Get to Know the Curriculum

Parents Forever™: Education for Families in Transition is the curriculum offered in University of Minnesota Extension’s Parents Forever™ course. The curriculum contains all core content delivered to parents, caregivers, and others attending a Parents Forever™ course and has been in use since 1999 – primarily in Minnesota but some other states as well. Minor revisions have been made to the curriculum throughout the years – most notably revisions in the parent handbook from 2009-2012.

In 2014, we (U of M Extension educators and specialists) undertook more extensive revisions – revamping the entire Parents Forever™ curriculum and all related resources. Changes to the curriculum are so extensive that Extension is requiring re-training for any facilitators and coordinators who have used the curriculum in the past. As usual, new staff also must be trained. (See more information about required training at the end of this fact sheet.)

Following is a description of the curriculum’s overall structure (the “big picture”), as well as information about what program participants will learn after attending all sessions (eight hours) of a Parents Forever™ course.

THE “BIG PICTURE”

Course sessions incorporating elements of the Parents Forever™: Education for Families in Transition curriculum are designed for parents and other caregivers of children who are exploring or have already divorced, separated, or decided to parent apart. In this fact sheet, we use the term “parents” to describe this audience. This fact sheet, as well as the Parents Forever TM curriculum and related resources, also uses the term “family transition” to describe all the changes that families experience following divorce, separation, or other decisions to parent apart.

The Parents Forever™ course is most frequently delivered to parents who have been court-ordered to attend a “parent education” course, also called “divorce education” or “co-parenting education” by some state statutes. The Parents Forever™ curriculum was developed with Minnesota state statute 518.157 in mind, which means it was...
written to be delivered in eight hours and cover 25 topics that the Minnesota Supreme Court committee deemed important for all mandatory parent education programs. Minnesota Supreme Court committee deemed were important for all mandatory parent education programs. After completing a Parents Forever™ course, parents will be able to:

- Describe the family transition journey and how each family member will be affected.
- Recognize the role of self-care, parent-child relationships, and co-parenting in child well-being.
- Identify internal and external resources and strategize how to leverage these resources to promote resilience for all involved.

Parents Forever™: Education for Families in Transition is organized into five main sessions named in the image to the right. These five sessions comprise a continuum and are intended for delivery in the order listed. See below for more details about the sessions.

It is worth noting that while the original version of the curriculum also included five sessions, the content of these new sessions are NOT analogous with the original ones. As noted, the vast majority of the 2014 version of the curriculum is new and so cannot be readily compared with the old versions. For more information about the overall structure of the curriculum and how it differs from the competition, see Why It’s the Right Choice for Families.

**SESSION 1: PARENTS FOREVER™ COURSE INTRODUCTION**

The first session of the curriculum helps parents understand why they must take the course, and what they can expect from it. After participating in this session, parents will be able to:

- Understand the background and basis for the Parents Forever™ course.
- Explain the outline of the course and how it will be delivered.
- Describe topics and concepts they will learn in the course.

The “Parents Forever™ Course Introduction” session includes only only one same-titled lesson plan, and takes 25 minutes to teach.
SESSION 2: TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

The second Parents Forever™ session is about self-care. Using the analogy of a plane trip, the curriculum teaches parents that “you need to put on your own oxygen mask first before helping your children or others put on theirs.” After participating in this session, parents will be able to:

✓ Describe thoughts and feelings associated with the family transition process.
✓ Examine the links between self-care and life skills needed during and after the family transition.
✓ Analyze how personal needs and wants affect goals and create an action plan to improve self-care for the future.

The “Taking Care of Yourself” session is the longest of the five and takes 2 hours and 40 minutes to teach. It includes the following lesson plans:

✓ Introduction: Taking Care of Yourself
✓ The Legal Side of Family Transition
✓ The Emotional Side of Family Transition
✓ Dealing with Anger
✓ Managing Stress
✓ Staying Safe During a Transition
✓ Strengthening Your Support Network
✓ The Financial Side of Family Transition
✓ Planning for the Future
✓ Conclusion: Taking Care of Yourself

SESSION 3: TAKING CARE OF YOUR CHILDREN

The third Parents Forever™ session is about parent-child relationships. It helps parents realize that they and their children need each other, and can both help each other through the family transition journey. After participating in this session, parents will be able to:

✓ Recognize how stages of child development influence children’s journey through the family transition.
✓ Identify characteristics of parent-child relationships that improve child well-being.
✓ Apply knowledge and identify skills that will lead to improved parent-child relationships.
The “Taking Care of Your Children” session takes 2 hours and 5 minutes to teach and includes the following lesson plans:

- Introduction: Taking Care of Your Children
- What Are Your Children Experiencing?
- What Do Your Children Bring to the Parent-Child Relationship?
- What Do You Bring to the Parent Child Relationship?
- How Do You and Your Children Shape Each Other?
- Strategies to Help Strengthen Parent-Child Relationships
- Strengthening Your Children’s Support Network
- Maintaining Balance in the Parent-Child Relationship
- Conclusion: Taking Care of Your Children

SESSION 4: BEING SUCCESSFUL WITH CO-PARENTING

The fourth Parents Forever™ session reaffirms that children’s parents are “parents forever,” even if they are not living in the same household. After participating in this session, parents will:

- Reflect on the nature of their co-parenting relationships.
- Apply the communication and conflict management skills needed to have an effective co-parenting relationship.
- Recognize that a parenting plan is an effective tool to help prepare for positive co-parenting.

The “Being Successful with Co-Parenting” session takes 2 hours to teach and includes the following lesson plans.

- Introduction: Being Successful with Co-Parenting
- What Is Co-Parenting?
- Redefining Your Family
- Different Approaches to Co-Parenting
- Communication Skills for Effective Co-Parenting
- Managing Conflict
- Strategies for Parenting Apart
- Where Do Stepfamilies Fit in the Picture?
- Creating a Parenting Plan
- Conclusion: Being Successful with Co-Parenting
PARENTS FOREVER™ COURSE CONCLUSION

The fifth, and last, Parents Forever™ session helps parents understand that the family transition will take time, but that they’ll eventually reach a satisfactory “destination.” After participating in this session, parents will be able to describe how self-care, parent-child relationships, and co-parenting relationships work together to improve family well-being. The “Parents Forever™ Course Conclusion” session is comprised of only one same-titled lesson plan, and takes 15 minutes to teach.

ACCESSING THE CURRICULUM

Parents Forever™: Education for Families in Transition is only available in an electronic format. All needed curricular resources are linked on the Parents Forever™ Facilitator website, including the:

- Parents Forever™ Facilitator Guide
- Parents Forever™ Presentation
- Videos
- Handouts and teaching aids
- Order links for the Parents Forever™ Participant Handbook, which must be purchased for each course participant

The Parents Forever™ Facilitator Website contains many more resources than just the curriculum – it is the gateway for all facilitator-related resources and training. Access to the website costs $299 for two people from one organization, and $20 for each additional person from that organization. This is a one-time cost, and membership can be transferred to different individuals within an organization upon approval by the Parents Forever™ administrative office.

As noted earlier, all facilitators must be trained before using the curriculum. Specifically, all facilitators who teach one hour or more of the Parents Forever™ curriculum must go through the start-up training requirements, sign an annual agreement, and agree to follow additional annual requirements to become an “authorized provider” of the curriculum. For information on the requirements, see Get Trained to Teach Parents Forever™.