

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

This bill repeals the current parent education requirements for parties in a divorce and creates a new codified law regarding education for parents who have minor children during a divorce or legal separation.

Section

1 Marriage dissolution and legal separation education requirements.

Subd. 1. Application. This section applies to all marriage dissolutions and legal separations that involve minor children.

Subd. 2. Participation requirements. The court can order parties to attend the course after the divorce is finalized or in custody cases. This section requires:

- Parents to attend a four-hour education program to be completed before their first court appearance or within 30 days of filing for divorce, whichever is sooner and for the court to verify that course completion at the first hearing.
- Court to create deadlines to complete the course if it has not been completed or excuse a party from the course for good cause, including the safety of the party or child or the ability to afford the course fee.
- Parties who do not have a hearing to submit proof of completion of the course with a divorce stipulation unless they were exempted from taking the course.
- The court administrator to ensure that any agreement filed has proof of completion of the course or the parties are exempted.

Section

- Specific language that must be in the certificate of completion that is issued from the program providing the course.

Subd. 3. Program requirements. Provides the requirements for a program to offer the divorce education class and allows the class to be either online or in-person. This section also requires the Supreme Court administrator to provide statistics on court participation each year to the legislative committees with jurisdiction over civil law.

Subd. 4. Confidentiality. Provides that statements made by parties during a parent education program are confidential and inadmissible in court for any purpose and that parent education course instructors cannot be called as witnesses in court proceedings.

Subd. 5. Costs and program providers. Provides that the programs must have a sliding scale and fee waiver and allow parents timely access to the programs. This section also provides a process to appeal denial for approval as a course that meets the requirements of this section and for a court district to be exempt from the requirements for parent education if there are no programs available or affordable in that district.

- 2 Effective date.** This applies to proceedings where the initial pleadings were served or joint petition was signed on or after January 1, 2014.
- 3 Repealer.** This section repeals the previous divorce education requirements.