

**Last reviewed:** January 2021

**Intervention website:** <https://extension.umn.edu/courses-and-events/parents-forever-online>

# GUIDEBOOK INTERVENTION INFORMATION SHEET

## Parents Forever

Please note that in the 'Intervention summary' table below, 'child age', 'level of need', and 'race and ethnicities' information is **as evaluated in studies**. Information in other fields describes the intervention as **offered/supported by the intervention provider**.

Intervention summary	
<b>Description</b>	Parents Forever is a parenting intervention for divorced/separated (or divorcing/separating) parents with a child between the ages of 0 and 18. It is delivered by a trained facilitator to groups of up to 15 parents over three sessions lasting four to eight hours each.
<b>Evidence rating</b>	2
<b>Cost rating</b>	1
<b>Child outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supporting children's mental health and wellbeing<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Improved emotional wellbeing</li><li>- Improved prosocial behaviour</li><li>- Improved peer relations.</li></ul></li><li>• Preventing crime, violence and antisocial behaviour<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Improved behaviour.</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Child age</b> (population characteristic)	Not reported
<b>Level of need</b> (population characteristic)	Targeted Selected

## Foundations Guidebook – Intervention information sheet

Visit the Foundations Guidebook | [www.foundations.org.uk/guidebook](http://www.foundations.org.uk/guidebook)

Intervention summary	
<b>Race and ethnicities</b> (population characteristic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hispanic</li><li>• Mixed ethnic background</li><li>• White.</li></ul>
<b>Type</b> (model characteristic)	Group
<b>Setting</b> (model characteristic)	Community centre
<b>Workforce</b> (model characteristic)	The practitioner who delivers this intervention is a facilitator with no qualification requirements beyond intervention training
<b>UK available?</b>	No
<b>UK tested?</b>	No

## Model description

Parents Forever is a parenting intervention for divorced or separated parents with a child aged between 0 and 18 years.

Parents Forever is available in a variety of formats. This description and intervention assessment relates to the eight-hour version that is delivered by facilitators to groups of 15 parents. The length of the sessions depends on the day of the week it is held. For example, it could be delivered in one eight-hour day if delivered on a Saturday, or in two four-hour sessions if held on a weeknight.

The purpose of the Parents Forever intervention is to help parents understand the issues children face when parents separate or divorce, and to provide parents with the motivation and skills to help them co-parent effectively in a way that supports their child's needs.

The Parents Forever content includes five consecutive components:

- **Course Introduction:** this brief session is designed to introduce parents to the intervention and give them an overview of what to expect during the course.
- **Taking Care of Yourself:** this session helps parents understand and embrace that they need to take care of themselves, first, in order to effectively help their children through a family transition.

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- **Taking Care of Your Children:** this session helps parents assess where their children are at and what they need, and find the strengths and resources needed to bring both parents and children through the transition.
- **Being Successful with Co-parenting:** this session helps parents explore co-parenting and skills that will help them successfully form a parenting partnership with their children's other parent.
- **Parents Forever Course Conclusion:** this brief session is designed to conclude the intervention by introducing parents to different paths they may take in the future.

Parent learning is supported through self-reflection, group discussion, interactive exercises (like video and follow-up activity), self-assessment, and action planning.

### Target population

<b>Age of child</b>	0 to 18 years old
<b>Target population</b>	Parents of at least one child aged 0 to 18 years who are divorced/separated, or divorcing/separating

Please note that the information in this section on target population is as **offered/supported by the intervention provider**.



## Theory of change

Why		Who	How	What		
Science-based assumption	Science-based assumption	Science-based assumption	Intervention	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental separation, divorce, and the immediate time afterwards represents a stressful transition in the family lifecycle</li> <li>• Parental separation is known to increase the risk of child emotional and behavioural problems during childhood and adolescence.</li> </ul>	<p>Avoiding conflict and working effectively as co-parents can reduce the stress children experience during parental divorce and separation.</p>	<p>Separating parents can benefit from advice on improving the co-parenting relationship and reducing inter-parental conflict.</p>	<p>Parents learn to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work effectively as co-parents while living apart</li> <li>• Reduce inter-parental conflict</li> <li>• Support their children's needs through active listening skills</li> <li>• Encourage positive child behaviour</li> <li>• Implement age-appropriate discipline.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents are better able to work effectively as co-parents</li> <li>• Families are better able to manage conflict</li> <li>• Parents experience improved wellbeing</li> <li>• Parent–child interaction improves.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families are better able to manage post-separation</li> <li>• Children's emotional wellbeing is supported</li> <li>• Children's behaviour improves.</li> </ul>	<p>Children are at less risk of emotional and behavioural problems.</p>



