

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 1995

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HOUSE BILL 225
Corrected Copy 2/22/95
Corrected Copy 2/23/95
Committee Substitute Favorable 4/13/95

Short Title: Divorce Educ. Program.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

February 20, 1995

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO DIRECT THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS TO
DEVELOP AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR DIVORCING COUPLES WITH
CHILDREN.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. (a) The Administrative Office of the Courts shall develop a program to educate and sensitize divorcing couples with children about the needs of their children during the separation and divorce process and after the divorce has been granted. Program development shall include the following:

- (1) An educational course that divorcing couples with children could voluntarily attend before obtaining an absolute divorce; the course should be designed to inform attendees about divorce and its impact on:
 - a. The children,
 - b. The family relationship, and
 - c. The couples' financial responsibilities for the children;

1 The course should also provide information to attendees on
2 resources available in the community for helping families affected by
3 divorce;

4 The course should not be so lengthy as to be unduly burdensome, but
5 should be sufficiently comprehensive in subject matter and information
6 to be useful to attendees;

7 (2) An administrative plan for the implementation of the program statewide
8 or in at least five selected judicial districts, as recommended by the
9 Administrative Office of the Courts; the administrative plan shall
10 include:

11 a. Estimates of the cost to operate the program in selected districts,
12 or statewide,

13 b. Estimates of reasonable fees that attendees would be charged,
14 and a method for waiving such fees in cases of severe financial
15 hardship,

16 c. Methods for evaluating the courses to ensure effectiveness, and
17 for certifying attendance,

18 d. How the program will be implemented at the local level, and

19 e. Other administrative matters identified by the Administrative
20 Office of the Courts as necessary for effective and efficient
21 program implementation;

22 (3) Identification of course providers with whom the Administrative Office
23 of the Courts would contract to make courses available at reasonable
24 times and for reasonable fees, and to ensure that courses will be
25 available with sufficient regularity to meet the needs of the judicial
26 district in which the program is offered; and

27 (4) Other matters considered by the Administrative Office of the Courts to
28 be important program components.

29 (b) The Administrative Office of the Courts shall ensure involvement and input
30 into the development of the program by persons who have experience in assisting
31 families through and after the divorcing process.

32 Sec. 2. The Administrative Office of the Courts shall report to the General
33 Assembly not later than May 1, 1996, on the program developed pursuant to Section 1 of
34 this act. The report shall include the following:

35 (1) Recommendations on whether the program should be implemented
36 statewide or in at least five targeted pilot districts, and the reasons for
37 the recommendation;

38 (2) The amount of State funds that will be necessary to support the
39 program; these amounts shall indicate costs to operate the programs
40 locally, and administrative costs for the Administrative Office of the
41 Courts to supervise and oversee program operation;

42 (3) Legislation that may be needed to facilitate program implementation
43 and operation; and

- 1 (4) Other recommendations the Administrative Office of the Courts
2 considers appropriate.
3 Sec. 3. This act is effective upon ratification.