



# Helping Your Children Put Divorce Behind Them

ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1991

The sharp rise in divorce rates alarmed the nation during the 1970s and early 1980s. Some researchers predicted that half of all children would spend part of their childhoods in single-parent homes. Others reported that children from single-parent homes had more problems in school. People worried that growing up in a single-parent home was risky business.

New studies, however, show little or no difference in the school achievement of children from similar backgrounds in one-parent and two-parent families. "From similar backgrounds" is the key phrase. The early studies failed to look at single-parent upbringing within a given income bracket.

Recent studies, however, do show divorce to be a traumatic event for children. But they also show that most children adjust well enough, after a time. Communication, warmth, and structure from adults are the things that build a strong family. And that applies to both single-parent and two-parent families.

What can you do about school if your family must deal with divorce? You can help make sure that school is a source of help. During the first weeks, let your children's teachers know about the crisis in your family. Teachers, too, can provide warmth and structure, and some extra words of encouragement. Don't forget, many teachers might have gone through divorce themselves! Schools may also put you in touch with support or counseling groups.

Teachers can recommend insightful library books for you and your children.

Expect the adjustment to take up to two years. Stay in touch with teachers and school counselors for that long - until everyone feels resettled and secure in the new family arrangement. Once things settle down, expect your children to do just as well as those

from two-parent families. Make sure that school people share your view.

Also, be sure to take part in as many school events as your schedule allows. That will show something to two groups: your children and their teachers. Taking part shows that you consider schooling so important that you save time for it in your obviously busy schedule.

Finally, remember this: Your child lives in a family that is a lot like many other families today. There is every reason to be optimistic about the outcome.

For more information, call the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools (ERIC/CRESS) toll-free at 1-800/624-9120. We can help direct you to other resources. To find out more about the ERIC system and its varied units and services, call ACCESS ERIC at 1-800/USE-ERIC. Staff of ERIC/CRESS prepared this article, based on information in the ERIC database.

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For more information contact:



**The Center for Parent Involvement** (FCPI) was funded by the U.S. Department of Education; Goals 2000, Educate America Act from 1994-1999. Guided by an advisory board of parents and professionals, the FCPI's goal was to tap the power of parents.

The FCPI gathered information on parent needs, coordinated the information, and created a series of resources organized by theme, including fact sheets for parents and professionals, "Beyond the Basics" resources, and resource identification lists. Many of the resources have been translated into Spanish language versions, and every effort has been made to preserve the meaning and flavor of the original English documents. This series of materials provides a wealth of current information for both parents and providers; the complete set of resources can be obtained in PDF format on the Department of Child and Family Studies Website at [www.fmhi.usf.edu/cfs/dares/fcpi](http://www.fmhi.usf.edu/cfs/dares/fcpi). The staff of the FCPI are hopeful that their work will continue to help children get ready to learn for many years to come.

The series' themes include:

- Family Empowerment
- Parent Involvement
- Parenting Support
- School Readiness
- Violence in the Lives of Children
- Transition to Kindergarten

The Center was one component of a project led by Hillsborough County Center of Excellence in collaboration with the Department of Child & Family Studies at USF's de la Parte Institute and the Florida Children's Forum. Other project partners include HIPPI (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters), Hillsborough County Head Start and Hillsborough County Even Start. For more information about these projects, call 813.974.4612.

Parent Support Series, Beyond the basics. helping your child put divorce behind them.

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