

Terrific Outreach Programs That You Can Steal!

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From Patent Wars to Co-Parenting

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Introduction

The Young Lawyers Section and the Family Law Section of the Arkansas Bar Association joined forces in a project designed to educate the public, attorneys and judges about the long-lasting damages caused to children when parents feud during and after divorce. "Parent Wars" a video and "From Parent Wars to Co-parenting," an accompanying booklet resulted. The video includes re-enactments of hostile exchanges between parents, interviews with judges, therapists, psychologist and children. Realistic story lines are included in an effort to make the video appeal to the public. The video also includes discussion on co-parent and mediation that may serve as alternatives to protracted litigation. The handbook tracks the subjects addressed in the video and provides a listing of professional resources available to divorcing parents and the children involved.

Need

Judges across the state recognized that domestic cases were becoming more and more contentious. Practitioners shared in this concern. A group of school counselors concurred that children involved in a contentious divorce proceeding were more likely to struggle in the classroom and in their relationships with classmates. No formal study was conducted.

Implementation

First, an original educational video with original music was produced. Multiple copies of the video were distributed to Arkansas judges, mediators and attorneys. An accompanying booklet was published entitled "From Parent Wars to Co-Parenting" and distributed as well. "PARENT WARS" was aired on the statewide educational network (Arkansas Educational Television Network) with a panel discussion following.

The video aired on the Arkansas Educational Television Network on June 22, 2004. A panel discussion included two judges, the executive director of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Commission, a social worker, and the video's producer and an opportunity for viewers to call-in followed. The I_MAX Theater has a special showing of the video. Video and booklet copies were distributed statewide to judges, mediators, and lawyers at judicial conferences, and the Arkansas Bar Association annual and midyear meetings.

Time Table

This project was initiated when grant applications were filed by the producer who is an Arkansas Bar Association member and a member of the Family Law Section. The project continued with filming interviews and re-enactments from July 2000 through the time editing was begun. The

final version was completed and aired on June 22, 2004. The video producer and director worked at least 40 hours each. The booklet took at least 25 hours. Time at meetings to advertise and distribute the video and booklet took at least 15 hours. Volunteer time by the actors and interviewees would be at least 40

Budget

The budget was \$34,900 to produce the "PARENT WARS" video; \$3,050 to air it on Arkansas Educational Television Network, for the premiere and for the panel discussion; and \$2,000 to print and distribute "From Parent Wars to Co-Parenting."

Funding was through grants from the Arkansas Bar Foundation, the Arkansas Dispute Resolution Commission, the Arkansas IOLTA Foundation, the Arkansas Bar Association Young Lawyers Division and Family Law Section, and the Arkansas Public Information Committee.

Results/Evaluation

The feedback from judges, lawyers and mediators has been overwhelmingly positive. The producer has spoken with parents about the dramatic effect it has made on them. The goals are being met.

Other Information

Distribution has been through bar association meetings, judicial conferences, dispute resolution conferences, and airing the video on television.

Availability

Since the material is not state-specific, it is easily adaptable by other bar association.

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