Overview of UW-Extension Co-Parenting Parenting

<http://blogs.ces.uwex.edu/co-parenting>

**How does co-parenting programming look in Wisconsin? In 2014, 18 family living educators taught co-parenting a total of 124 times, reaching 1510 parents; our reach continues to expand.** We know that there is a lot of variety in how co-parenting classes are taught by UW-Extension Family Living Educators and their partners across Wisconsin. This variety can be seen in audience, materials used, methods used, length of class, and other factors. This variation has allowed educators to meet the specific needs of each county. At the same time, in order to show the impact our teaching is having across the state we need to know that each of us is teaching some core concepts within our co-parenting classes.

**What are the program objectives?**  The core concepts that we are teaching across the state have been identified through research as things that support children’s coping skills through the divorce/separation/child custody process. The core concepts are as follows.

1. Parents learn to encapsulate conflict (keep children form witnessing parental conflict).
2. Parents learn why and how to avoid putting children in the middle of adult relationships.
3. Parents learn how to utilize a business-like, emotionally neutral style of communication with the other parent that can decrease conflict and facilitate decision-making that supports children’s wellbeing.
4. Parents learn to support the role of the other parent in the child’s life.
5. Parents learn the value of a written, agreed-upon Parenting Plan.

**Content? Delivery model (i.e., number of sessions, in-person, online, dosage)** There are probably as many ways to teach the core concepts as there are counties in Wisconsin, providing lots of flexibility to local educators. The important thing is that educators can clearly identify where and how each of the core concepts is addressed within the program they offer. This enables educators to use the standard end-of-session questionnaire that has been developed for use with our co-parenting programs. While we would like to see all Family Living Educators teaching the five core concepts within the co-parenting class, educators also include other things within the class they teach, depending on local needs. Length of programs varies from two to eight hours, with some programs taught in one session and some taught over multiple sessions. Counties are offering the course as a face-to-face model, with some counties allowing participation in an on-line model (typically, the Children in Between course out of Ohio) in special circumstances. Some programs use the Parents Forever Parent Handbook as the basis for the materials shared in the program, while other programs have created their own set of materials. A few counties offer a children’s program in conjunction with a program for the parents.

**What’s the research and evaluation model (i.e., retrospective pre/post, pre/post follow-up, etc.)?**

All UW-Extension Family Living Educators who are teaching co-parenting are strongly encouraged to use the evaluation materials developed by the Co-Parenting Impact Workgroup. These evaluation tools are accessible through our website, <http://blogs.ces.uwex.edu/co-parenting>. The tools consist of an End-of-Session Questionnaire, available to be printed or to be completed online through Qualtrics, as well as a 1-2-month Follow-up Questionnaire, also available to be printed or completed online through Qualtrics.