

Executive Summary

Purpose: This report details a research project contracted by the Foundation for Families in Transformation (FITT) that investigates divorce, separation and/or loss programs for children, youth and parents.

Methods: Eleven programs were selected from a preliminary report and included the programs currently offered by FITT. Materials for the programs were collected and six features were examined. These included:

- **Format of program** – duration, group size and categories, session routine, discussion questions, program basis, type of clientele, teaching style and confidentiality.
- **Topics**
- **Materials need to facilitate program**
- **Provider role** – training, manuals, roles, experience and user friendly rating.
- **Costs**
- **Program Support** – research/evaluation, support, age of program, creator and continued evaluation.

Results: Program Summaries

Rainbows, Sunbeams, and Spectrum:

Format: These programs serve children ages 3 – 18 with 12 weekly sessions (25 – 60 minutes long) and 1 – 2 celebrate me days. There are 3 – 8 children/group and the sessions have a regular routine. The majority of the discussion questions are open ended. These programs are community based, serve children going through many different types of family changes, utilize a process learning style and address confidentiality in the first session.

Topics: Rainbows and Spectrum address the following topic themes: feelings, self-esteem, divorce information, family, skill building, support, moving on, trust, belonging, and adjustment.

Materials: All three programs have a facilitator and a coordinator manual. There is a listening module for all volunteers and workbooks/journals for all participants except for the Sunbeams group. There are also story books, activities, games and evaluation forms provided. These programs require a lot of non-program specific materials.

Provider Role: Volunteers are trained by the registered agency and the materials do not indicate that extra experience/qualifications are required. The facilitators and coordinators each have their separate roles and many responsibilities, with a time commitment of 42 and 55 hours respectively. The manuals are very user friendly with great content and excellent instructions. The user-friendliness rating is 6.2 – 8.2.

Costs: Providers may purchase complete kits for Rainbows, Sunbeams an Spectrum at \$770.00, \$425.00, and \$805.00 respectively. Maintenance fees range from \$7.25 – \$18.50/participant.

Program support: These programs do have supportive research results (1 article cited), are internationally supported, and were first implemented in 1983 by Suzy Yehl-Marta. These programs also encourage evaluation and forms are provided.

Prism:

Format: This program has 12, two hour sessions and a celebrate me day retreat for small groups of 5 parents whose children are in Rainbows. The sessions are fairly structured, follow the same routine but there are no discussion questions for facilitators. The program can be community or church based depending on the needs of the providers, it utilizes a process learning style and confidentiality is addressed in the first session.

Topics: This program covers the following topic themes: feelings, parenting skills, impact of divorce on adults/children, family, support/resources, the self, acceptance, trust, god (religious version), forgiveness, and death.

Materials: There are facilitator and coordinator manuals, parent workbooks, and extra books/information for parents. There are no non-program specific materials.

Provider Role: There is training for volunteers provided by the registered agency (FFIT). Both the facilitator and coordinator manual lack a lot of useful information and instructions. There are similar responsibilities for Prism volunteers as there are for Rainbows and time commitment is the same. The user friendliness rating is 3.8 – 5.8.

Costs: The set up fees are \$41.00 for the manuals and maintenance fees are \$22/parent workbook.

Support: There is no literature to support this program; it has been around since at least 1987 and has the same creator as Rainbows.

Children in the Middle (Children's Version):

Format: This program has at least 8 sessions for children ages 3-15 whose parents are divorcing or separating. The program utilizes a process learning style, the majority of discussion questions are open ended and it is school based.

Topics: The program covers the following topic themes: feelings, divorce information, family, skill building, in the middle of conflict, support, and moving on.

Materials: This program needs very few materials. There are manuals, workbooks, a video and no non-program specific materials.

Provider Role: There is no training required, the facilitator manual has lots of content and great instructions. It is suggested that teachers and counsellors are facilitate the group. The user friendliness rating is 5 – 7.

Costs: The set up fees are between \$299 - \$510 and maintenance fees are \$1.30 - \$2.35.

Support: This program is supported by research results (1 article cited). It is also nationally supported in the USA and has received awards. The program has been around since at least 1995 and was created by J. Arbuthnot, Ph.D. and D. A. Gordon, Ph.D.

