

**IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF FORSYTH COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA**

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 26- 8

(Revoking and Replacing Administrative Order 11-01)

IN RE: PARENTING SEMINAR

Pursuant to the inherent powers of this Court, Article VI, Section IX, Paragraph I of the Constitution of the State of Georgia of 1983, Uniform Superior Court Rules 1.2 and 24.8, and upon the vote of a majority of the judges of the Bell-Forsyth Judicial Circuit as required by Uniform Superior Court Rule 24.8(A), and in order to provide for the speedy, efficient, and inexpensive resolution of disputes and to promote the best interests of children in domestic relations matters, it is hereby ORDERED:

1. APPLICABILITY

Except as provided in Section 6 of this Order, this Order applies to all parties to any action for divorce, separate maintenance, paternity, legitimation, change of custody, child support, or parenting time, and to any other domestic relations action as defined by Uniform Superior Court Rule 24.1, in which the care, custody, parenting time, or support of a child under the age of eighteen (18) is at issue.

This Order does not apply to:

- a. proceedings brought solely under the Family Violence Act, O.C.G.A. § 19-13-1 et seq.;
- b. contempt actions, except that this Order shall apply to any contempt action in which a party also seeks modification of custody, parenting time, or child support; and
- c. uncontested or stipulated modifications of parenting time and uncontested or stipulated modifications of child support.

This Order applies to all actions filed on or after its effective date and to all actions pending on that date in which a final judgment or decree has not been entered. In any action pending on the effective date, the time for completion set forth in Section 5 of this Order shall run from the effective date rather than from the date of filing or service.

2. MANDATORY REQUIREMENT

All parties subject to this Order shall successfully complete a court-approved, certificate-bearing parenting seminar (the "Seminar") meeting the requirements of Section 3 of this Order.

At the time an action subject to this Order is filed, the Clerk of Superior Court shall deliver a copy of this Order to the plaintiff or petitioner. The plaintiff or petitioner shall serve a copy of this Order upon the defendant or respondent together with the complaint or petition. A party who is joined in or intervenes in an action subject to this Order shall be served with a copy of this Order at the time of joinder or intervention.

3. SEMINAR CONTENT AND FORMAT

The Seminar shall be an educational program of four (4) contact hours, which is the maximum duration permitted by Uniform Superior Court Rule 24.8(B). The Seminar shall be conducted online and shall be conducted by qualified personnel whose professional and educational experience includes a knowledge of children and families, as required by Uniform Superior Court Rule 24.8(B).

The Seminar shall focus on the effects of separation and divorce on children, particularly as those effects relate to the actions of the parents during and after the separation and to children at different developmental stages. Specific attention shall be given to the effects of the economics of divorce on children, as required by Uniform Superior Court Rule 24.8(C). The Seminar shall emphasize fostering children's emotional health during periods of stress. The program shall be informative and supportive and shall direct participants who desire additional information or assistance to appropriate resources.

The Seminar content shall include, at a minimum: (a) the developmental stages of childhood and the reactions of children to separation and divorce at specific ages; (b) how separation and divorce affect families; (c) grief processes and coping skills; (d) the roles of divorced or separated parents; (e) co-parenting skills; (f) the financial obligations of parents and the effects of the economics of divorce on children; and (g) mediation as a tool for resolving domestic disputes.

Each provider approved under this Order shall supply written verification to the Court, upon request, confirming that its program meets the requirements of this Section. Each Certificate of Completion shall bear a unique identifying number so that completion may be verified.

4. SATISFYING THE SEMINAR REQUIREMENT

The Seminar requirement may be satisfied as follows:

- a. Primary provider. A party may complete the Seminar through the Ninth Judicial Administrative District Office of Dispute Resolution, available at www.adr9.com, which is the primary approved provider for the Bell-Forsyth Judicial Circuit. Upon a party's completion, the provider shall transmit the Certificate of Completion to the Clerk of Superior Court of Forsyth County for filing in the party's case and shall deliver a copy to the participant.

