

## **Kids First Workshop Information**

### **for Parents of Kindergarten - 2<sup>nd</sup> Graders**

#### **What will my child learn at the workshop?**

- Divorce means that your parents won't be married anymore, but they will still be your parents. Your family is always your family.
- Divorce is never the kids' fault.
- All feelings about the divorce are normal and okay. There are no wrong ways to feel, but there are right and wrong ways to act. Find healthy things to do to feel better (draw, listen to music, read, play with pets, ride a bike, play outside).
- It's important to talk about feelings with parents and other adults you trust. Kids identify adults they can talk to, such as teachers, school counselors, coaches, and relatives.
- It's normal to want parents to get back together, but divorce is usually final. Kids can't fix it.
- Some things change with divorce (like where parents live and how you celebrate holidays) but many things stay the same (like relatives, school, friends and parents' love for you).

#### **Your child will receive an activity book and calendar**

Activity book: We hope it will spark discussion between you and your child. Go through it together and ask questions. Help your child complete any blank pages.

Calendar: A calendar can help kids keep track of their schedule and feel less anxious. Help your child fill out the calendar with stickers to remember the days they see each parent. Kids can color when stickers run out. If your child does not spend time with your spouse, use the calendar to talk about it and to let your child share his/her feelings.

#### **Gabby's Story**

Kids read a story about a girl named Gabby who keeps all her feelings bottled up. Gabby doesn't talk about her feelings and then "explodes" at her brother. We go outside and watch a Coke and Mentos demonstration to remember not to bottle up our feelings!

#### **My Job/Not My Job**

We play a game called "My Job/Not My Job" where kids learn:

- Their job: Follow the rules at each parent's home, ask questions if they are confused, say how they are feeling, and know it's ok to show love for both parents.
- NOT their job: Listen to parents fight or stop parents' fights, deliver messages between parents, act like a spy on parents, listen to a parent say bad things about the other parent, or choose sides.

#### **Will the teachers tell us what our child said in the workshop?**

To encourage kids to share openly, we promise not to share what they say with their parents.

#### **How does the Court know my child attended the class?**

Within a week after all your registered kids have attended, Kids First files a certificate of participation with the court.

## What questions should I ask my child?

### *About the activity book:*

- Tell me about the feelings you circled. What makes you feel that way?
- What happened to the girl named Gabby in the story? Could she do something different to make it a better ending?
- What changes with divorce? What stays the same?

### *Additional questions:*

- Tell me about the *Dinosaurs Divorce* book. How did the dinosaurs feel?
- What would make the divorce easier for you?
- What was your favorite part of the workshop?

## Who else can my child talk to?

Talk to your child's school counselor or pediatrician. Some schools form peer groups for children experiencing divorce. Individual counseling is often helpful for children going through divorce. Many good children's counselors and play therapists work in our community.

## What books does Kids First recommend for children this age?

Young children can sometimes talk about a subject more easily by reading a book with their parent. Ask questions about the book and encourage your child to talk about feelings. Kids First has many of these books that you may preview; please call first (319.365.5437).

*A Terrible Thing Happened* by Margaret Holmes (for kids who have witnessed violence/trauma)

*Charlie Anderson* by Barbara Abercrombie (about a cat with two homes)

*Dinosaurs Divorce* by Marc Brown (we read much of this book in class)

*I Don't Want to Talk About It* by Jeanie Franz Ransom (girl doesn't want to talk about divorce)

*I Love You More Than...* by Elizabeth Hickey & James Cohen

*Is a Worry Worrying You?* by Ferida Wolff & Harriet May Savitz (for any worries)

*It's Not Your Fault, Koko Bear* by Vicki Lansky (includes discussion questions)

*Let's Talk About It: Divorce* by Fred Rogers (Mr. Rogers) (photos of diverse families)

*Mom and Dad Break Up* by Joan Singleton Prestine (upset boy tries to get parents together)

*Mom and Dad Don't Live Together Anymore* by Kathy Stinson

*My Family's Changing* by Pat Thomas (includes discussion questions)

*My Life Turned Upside Down, But I Turned It Rightside Up* by Mary Field (self-esteem)

*Standing on My Own Two Feet* by Tamara Schmitz (affirmation of love in midst of divorce)

*Through the Eyes of the Children* by Janet Johnston (stories about animals, related to divorce)

*Two Homes* by Claire Masurel

*Was It the Chocolate Pudding?* by Sandra Levins (boy who thinks divorce is his fault)

*When My Parents Forgot How to Be Friends* by Jennifer Moore-Mallinos (parents happier apart)

**Questions? Call Kids First at 319.365.5437 or visit [www.kidsfirstiowa.org](http://www.kidsfirstiowa.org)**