Children in the Middle (Parents' Version):

Format: This program has 1 or 2, two to three hour sessions for 6 – 18 newly divorced/separating parents. The program has activities that promote discussion, is community based, and utilizes both educational and process learning styles.

Topics: The program covers the following topic themes: money issues, co-parenting (emphasis), and parenting skills.

Materials: The program provides a PowerPoint presentation, a video, facilitator and coordinator manual, and workbooks and handbooks for parents. There are no non-program specific materials.

Provider Role: There is no training needed for facilitators, however a background in child development, clinical psychology, or family therapy is suggested but not required; personal or work experience are also beneficial. The manuals have a lot of content and instructions, especially for the coordinator. There are not too many responsibilities outlined and facilitators would have to commit to at least the duration of the program. User friendliness rating is 5.2 – 7.2

Costs: The set up fees are between \$299 - \$620 and maintenance fees are between \$1.85 - \$3.00.

Support: This program is supported by research results (3 articles cited). It is also nationally supported in the USA and has received awards. The program has been around since the late 1980's and early 90's and was created by J. Arbuthnot, Ph.D. and D. A. Gordon, Ph.D.

Children of Divorce Intervention Program:

Format: This program has 12 – 14, 45 – 60 minute sessions, for 4 – 8 children/group whose parents are divorced/separated. The program utilizes a process learning style, the majority of discussion questions are open ended, it is community/school based and confidentiality is addressed.

Topics: The program covers the following topic themes: feelings, self-esteem, divorce information, family, skill building (emphasis), support, review, parent-child relationship, trust, and sharing experience.

Materials: There are manuals for each age group, handouts within manuals, and games. There are lots of non-program specific materials.

Provider Role: Training is not required, but recommended and is provided by the program creators. This program has great manuals with lots of content and instructions for both facilitators and coordinators. Basic responsibilities are identified and volunteer commitment ranges from 15 – 41 hours. There are no qualifications needed for the volunteers. The user friendliness rating is: 3.8 – 5.8

Costs: The set up fees are \$250 and maintenance fees come from non-program specific materials.

Support: This program is supported by research results (4 articles cited). It is internationally supported, including Canada, and has awards and designations. The program was created in 1983 by J. Pedro-Carroll Ph.D.

ACT for the Children:

Format: This program has 2, three and a half hour sessions for large groups of up to 40 parents who are divorcing or separating. The two sessions are slightly different from each other as the first has the facilitator present and the second session has legal and mental health professionals present. The program is community based, utilizes an educational learning style. There are no discussion questions for facilitators but time is set aside for some discussion.

Topics: The program covers the following topic themes: Legal information, co-parenting, parenting skills (emphasis), and impact of divorce on adults/children.

Materials: This program does not need many materials. There is a manual, a powerpoint presentation and 2 videos that are purchased through other providers (Children in the Middle being one of them).

Provider Role: The manual is pretty comprehensive for the facilitator but not for the coordinator. Roles for presenters is outlined in the instructions but coordinating roles are not discussed very much; commitment is based on session lengths. The user friendliness rating is 4 – 6.

Costs: The set up fees are \$319+ (unknown video price) and there are no maintenance fees.

Support: This program is supported by research results (1 article cited) and has been available since at least 1998. It shares the same creator as the Children of Divorce Intervention program, J. Pedro-Carroll Ph.D.

Rollercoasters:

Format: This program has 8 sessions of unknown length, which serve small groups of children aged 5 – 12 that are going through family changes/transitions. It utilizes a process learning style and can be situated in religious or community centres, and/or schools.

Topics: Rollercoasters covers the following topic themes: feelings, divorce information, family, skill building, support, review, and change and loss.

Materials: There are not too many materials for this program. There is a leader guide and activity handouts which are available on a CD-Rom.

Provider Role: There does not appear to be a training requirement. Provider roles are not distinguished but a facilitator and someone to coordinate the program would be needed. The user friendliness rating is 5.8-7.8, however it should be noted that this is based on the minimal materials reviewed.

Costs: The set up fees are \$278 and maintenance fees are the cost of printing handouts.

Support: This program is supported by research results (1 article cited), was created by the Families First Inc., and has received a few awards.