- b. Alternative provider. A party may complete the Seminar through another online parenting seminar program, upon written approval of the assigned Superior Court Judge obtained before enrollment. To obtain approval, the party shall submit information sufficient for the Court to determine that the proposed program:
- (i) consists of four (4) contact hours, or such lesser duration as the assigned judge may approve, and in no event more than four (4) hours;
 - (ii) covers the content required by Section 3 of this Order;
 - (iii) is conducted online;
 - (iv) is conducted by qualified personnel whose professional and educational experience includes a knowledge of children and families, as required by Uniform Superior Court Rule 24.8(B);
 - (v) issues a verifiable, uniquely numbered Certificate of Completion;
 - (vi) is administered on a non-profit basis, as required by Uniform Superior Court Rule 24.8(D); and
 - (vii) provides a procedure for the waiver or reduction of its fee in cases of indigent parties, as required by Uniform Superior Court Rule 24.8(D).

Approval of an alternative provider rests in the discretion of the assigned judge.

5. COMPLETION DEADLINE

Unless otherwise ordered by the Court, each party shall successfully complete the Seminar as follows:

- a. the plaintiff or petitioner, within thirty-one (31) days after the action is filed; and
- b. the defendant or respondent, within thirty-one (31) days after service of the complaint or petition upon that party.

In all events, the Seminar shall be completed before the final hearing or trial.

Unless the provider has transmitted the Certificate of Completion to the Clerk of Superior Court pursuant to Section 4(a), the party shall file the Certificate of Completion with the Clerk of Superior Court within seven (7) days after completing the Seminar. Each party shall provide a copy of the Certificate of Completion to the assigned judge at any scheduled court appearance.

The failure of one party to complete the Seminar shall not delay relief sought by a party who has complied with this Order. The Court may decline to schedule non-emergency hearings requested by a party who has not filed proof of completion.

6. CERTIFICATES OF COMPLETION

A Certificate of Completion is valid for three (3) years from the date of its issuance. A party who has successfully completed a court-approved parenting seminar within the preceding three (3) years in connection with another domestic relations action need not repeat the Seminar, provided that the certificate was issued by a provider approved under this Order or under a prior order of this Court. A party relying upon a previously issued certificate shall file it with the Clerk of Superior Court, and provide a copy to the assigned judge, within the time set forth in Section 5 of this Order.

7. FEES AND FEE WAIVERS

Each participant shall pay any registration fee charged by the selected Seminar provider. Pursuant to Uniform Superior Court Rule 24.8(D), the assigned judge may in his or her discretion assess the fee against either party in addition to court costs.

Upon the filing of an affidavit of indigence pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 9-15-2 and a finding by the Court that the party is unable to pay, the Court may waive or reduce the fee charged for the program administered by the Ninth Judicial Administrative District Office of Dispute Resolution.

A party may also satisfy this Order through any other provider approved under Section 4(b) that offers a waiver or reduction of its fee. No party shall be denied access to the Seminar solely because of an inability to pay, consistent with Uniform Superior Court Rule 24.8(D).

8. ENFORCEMENT AND SANCTIONS

A party who fails to comply with this Order is subject to the contempt powers of this Court. Upon a party's failure to complete the Seminar as required by this Order, and after notice and an opportunity to be heard, the assigned judge may take appropriate action, including, but not limited to, withholding entry of a final decree or final order; the imposition of sanctions; attachment for contempt; and an award of attorneys' fees and costs, consistent with Uniform Superior Court Rule 24.8(E).

No party shall be held in contempt of this Order, or otherwise prejudiced for failure to comply with it, unless that party received actual notice of this Order as contemplated by Uniform Superior Court Rule 1.2.

