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## Family Service Launches Co-Parenting Program for Divorced or Separated Parents



Family Service Association of Bucks County recently launched Parenting Together, a co-parenting program for parents or caregivers experiencing problems with communication. These co-parenting classes are designed to help parents work together effectively to promote the best interests of their children following separation, divorce or other conflicts.

Judge Jeffrey G. Trauger of the Bucks County Court of Common Pleas identified the need to have co-parenting education available to Bucks County parents. In the courtroom, he regularly sees families dealing with high conflict situations, and the children are suffering. “Our community is in need of a tool that can help parents learn to communicate respectfully with one another for the benefit of their children,” said Judge Trauger.

“In families where there is a high level of conflict and animosity between parents, children are at a greater risk of developing emotional, social and behavioural problems, as well as difficulties with concentration and educational achievement.”<sup>i</sup> These are lasting effects that are negatively impacting children of all ages, yet research shows that children do better when parents can minimize conflict and cooperate on behalf of the child.<sup>ii</sup>

In working with Judge Trauger, Family Service heard about the need for co-parenting education and began developing Parenting Together. “Our goal as an agency is to meet the ever-changing needs of our

community. We learned that parents often don't know where to turn for help during high conflict situations. We thought we could help address this need, and we are pleased to provide this co-parenting service for the community," shared Audrey J. Tucker, Chief Executive Officer of Family Service.

Parenting Together instructors utilize an evidenced based curriculum to teach parents useful anger management, conflict resolution and communication skills to enhance their ability to parent cooperatively and effectively on behalf of their children's best interests. Specific class topics include understanding and managing anger, communicating feelings, establishing routines, family values, discipline, problem solving and building self-worth.

"The benefits of this type of program are twofold," said Judge Trauger. "Not only do the parents benefit, but the children do, as well."

Both group and private classes are available. Group classes are currently offered at Family Service's Langhorne office, though in time, the program will expand to Doylestown and Quakertown. Classes do not need to be attended as a couple. Parents, partners, grandparents, foster parents, and any other individuals who co-parent with another to provide direct care for a child can participate. There is a fee for this service, and all participants will receive a certificate of attendance.

To enroll in the next series of classes, contact Parenting Together staff at 215.757.6916, ext. 268 or [parentingtogether@fsabc.org](mailto:parentingtogether@fsabc.org). To learn more, visit [www.fsabc.org/parentingtogether](http://www.fsabc.org/parentingtogether).

**Photo Caption:** Francis J. (Frank) Sullivan, Managing Partner of Hill Wallack LLP's Yardley office; Jennifer Santiago, Family Strengthening Program Coordinator at Family Service; and the Honorable Jeffrey G. Trauger of the Bucks County Court of Common Pleas presented to the Bucks County Bar Association on August 3<sup>rd</sup> about the need for and benefits of co-parenting programs.

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Family Service Association of Bucks County is a nonprofit social service organization with locations throughout Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Family Service's mission is to listen, care and help. Every day. For more than 60 years, Family Service has been improving the lives of children and their families, doing whatever it takes to help them overcome obstacles and reach their full potential. Visit [www.fsabc.org](http://www.fsabc.org) to donate, volunteer or learn more about how Family Service helped more than 27,000 children, teens and adults last year.

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<sup>i</sup> Kelly, J. (2012) Risk and protective factors associated with child and adolescent adjustment following separation and divorce: Social science applications, Chapter 3. In Eds. K. Kuehnle & L. Drozd. Parenting Plan Evaluations: Applied research for the family court, Oxford University Press, New York.

<sup>ii</sup> American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (March 2011) Facts for Families: Children and Divorce.