflict and assists the parents in carrying out their court orders. Other family members may participate as directed by the court and when considered appropriate by the counselor; Collateral contacts may be made with the child's therapist and other professionals involved with the family;
- Parents will be seen in sessions together, or in separate sessions.

Service goals: The counselor functions as a parent coordinator to manage chronic, recurring disputes such as visitation conflicts and help parents to adhere to court orders in highly conflicted separating and divorcing families. Interventions generally include helping the parents understand the affects of their conflict on the children, to help them improve and protect good relationships with their children, provide advise and assistance in implementing their visitation and custody plans, help improve communication, coordinate the safe care of their children and help children cope with the stress and fears.

Fees: **New Skills and Choices Parenting Programs** are funded in part by **FIRST 5 Santa Clara County**. There is a co pay of \$10 per class for parents in the Family Court system with at least one child under six years old attending the Parents in Conflict program and Safe Families. FIRST 5 families in the co/parallel parent counseling program pay a co-pay fee of \$15 per parent per session and for intake interviews. All other parents pay the CHD sliding scale fee according to gross income.

All services and classes of the **New Skills and Choices Programs** are treatment focused, confidential and not subject to assessments, reports or testifying.

PARENTS IN CONFLICT
The Center for Healthy Development
New Skills and Choices Parenting Program

Families to be referred to **Parents in Conflict** group intervention program include:

- Parents in conflict over their children;
- Children in family are in stress due to parental conflict and separation;
- Parents are entrenched in litigation;
- Both parents must participate in the classes.

Classes are not appropriate for families with a history of domestic violence, active substance abuse or serious mental disorders. Parents are referred at any time during the court process.

Class structure:

- Classes are two hour sessions held once a week over an eight week period;
- Parents meet in separate classes on separate days;
- The two groups are a mix of fathers/mothers and custodial/non-custodial parents.

Program objectives: To help parents build new skills in communication and parenting and to make constructive choices for their family. Group interventions include role plays, videos, peer learning and didactic information to assist them in learning the ability to:

- Develop empathy for children and the other parent;
- Learn constructive ways to solve problems;
- Learn new communication techniques, especially clarifying and listening;
- Learn value of parallel parenting when appropriate;
- Understand effects of conflict on children and on each other;
- Recognize ways that stress, anger, violence, substance use, and emotions cause problems.

CLASS TOPICS:

1. Introduction to Program and Program Rules
2. Communication
3. Children in the Middle
4. Stress, Anger, & Impulse Control
5. Stress Management
6. Negotiating and Advanced Conflict Management
7. Parallel Parenting
8. Summary and Empathy