## Implementation requirements

<b>Who is eligible?</b>	Parents of at least one child aged 0 to 18 years who are divorced/separated, or divorcing/separating.
<b>How is it delivered?</b>	Parents Forever is of eight hours' duration and is delivered in three sessions of varying duration by facilitators to groups of 15 parents.
<b>What happens during the intervention?</b>	<p>The purpose of the Parents Forever intervention is to facilitate awareness of issues faced by children when parents separate or divorce, and to provide parents with the motivation and skills needed to communicate and co-parent together, so as to best help their children cope with the separation process.</p> <p>The Parents Forever course covers topics such as Taking Care of Yourself, Taking Care of Your Children, and Being Successful with Co-parenting. The activities of the intervention include self-reflection, group discussion, interactive exercises (like video and follow-up activity), self-assessment, and action planning.</p>
<b>Who can deliver it?</b>	The practitioner who delivers this intervention is a facilitator with no qualification requirements beyond intervention training.
<b>What are the training requirements?</b>	The practitioners have four hours of programme training. Booster training of practitioners is not required.
<b>How are practitioners supervised?</b>	Supervision of practitioners delivering the intervention from the host agency is determined by the host site.
<b>What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?</b>	<p>Intervention fidelity is maintained through the following processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training manual</li> <li>• Other printed material</li> <li>• Other online material</li> <li>• Programme Agreement form.</li> </ul>
<b>Is there a licensing requirement?</b>	No



## Implementation requirements (Cont.)

<b>*Contact details</b>	<p>Contact person: Ellie McCann; Kate Welshons</p> <p>Organisation: University of Minnesota</p> <p>Email address: <a href="mailto:mccan023@umn.edu">mccan023@umn.edu</a>; <a href="mailto:wels0107@umn.edu">wels0107@umn.edu</a></p> <p>Website: <a href="https://extension.umn.edu/courses-and-events/parents-forever-online">https://extension.umn.edu/courses-and-events/parents-forever-online</a></p> <p>*Please note that this information may not be up to date. In this case, please visit the listed intervention website for up to date contact details.</p>
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## Evidence summary

Parents Forever’s most rigorous evidence comes from a single comparison group study conducted in the United States consistent with Foundations’ Level 2 evidence strength criteria.

This study observed statistically significant improvements in Parenting Forever parents’ reports of their child’s emotional wellbeing, prosocial behaviour, conduct problems, and problems with peers than parents not receiving the intervention. Parenting Forever parents were additionally more likely to report improved positive co-parenting alliance, improved physical, psychological, and environmental wellbeing, increased self-efficacy, and improved parenting practices (including reduced inconsistent discipline and reduced poor supervision) in comparison to parents not receiving the intervention.

Parents Forever has preliminary evidence of improving a child outcome, but we cannot be confident that the intervention caused the improvement.

## Search and review

	Number of studies
<b>Identified in search</b>	5
<b>Studies reviewed</b>	1
<b>Meeting the L2 threshold</b>	1
<b>Meeting the L3 threshold</b>	0



	Number of studies
<b>Contributing to the L4 threshold</b>	0
<b>Ineligible</b>	4

## Individual study summary: Study 1

Study 1	
<b>Study design</b>	Comparison group study
<b>Country</b>	United States
<b>Sample characteristics</b>	222 parents, including 80 participants who were court-mandated to attend Parents Forever by a local judge within 60 to 90 days of filing for divorce, and 142 similar divorcing parents in the comparison group
<b>Race, ethnicities, and nationalities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White (Intervention group: 93.8%; Control group: 63.4%)</li> <li>• Mixed racial background (Intervention group: 2.5%, n = 2; Control group: 11.3%)</li> <li>• Black/African American (Intervention group: 0%; Control group: 12%)</li> <li>• Hispanic/Latino (Intervention group: 1.3%; Control group: 7%)</li> <li>• Asian (Intervention group: 0; Control group: 4.9%, n = 7)</li> <li>• American Indian/Alaskan Native (Intervention group: 0; Control group: 1.4%).</li> </ul>
<b>Population risk factors</b>	Parents were all either divorced/separated or divorcing/separating. The parents in the intervention group had been court mandated to attend Parents Forever, resulting from their involvement in legal proceedings for divorce/separation.
<b>Timing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline</li> <li>• 3 months after baseline.</li> </ul>
<b>Child outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved child emotional symptoms (parent report)</li> <li>• Reduced child conduct problems (parent report)</li> <li>• Reduced child peer problems (parent report)</li> <li>• Improved child prosocial behaviour (parent report).</li> </ul>
<b>Other outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved positive coparenting alliance (parent report)</li> <li>• Improved adult self-efficacy (parent report)</li> </ul>



Study 1	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved adult physical health (parent report)</li> <li>• Improved adult psychological health (parent report)</li> <li>• Improved adult environmental health (parent report)</li> <li>• Improved positive parenting (parent report)</li> <li>• Reduced inconsistent discipline (parent report)</li> <li>• Reduced poor supervision (parent report).</li> </ul>
<b>Study Rating</b>	2
<b>Citation</b>	Becher, E. H., McGuire, J. K., McCann, E. M., Powell, S., Cronin, S. E. & Deenanath, V. (2018) Extension-based divorce education: A quasi-experimental design study of the Parents Forever Program. <i>Journal of Divorce &amp; Remarriage</i> . 59 (8), 633–652.

