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PRESS RELEASE

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PROBATE AND FAMILY COURT ANNOUNCES PILOT PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR NEVER MARRIED PARENTS

The Probate and Family Court Department announces the implementation of Standing Order 6-08 relative to a pilot parent education program for never married parents. The Probate and Family Court Administrative Office has in cooperation with the Department of Revenue obtained funding to implement the program for never married parents in the Essex, Hampshire and Suffolk Divisions. The new Standing Order mandates that parties to a Complaint to Establish Paternity, a Complaint for Custody/Support/Visitation, and in any case involving visitation, custody or support of minor children of never married parents filed on or after July 1, 2008 attend and participate in a five (5) hour education program known as "*For the Children.*"

"*For the Children*" is a supportive parent education program that focuses on the needs of children of never married parents. Topics will include the vital role of parents in children's lives, cooperative parenting, pitfalls for parents to avoid, understanding children's needs and supporting children when parents live apart. The new Standing Order is effective November 1, 2008.

In addition, since 1994, the Probate and Family Court has required that parties to a divorce action where there are minor children register with and attend an approved parent education program. Attendance is mandatory unless waived by the Court. Currently, there are 31 approved providers who offer the program at 63 locations around the state. The program is also offered in Spanish at 3 locations.