

DATE: *December 8, 2022*

FROM: *Jill Burchardt, Manager Family Court Services/Tara Berry, Clerk of Court*

RE: *Fee Increase for Parent Education Course*

General Description:

Family Court Services is requesting an increase in the fee charged for parents to attend the parent education program, Partners in Parenting, offered by the office of Family Court Services to parents involved in the family court system, from \$10 to \$20 per parent.

Action Requested:

Motion to approve a resolution to increase the fee to attend the parent education program to \$20 per parent.

Procedural Steps:

(Show each level of committee and board approval needed, with meeting dates.)

Committee of Jurisdiction: JPS

Meeting date: January, 9 2023

Action taken: _____

Vote: _____

Other Committee: P&F

Meeting date: February 8, 2023

Action taken: _____

Vote: _____

County Board

Meeting date: February 2023 TBD

Background:

Last fee increase for attendance at the parent education program was approximately 2001. A motion to raise the fee from \$10 to \$20 was made at a judge's meeting and unanimously approved in October 2022.

Pursuant to Wis. Stat. 767.401, a court may require any parent involved in an action affecting the family or in an action to determine paternity of a child to attend an educational course that addresses the effects of a dissolution of marriage on the child, child development, family dynamics, parenting skills and co-parenting skills. Pursuant to Winnebago County Local Court Rule 3.20, all parents ordered to participate in custody mediation are required to participate in the parent education program offered by the Office of Family Court Services and all parents who are parties to a paternity action are required to attend the parent education program. Participation in parent education programming and mediation helps to reduce the case load in the family court system and reduces litigation overall.

Since 2010, the office of Family Court Services and the Child Support office shared responsibility for administering the parent education course. The child support office prepared/sent all court orders and prepared all informational packets for the paternity cases. The office of Family Court Services prepared all material for mediation clients, taught all classes (offered twice monthly) and prepared all invoices for all parents. The course fee of \$10/parent was collected and kept by the office of Family Court Services for all parents that attended, primarily to cover the cost of teaching the course and for the larger administrative load related to collection of fees.

In August 2021, the child support office relinquished all involvement in the parent education course, and the office of Family Court Services now provides all preparation, administration and teaching of the

twice monthly offered program. The expense involved with the course is not covered by the current fee of \$10/hour.

Policy Discussion:

- Average attendance (5-year average) is 245 parents every year, with a current total potential revenue of \$2,450
- The average salary of a mediator is \$33/hour. Support staff salary is currently \$18/hour.
- One mediator spends 4 hours each course between set up, teaching, and clean-up of class. Support staff spends approximately 2 hours each course preparing folders for course participants, checking clients into class, invoicing and data entry. Total salary expended per class is \$168.
- A course folder is provided to the parents that includes supplemental material that is paid for out of our current budget. This expense has increased, as the office of Family Court Services has assumed this expense in full in 2021. The budget for 2023 was prepared prior to this request, and does not include the amount needed to cover increase expense in office supplies. The 2022 budget for office supplies is already over, and this overage will continue into 2023 unless costs are recovered through a fee increase.
- Average parent attendance per class 10 people. At current rate of \$10/parent, we are not covering salary/expenses.
- At \$20/parent, costs would be covered, and surplus gained could result in providing parents more information in their resource folders.

Every county provides a different option for the required parent education course. Some nearby counties that have a Family Court Services office and offer similar, in-person programs proctored by the office of Family Court Services staff or by a local agency (ie: UW Extension staff):

Outagamie County \$10 (approved to increase to \$20 beginning in March 2023)

Fond du Lac County \$40/parent

Calumet County \$20/parent

Dane County \$40/parent

Dodge County \$20/parent

Other counties that offer mediation through contact workers or through their Department of Human Services offices typically require parents to attend a course on-line (ie: Children in the Middle, Children in Between). These on-line courses are \$40 to \$60/parent.

- These courses are not specific to Wisconsin nor are they specific to Winnebago County process and procedure.
- These courses were previewed by the staff at Family Court Services during COVID shutdowns, and were rejected as options due to the length, the inclusion of financial discussions (which are left out of current programming as this is not covered in mediation with our office) and due to the cost associated with them.

Raising the fee charged to parents for attending the course from \$10 to \$20 will put this county in-line with other, similarly situated counties, will cover the cost of staff salary for time spend providing this service and will generate additional revenue to improve the product provided to the parents.

Attachments:

N/A