## Brief summary

### Population characteristics

This study included 222 parents, including 80 participants who were court-mandated to attend Parents Forever by a local judge within 60 to 90 days of filing for divorce, and 142 similar divorcing parents in the comparison group who were recruited from an online workforce platform. The comparison group were included in the study if they had recently filed for divorce, had minor children, and had not been mandated to a divorce education programme.

The intervention group consisted of 80 participants in Minnesota, 93.8% of whom were White and 58% of whom were female. 70% of the intervention condition participants were in full-time employment and 26% earned less than \$1,500 per month. The average length of the reported relationship with their co-parent was 13.29 years with a range of 2 years to more than 20 years. All participants in the intervention condition had been court-mandated to attend the Parents Forever intervention after filing for divorce.

The comparison group were recruited through the Qualtrics Panels survey workforce recruitment platform, and participants could be living anywhere across the country. The group consisted of 142 participants who had recently filed for divorce, who had minor children, and who had not been mandated to a divorce education programme. The comparison group was more ethnically diverse, with 63.4% White participants, 12% Black/African American, 11.3% from a mixed racial background, and fewer than 10% from other minoritised ethnic communities (listed in full in table above). 56.2% of the sample were female, 69.7% worked full-time, and 19% earned less than \$1,500 per month. The average length of relationship reported with their co-parent was 9.41 years.

The demographic characteristics, including age and gender, of the children of parents participating in this study is not reported.





## Study design

This study utilised a non-equivalent comparison group design. Participants in the intervention group were parents who had been mandated to attend a Parents Forever class in a county where a local judge ordered parents to attend a class within 60 to 90 days of filing for divorce.

Participants in the comparison condition were recruited through the Qualtrics platform, which is an online workforce survey service. Participants self-selected into the study through answering a series of questions. Participants who had recently filed for divorce, who had minor children, and who had not been mandated to a divorce education programme were invited to participate.

The study refers to attempts to match participants between groups but does not describe how matching was conducted. Baseline measures of outcomes are not presented for each group, therefore it is not possible to verify whether the two groups were equivalent on these variables at the outset. In addition, some demographic variables such as ethnicity and parent education appear to be considerably different between the conditions. Also, the participants in the intervention group had been mandated to take the course and all those in the control group were not mandated to take the course, therefore some baseline non-equivalence is integral to the design.

## Measurement

Measurement took place at baseline and three months after baseline. The recruitment into the study and delivery of the intervention took place over a 12-month period, so the baseline and three-month follow-up assessments were not completed simultaneously by all parents. The intervention group also completed a post-intervention assessment. All measures used were parent reported.

- **Parent report** measures included the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire, World Health Organization's (WHO) Quality of Life Brief Scale, the New General Self-Efficacy Scale, the Parent Adaptation of the Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale, and the Parenting Alliance Inventory.

## Study retention

Within the intervention group, 189 participants completed baseline assessment. 115 participants completed post-intervention assessment (39% attrition) and 98 participants completed the three-month follow-up (48% attrition from baseline). However, only 80 participants completed all three timepoints and so were included in the study. The overall dropout rate for the intervention group from baseline assessment to inclusion in the study was therefore 58%.

Within the comparison group, 451 participants completed the initial presurvey and 150 participants completed the three-month follow-up, resulting in a 67% attrition rate. The comparison group did not complete an assessment at the post-intervention timepoint.

The study does not report on differences between attriters and remainers. The study does not include participants who completed baseline assessment but failed to complete further data collection within the stated sample size.



## Results

### *Data-analytic strategy*

Only participants from both groups who completed all assessment points were included in the analysis (baseline, post-intervention, and three-month follow-up for the intervention group, and baseline and three-month follow-up for the comparison group).

For each condition, unstandardised residuals were calculated. Independent samples t-tests were then conducted to compare the unstandardised residuals between the conditions on each of the outcome measure. For the intervention condition, post-intervention and three-month follow-up were used as Time 1 and Time 2, whereas for the comparison condition the baseline assessment and three-month follow-up were used.

### *Findings*

Overall, the study identified statistically significant positive impact on a number of child outcomes for the Parents Forever group, compared to the control group, including:

- Improved child emotional symptoms (parent report)
- Reduced child conduct problems (parent report)
- Reduced child peer problems (parent report)
- Improved prosocial behaviour (parent report).

