

**NOTICE OF MANDATORY PARTICIPATION IN FOC ORIENTATION AND
SMILE PROGRAM**

TO: All parties and attorneys in cases ending in -DM, -DS, -DC, -DP

FROM: Chief Judge Susan L. Dobrich, Cass County Courts

Effective November 1, 2019, the Plaintiff and Defendant in all new divorce, custody, family support, or paternity cases will be required to attend the SMILE Program administered by the Cass County Friend of the Court, along with an FOC Orientation session.

All parents with minor children with divorce, custody, support, and paternity cases are required to attend the SMILE program. Parties will receive a court order requiring FOC Orientation and SMILE Program participation. The program is available free of charge.

SMILE—Start Making It Livable for Everyone—is an educational program for separating or divorcing parents with children under the age of eighteen. It provides information to help parents better understand the effects of divorce. Although the SMILE program was developed with divorcing parents in mind, it provides valuable information that is helpful in assisting all parents in understanding the impact that family separation has on children.

The FOC Orientation portion of the program provides parents with an opportunity to learn about the FOC and the services it provides. FOC staff will be available to answer questions and provide information about FOC services and the court process. Please note that FOC staff are not attorneys, and may not provide legal advice. Parents will be provided with a folder of information that will help them understand the FOC and its services, as well as resources that are available to help navigate the court process.

A final judgment will not be entered by the Court until the party requesting the order and/or judgment has participated in the FOC Orientation and SMILE Program.

If you have any questions, please contact the Cass County Friend of the Court at 269-445-4436.