

Kids First Workshop Information for Parents of 9th – 12th Graders

What happens at the workshop?

Your teen and the other high-school-age kids at the workshop:

- Name feelings about the divorce and discuss their experiences with other kids;
- Have an opportunity to “ask the lawyer” questions to get clarification of what to expect;
- Perform role plays to know how to handle common divorce scenarios;
- Identify different ways to discuss sensitive topics with parents;
- Learn about kids’ rights not to take sides, be the messenger, or listen to parents badmouth each other or fight;
- Talk about coping strategies to handle stress in a healthy way;
- Identify trusted adults to talk to about the divorce.

What should I ask my teenager?

- What bothers you most about the divorce? Is there anything good about it?
- Go over “Kids Rights” handout. Which are most important to you?
- When do you feel stuck in the middle? What do you do when you feel that way?
- When you feel sad or angry, what makes you feel better?
- How can we make the divorce easier on you?
- If you could have 3 wishes about our family, what would they be?
- Who can you talk to besides me if you’re feeling stressed?
- What can I do to make it easier to talk about how you’re feeling?
- On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), how (stressed, sad, ok, worried) are you feeling about things?
- Are you getting the help you need? What help do you need?
- Let them quiz you with true/false questions from their handout.

What should I listen or watch for?

Teens learn techniques for communicating important concerns to you. Watch for these and respond by letting your teen know their thoughts and feelings are important to you.

- They might leave you a note saying they want to talk or a letter to start a written conversation.
- They might draw a picture to explain how aspects of the divorce feel.
- They might use key phrases to stay out of the middle.
- It might be easier for them to talk in the car or while you’re doing an activity with them.
- They might express feelings through “I feel” statements: “I feel _____ when you _____ because _____.” Listen for sentences that begin “I feel” to hear your teen’s concerns.

Make yourself available to your teen to talk by staying off your cell phone while driving with your child and avoiding unnecessary distractions when they are in your care.

Who else can my teenager talk to?

Talk to the high school counselor or to your teen's doctor. Individual counseling is often helpful for kids going through divorce. Many qualified adolescent counselors work in our community. Your child can call the Kids First office in case he or she has more questions about the divorce.

Will the teachers tell me what my teenager 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* of your registered kids have attended, Kids First files a certificate of participation with the court.

Questions? Please call **Kids First** at **319.365.5437**.