

598.15 Mandatory course — parties to certain proceedings.

1. The parties to any action which involves the issues of child custody or visitation shall participate in a court-approved course to educate and sensitize the parties to the needs of any child or party during and subsequent to the proceeding within forty-five days of the service of notice and petition for the action or within forty-five days of the service of notice and application for modification of an order. Participation in the course may be waived or delayed by the court for good cause including but not limited to a default by any of the parties or a showing that the parties have previously participated in a court-approved course or its equivalent. Participation in the course is not required if the proceeding involves termination of parental rights of any of the parties. A final decree shall not be granted or a final order shall not be entered until the parties have complied with this section, unless participation in the course is waived or delayed for good cause or is otherwise not required under this subsection.

2. Each party shall be responsible for arranging for participation in the course and for payment of the costs of participation in the course.

3. Each party shall submit certification of completion of the course to the court prior to the granting of a final decree or the entry of an order, unless participation in the course is waived or delayed for good cause or is otherwise not required under subsection 1.

4. If participation in the court-approved course is waived or delayed for good cause or is otherwise not required under this section, the court may order that the parties receive the information described in subsection 5 through an alternative format.

5. Each judicial district shall certify approved courses for parties required to participate in a course under this section. Approved courses may include those provided by a public or private entity. At a minimum and as appropriate, an approved course shall include information relating to the parents regarding divorce and its impact on the children and family relationship, parenting skills for divorcing parents, children's needs and coping techniques, and the financial responsibilities of parents following divorce.

6. In addition to the provisions of this section relating to the required participation in a court-approved course by the parties to an action as described in subsection 1, the court may require age-appropriate counseling for children who are involved in a dissolution of marriage action. The counseling may be provided by a public or private entity approved by the court. The costs of the counseling shall be taxed as court costs.

7. The supreme court may prescribe rules to implement this section.

[C73, §2227; C97, §3178; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §10479; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, §598.12; C71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §598.15]

2005 Acts, ch 69, §36; 2010 Acts, ch 1159, §7