

## CHILDREN FIRST PROGRAM

The Children First Program is an educational seminar for divorcing parents as required by Supreme Court Rule 924. Participants meet in a group of 25 to 30 persons, with a group moderator. Group discussion is facilitated by viewing short videotaped examples of interactions which occur frequently during dissolution proceedings, and which have negative, often hurtful, effects on children. The most important aim of discussion is to focus attention on the feelings of the children involved, rather than on the problems, or feelings, of the parents. Neither spouses nor children are allowed to attend with either parent.

Parties seeking a dissolution of marriage must participate in a Children First Program, except in the following instances:

- (1) parties do not have a child under the age of 17 years;
- (2) a party who is a step-parent;
- (3) a party who resides outside of the State of Illinois;
- (4) a parent who does not enter his or her appearance in the proceeding;
- (5) a parent who has previously attended Children First.

You may visit the Children First Foundation website at [www.children1stfoundation.org](http://www.children1stfoundation.org). This website allows you to take the course online. It will be your responsibility to pay for the costs of this program. Please note that you will need to provide my office with the Certificate of Completion that will be printed once the course is completed.

Participants can schedule a place in the most convenient group by calling 1-800-363-5237. Locations include: Rend Lake College, Ina, IL; Fairfield Community College, Fairfield, IL; John A. Logan Community College, Carterville, IL; First United Methodist Church, Carmi, IL; Mt. Carmel Public Library, Mt. Carmel, IL; Rend Lake College Market Place, Mt. Vernon, IL; Our Savior Lutheran Church, Lawrenceville, IL.

The cost of the program is **\$100** per person, which must be paid by a money order or a certified bank check made out to "Children First", at the time of the first session, **no personal checks or cash**. A person is exempted from the fee if his or her income falls below the Federal Poverty Level Guidelines or if they are receiving assistance through Land of Lincoln.