9. WAIVER AND ALTERNATIVE COUNSELING

For good cause shown, the assigned judge may waive the Seminar requirement in an individual case by written order. A party seeking a waiver shall file a motion setting forth the good cause relied upon. Good cause may include, but is not limited to: a party's non-residence in Georgia; a party's non-residence in Forsyth County; the reasonable availability of a similar program to the party; or other reasonable circumstances indicating that a party should not be required to complete the program.

In lieu of the Seminar, and consistent with Uniform Superior Court Rule 24.8(E), the assigned judge may permit a party to complete an equivalent course of professional counseling covering the subject matter required by Section 3 of this Order, provided that the party submits written verification satisfactory to the Court confirming that such subject matter was adequately addressed.

10. FINAL DECREE BEFORE COMPLETION

Consistent with Uniform Superior Court Rule 24.8(F), the assigned judge may, as a discretionary matter, grant a final decree of divorce or other final order before a party has completed the Seminar. In such event, the assigned judge shall retain full authority to impose sanctions upon any party who thereafter fails or refuses to comply with this Order, including, but not limited to, those sanctions set forth in Section 8 of this Order.

11. NOTICE TO LITIGANTS

The Clerk of Superior Court of Forsyth County shall make this Order publicly available on the Clerk's website at www.forsythclerk.com and shall deliver a copy of this Order to the plaintiff or petitioner at the time of filing as provided in Section 2 of this Order. The Ninth Judicial Administrative District shall make this Order publicly available at www.adr9.com.

Copies of this Order shall also be furnished to attorneys and self-represented litigants upon request and shall be made available in the office of the Clerk of Superior Court and the Forsyth County law library, consistent with Uniform Superior Court Rule 1.2(E).

12. PRIOR ORDERS REVOKED

Administrative Order 11-01 (In Re: Parenting Seminar, entered December 16, 2010) is hereby revoked and replaced in its entirety, effective as of the effective date of this Order.

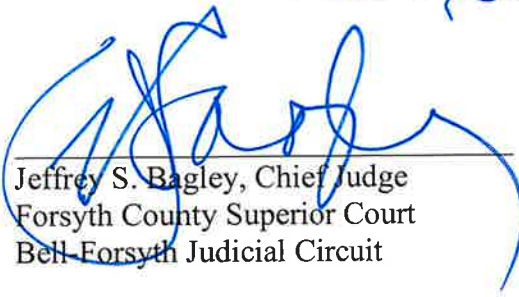
A Certificate of Completion issued under Administrative Order 11-01, or under any other prior order of this Court, remains valid for the period set forth in Section 6 of this Order and satisfies the requirement of Section 2. Any waiver of the seminar requirement, approval of an alternative provider, approval of alternative counseling, or other relief granted by an assigned judge under Administrative Order 11-01 before the effective date of this Order remains in full force and effect.

To the extent that any other prior administrative order, internal operating procedure, or standing order of this Court addresses parenting seminars and is inconsistent with this Order, this Order shall control.

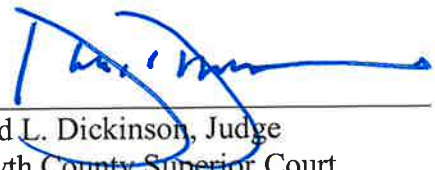
13. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Order shall take effect sixty (60) days after the date it is filed with the Clerk of Superior Court of Forsyth County. The Clerk shall cause the effective date to be stated on the copy of this Order posted pursuant to Section 11 of this Order.

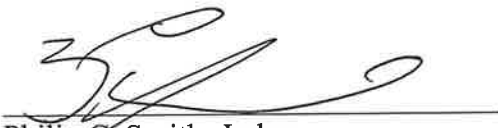
SO ORDERED, this 18th day of September, 2026.



Jeffrey S. Bagley, Chief Judge
Forsyth County Superior Court
Bell-Forsyth Judicial Circuit



David L. Dickinson, Judge
Forsyth County Superior Court
Bell-Forsyth Judicial Circuit



Philip C. Smith, Judge
Forsyth County Superior Court
Bell-Forsyth Judicial Circuit