Transparenting:

Format: This program has one, 4 hour session for parents going through family transitions (divorce/separation/custody), grandparents, and/or concerned family members. It is also good for professionals that work with these types of clients. This program utilizes an educational learning style with little time for discussion; it is community or church based, although there is no religious content.

Topics: The program covers the following topic themes with no particular emphasis on any of them: feelings, legal information, money issues, co-parenting, parenting skills, impact of divorce on children, family, support/resources, adjustment and making a change.

Materials: There are very few materials needed for this program. There is a video, powerpoint presentation, and parent handbook provided by the program creator. The providing agency will need a flip chart.

Provider Role: Facilitators will have to go through intensive training that is held in Atlanta (There is the option of bringing trainers to your site) and are recommended to have a masters degree. Time commitment would include length of program and training. User friendliness rating is 2.75 – 4.75.

Costs: The set up fees range between \$995 - \$1295 and maintenance fees are between \$80 - \$465 depending on quantities of handbooks ordered.

Support: This program is supported by positive results from a survey described in a brochure. It is also nationally supported in the USA, created by Families First Inc., and piloted in 1988.

Kids Talk about Divorce – Adolescent:

Format: This program has 8, 40-50 minute sessions for children aged 11 to 14 whose parents are currently or have recently gone through a divorce/separation and will participate in 3 – 5 activities per session. The program utilizes a process learning style, the majority of discussion questions are open ended, and it is highly school based.

Topics: The program covers the following topic themes: feelings, divorce information, family, in the middle of conflict, review and communication.

Materials: There are very few materials needed. There is a facilitator manual, handouts, feelings magnet and a few non-program specific materials.

Provider Role: Facilitator training is not required, but school employees (teachers or counsellors) are recommended to facilitate and coordinate the program. Responsibilities are listed and volunteers need to commit to at least the duration of the program. User friendliness rating is 5.4 – 7.4.

Costs: This program only needs the facilitator manual which is \$16.00. Maintenance costs will include the costs of non-program specific materials.

Support: This program is supported by research results (1 article cited) and is used by the state of Nebraska. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension created the program.

Parents' Forever:

Format: This program has 5, two to four hour sessions (12 hours total) for parents currently divorcing/separating. There are no discussion questions, however there is time set aside for discussion. The program is community based, utilizes an educational style learning process and confidentiality is addressed.

Topics: The program covers the following topic themes: legal information, money issues, co-parenting, parenting skills, impact of divorce on parents/children, family, abuse and STDs, moving on, and is divorce necessary?

Materials: There is a facilitator manual (Educator Guide) and a parent workbook for each of the 5 sessions. There is a coordinator type manual and overhead masters. There are no non-program specific materials.

Provider Role: There is training provided which can either be administered in person or online and it is highly recommended that facilitators have a background in adult education and conflict resolution. The 5 facilitator manuals have detailed instructions and great content. The program identifies a facilitator role with various responsibilities. A coordinator role is recommended to take on some of the roles the facilitator is responsible for. The user friendliness rating is 4.8 – 6.8.

Costs: The set up fees are \$395 and maintenance fees are \$25/set of 5 workbooks.

Support: This program is supported by research results (2 articles cited). It has been used by the state of Minnesota since at least 1999. It was developed at the University of Minnesota Extension Services and evaluation tools are available online.

Parents, Children, and Divorce:

Format: This program has one, 4 hour session for divorcing/separating parents. The program is community based and utilizes a process and educational learning style.

Topics: The program covers the following topic themes: feelings, legal information, money issues, co-parenting, parenting skills, impact of divorce on parents/children, family, support/resources, terms you need to know, and domestic violence.

Materials: There is only a facilitator guide and a parent handbook for this program.

Provider Role: There is no training or qualifications needed for facilitators. Time commitment is based on the length of the program. The user friendliness rating is 7-9.

Costs: There are no set up fees as the facilitator manual is free. Maintenance fees are \$7.50 - \$9.50/parent workbook depending on quantity ordered.

Support: There appears to be no literature that supports this program. It is used in the USA, mainly in Florida. The program was implemented in 1989 by N. Porter-Thal , a Supreme Court Certified Mediator and Licensed Mental Health Counsellor. Evaluation forms are provided in the back of the parent handbook.