



**THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**PROBATE AND FAMILY COURT ANNOUNCES  
AN ALTERNATIVE OPTION TO MEET THE PARENT EDUCATION REQUIREMENT  
IN LIMITED CIRCUMSTANCES**

The Probate and Family Court Administrative Office announces an alternative option to meet the Parent Education requirement where a waiver may otherwise be ordered by the Court. This option was initially approved by Chief Justice Paula M. Carey in June 2008 but notice was not widely disseminated. In an effort to further disseminate this information, this press release is issued.

Since 1994 Massachusetts has required mandatory parent education programs to help parents understand and handle the challenges of the disruption of the family unit with the breakup of a marriage, and to assist them in addressing and minimizing the stresses children may experience. Parties must register with an approved provider of one of these programs within sixty days of service of the original complaint. Divorcing parents must attend a Parent Education program in person.

Attendance at a Parent Education course is required of all parties to a divorce in which there are minor children or, as ordered by a judge, in other specific actions involving minor children, pursuant to Probate and Family Court Standing Order 4-08 entitled PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM ATTENDANCE. The Standing Order remains in full force and effect.

The court may waive the attendance requirement upon motion, with notice, for one or both parties. A Motion to Waive Attendance at a Parent Education Program must be presented by the party seeking the waiver. The reason the party is alleged to be unable to participate in a program in person must be included in the motion.

On a limited basis, use of a DVD program entitled *KidCare for Co-Parents: An Educational Program for Divorcing Families* is now available when a judge is considering a waiver.

*KidCare for Co-Parents* is a four and a half hour multimedia, interactive program which can be used with a DVD player on either a personal computer or a television screen. Completion of the interactive aspects of the DVD is required in order to obtain the Certificate of Attendance which must then be provided to the Court.

While this DVD is not the optimal means of satisfying the Parent Education Program Attendance requirement in most instances, it may be a reasonable alternative should a judge determine that a waiver of attendance is warranted. Utilization of this DVD may be ordered in lieu of a complete waiver of the requirement.

Examples where utilization of the DVD program may be ordered include unusual situations such as incarceration or extended hospitalization of, or residence outside of Massachusetts by, one of the parties.