

2018 -- H 7983

LC005168

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2018

A N A C T

RELATING TO DOMESTIC RELATIONS -- DIVORCE AND SEPARATION

Introduced By: Representatives Barros, Shanley, Maldonado, Ranglin-Vassell, and Tobon

Date Introduced: March 22, 2018

Referred To: House Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Legislative findings.

2 (a) The general assembly finds that divorce can be a profoundly stressful transition,
3 especially when children are involved and there are disputes regarding visitation, child support
4 and other related issues, regardless of whether the parties involved are married.

5 (b) Parental cooperation and constructive communication during and after divorce and/or
6 separation parents with children help reduce the stress between the parties and family units,
7 including the children of the divorcing and/or separating parents.

8 (c) The absence of parental communication can lead to conflict between the divorcing
9 and/or separating parties and parental alienation, both of which are detrimental to the well-being
10 and development of the children.

11 (d) Education programming offers help and guidance on parenting effectively through
12 and after divorce/separation and can and will benefit the children of divorcing/separating parents.

13 SECTION 2. Chapter 15-5 of the General Laws entitled "Divorce and Separation" is
14 hereby amended by adding thereto the following sections:

15 **15-5-30. Educational programs -- Required.**

16 (a) The chief judge of the Rhode Island family court shall institute a pilot classroom
17 program in any county which they choose, for divorcing parents and any case involving
18 visitation, custody, or child support for minor children.

19 (b) The program shall be expanded to the remaining counties over a period of eighteen

1 (18) months.

2 (c) The chief judge shall appoint a committee of seven (7) individuals, four (4) of whom
3 shall be attorneys with at least ten (10) years of experience in the practice of divorce, visitation
4 and custody law and three (3) of whom shall be certified family therapists/counselors with
5 experience in marital and family counseling. Members of the committee shall serve without
6 compensation, but shall be reimbursed for the reasonable expenses incurred while engaged in the
7 performance of their duties as approved by the chief judge of the family court.

8 (d) The committee shall establish standards for a curriculum, legal requirements and a fee
9 structure for the program and shall also approve vendors and/or providers of such programs.

10 (e) The program shall be mandatory in all cases involving divorce or separating parties
11 where there are children involved.

12 (f) The classroom programs shall educate the parents on the effects of divorce/separation
13 on children as well as on the steps parents can take to minimize the stress of this transition on the
14 children.

15 **15-5-31. Appropriations.**

16 The chief judge of the family court may, subject to appropriation, appoint such staff and
17 make such expenditures as have been authorized and shall be necessary to implement the program
18 established pursuant to § 15-5-3.

19 **15-5-32. Reporting requirements.**

20 The chief judge of the family court shall file a report with the speaker of the house of
21 representatives and the president of the senate on July 1 of each year, on the progress of the
22 programs and evaluates the success of the programs adopted in furtherance of the program
23 established pursuant to § 15-5-30.

24 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

=====
LC005168
=====

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO DOMESTIC RELATIONS -- DIVORCE AND SEPARATION

1 This act would authorize the chief judge of the family court to establish a program that
2 would require that any divorcing or separating parties with children participate in counseling and
3 educational programs to assist the children's transition through the proceedings.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

=====
LC005168
=====