
HOUSE BILL 1945

State of Washington

53rd Legislature

1993 Regular Session

By Representative Romero

Read first time 02/17/93. Referred to Committee on Judiciary.

1 AN ACT Relating to seminars for parents; adding a new section to
2 chapter 26.12 RCW; prescribing penalties; and providing an effective
3 date.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 26.12 RCW
6 to read as follows:

7 (1) If interests of children under eighteen years of age are
8 involved, all parties in actions for dissolution of marriage, parenting
9 plan modification, separate maintenance, paternity, custody of
10 children, and visitation shall successfully complete a seminar for
11 parents. This seminar shall be completed within thirty-one days of
12 service of the original complaint upon the original respondent.

13 (2) If a party fails to complete successfully the seminar, the
14 court may take appropriate action, including but not limited to
15 sanctions for contempt. The court may waive the requirement of
16 completion of the seminar upon a showing of good cause.

17 (3) Seminars shall be administered by the clerk of the superior
18 court, contracting with qualified counselors, trainers, and educators.
19 The clerk may appoint, designate, or hire a seminar administrator to

1 conduct and manage the seminars. Seminars shall be four hours long and
2 shall be offered at least twice a month. Participants shall be allowed
3 to choose either two two-hour evening sessions or one four-hour weekday
4 session.

5 (4) The seminar shall focus on the developmental needs of children
6 with emphasis on fostering the child's emotional health during periods
7 of stress. The seminar shall be informative and supportive and shall
8 direct people desiring additional information or help to appropriate
9 resources. The course content shall contain, but shall not be limited
10 to, the following:

11 (a) The developmental stages of childhood;

12 (b) The needs of children at different ages;

13 (c) Stress indicators in children;

14 (d) Age appropriate expectations of children;

15 (e) Adjusting to divorce;

16 (f) The grief process;

17 (g) Reduction of stress for children through an amicable divorce;

18 (h) Changing parental and marital roles;

19 (i) Visitation recommendations to enhance the child's relationship
20 with both parents;

21 (j) Financial obligations of child rearing; and

22 (k) Conflict management and dispute resolution.

23 (5) The court's action on a petition shall not be delayed by a
24 nonmoving or responding party's refusal or delay in completing the
25 seminar. A program of equal value and content may be substituted for
26 the seminar if written verification satisfactory to the seminar
27 administrator is provided to the court indicating that the specific
28 issues noted in subsection (4) of this section have been addressed.
29 The substitute program may be obtained through professional or pastoral
30 counseling, mediation, or another similar education seminar.

31 (6) The fee for such seminar shall not exceed thirty-five dollars
32 per party and shall be used to cover all the costs of the seminar
33 including the presenter's fees, handouts, applications, and seminar
34 administration. A sliding-scale fee may be used if a party presents a
35 verified affidavit of indigency and it appears upon investigation that
36 the party meets the court's guidelines of indigency.

37 (7) At the time of the filing of pleadings, the clerk shall give
38 notice to the parties of their responsibility to complete the seminar
39 or provide verification of an alternative program. Applications may be

1 obtained from the superior court clerk's office. The application and
2 fee shall be returned to the seminar administrator's office before the
3 seminar selected in order to ensure that adequate space and materials
4 are available at the seminar for each party. After submission of the
5 application and fee there will be no further notification from the
6 clerk's office and schedule changes shall be arranged through the
7 seminar administrator's office.

8 (8) A list of the participating parties shall be provided to the
9 presenters before each seminar. As the parties report to the seminars
10 selected by them, they shall provide proper identification and shall be
11 recorded as being in attendance. Each person who successfully
12 completes the seminar shall be given a certificate of attendance to
13 present to the assigned judge at the time of his or her next court
14 appearance.

15 (9) The clerk may arrange for an armed uniformed law enforcement
16 officer to be present at these seminars to ensure the security of the
17 participants before, during, and after each session.

18 (10) A judge may waive the completion of the seminar if the seminar
19 is unavailable in that county.

20 (11) This section does not apply to actions for domestic violence,
21 custodial interference, or contempt.

22 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** This act shall take effect January 1, 1994.

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