There were also a number of positive outcomes for parents, including:

- Improved positive coparenting alliance (parent report)
- Improved adult self-efficacy (parent report)
- Improved adult physical health (parent report)
- Improved adult psychological health (parent report)
- Improved adult environmental health (parent report)
- Improved positive parenting (parent report)
- Reduced inconsistent discipline (parent report)
- Reduced poor supervision (parent report).

However, in the study, the Parent Forever parents reported a decline in co-parenting alliance and in their child's prosocial behaviour, as compared to the comparison group.

### *Limitations*

Treatment and comparison groups were not generated by sufficiently robust methods, resulting in inequivalent groups. For the intervention condition, post-intervention and three-month follow-up were used as Time 1 and Time 2, whereas for the comparison condition the baseline assessment and three-month follow-up were used as Time 1 and Time 2.



## Study 1: Outcomes table

Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
<b>Child outcomes</b>					
Emotional symptoms	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire – subscale (parent report)	Not reported – marginal positive effect	Yes	209	Follow up (3 months post-baseline)
Conduct problems	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire – subscale (parent report)	Not reported – positive effect	Yes	208	Follow up (3 months post-baseline)
Hyperactivity	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire – subscale (parent report)	Not reported	No	183	Follow up (3 months post-baseline)
Peer problems	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire – subscale (parent report)	Not reported – positive effect	Yes	211	Follow up (3 months post-baseline)
Prosocial behaviour	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire – subscale (parent report)	Not reported – marginal negative effect	Yes	209	Follow up (3 months post-baseline)



Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
<b>Parent outcomes</b>					
Positive coparenting alliance	Parenting Alliance Inventory – alliance subscale (parent report)	Not reported – marginal negative effect	Yes	220	Follow up (3 months post-baseline)
Negative coparenting relationship	Parenting Alliance Inventory – conflict subscale (parent report)	Not reported	No	210	Follow up (3 months post-baseline)
Self-efficacy	New General Self-Efficacy Scale (parent report)	Not reported – positive effect	Yes	220	Follow up (3 months post-baseline)
Physical health	World Health Organization's (WHO) Quality of Life Brief Scale – Physical wellbeing subscale (parent report)	Not reported – positive effect	Yes	215	Follow up (3 months post-baseline)
Psychological health	World Health Organization's (WHO) Quality of Life Brief Scale – Psychological wellbeing subscale (parent report)	Not reported – positive effect	Yes	214	Follow up (3 months post-baseline)



Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Social health	World Health Organization's (WHO) Quality of Life Brief Scale – Social wellbeing subscale (parent report)	Not reported	No	217	Follow up (3 months post-baseline)
Environmental wellbeing	World Health Organization's (WHO) Quality of Life Brief Scale – Environmental wellbeing subscale (parent report)	Not reported – positive effect	Yes	216	Follow up (3 months post-baseline)
Positive parenting	Alabama Parenting Questionnaire – positive parenting subscale (parent report)	Not reported – marginal positive effect	Yes	216	Follow up (3 months post-baseline)
Inconsistent discipline	Alabama Parenting Questionnaire – Inconsistent discipline subscale (parent report)	Not reported – positive effect	Yes	210	Follow up (3 months post-baseline)
Poor supervision	Alabama Parenting Questionnaire – Poor supervision subscale (parent report)	Not reported – positive effect	Yes	139	Follow up (3 months post-baseline)

## Other studies

The following studies were identified for this intervention but did not count towards the intervention's overall evidence rating. An intervention receives the same rating as its most robust study or studies.



Becher, E. H., Cronin, S., McCann, E., Olson, K. A., Powell, S., & Marczak, M. S. (2015) Parents Forever: Evaluation of an online divorce education program. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*. 56 (4), 261–276. **This reference refers to a pre-post study, conducted in the USA.**

Brotherson, S. E., White, J. & Masich, C. (2010) Parents Forever: An assessment of the perceived value of a brief divorce education program. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*. 51 (8), 465–490. **This reference refers to a pre-post study, conducted in the USA.**

Brotherson, S. E., Rittenbach, C. & White, J. M. (2012) Impacts of Parents Forever on parental behavior and adjustment during divorce: A short-term follow-up evaluation study. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*. 53 (4), 267–291. **This reference refers to a pre-post study, conducted in the USA.**

Cronin, S., Becher, E. H., McCann, E., McGuire, J. & Powell, S. (2017) Relational conflict and outcomes from an online divorce education program. *Evaluation and Program Planning*. 62, 49–55. **This reference refers to a pre-post study, conducted in the USA.**

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**Note on provider involvement:** This provider has agreed to Foundations’ terms of reference (or the Early Intervention Foundation’s terms of reference), and the assessment has been conducted and published with the full cooperation of the intervention provider.