

The Impact of Divorce on Children:
What School Counselors Need to Know

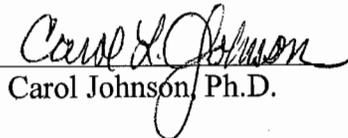
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ABSTRACT

Parents going through divorce may have children who experience increased likelihood for problems with social skills, behavior issues, and academic achievement. Parents who share similar views and practices for role expectations, discipline, and time spent with children may diminish the negative impact divorce often has on children. Divorced parents who live separately but focus on ways to create stability in the home, help smooth transitions between homes, and offer good communication help the social and emotional development of their children.

Divorce may impact the academic success of some students. It is important for school counselors to have an awareness of the warning signs that a student is struggling with home-life issues that carry over into the classroom. Strategies that school counselors may use to minimize the impact of a troubling divorce include support groups,

individual counseling, referral to community agencies, and effectively including and communicating with both sets of parents.

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Chapter I: Introduction

“To be separated from his mother is to lose a part of himself, as to be separated from a hand or foot” (Burns cited in Owusu-Bempah, 2007, p.1). Divorce is a recurrent event in the United States that has impacted more than one-third of America’s children (U.S. Bureau of Census cited in Owusu-Bempah, 2007). For many children, the effects of divorce can have instantaneous and long-lasting results.

According to Robert Hughes (2008), there are two factors influencing the rising divorce rates in the United States. The first factor is both men and women are relying less on one another for economic survival. As women gain status in the workplace, they often qualify for their own medical and retirement benefits enabling them to be less dependent on the male head of household. Women who are gainfully employed and self-sufficient may be more willing to dissolve a marriage because they are not perceived as a financially dependent spouse. Financial stability allows for the female head of household to have more flexibility to exit a broken marriage. Secondly, the “childless-by-choice” impact of birth control allows couples to divorce without worry for the emotional stress on a child. Couples without children may have less desire to stay in a failing marriage for the sake of the children if there are no children.

It is important to remember that as divorce rates continue to increase so does the likelihood that children of divorced parents may have a greater risk adjusting in areas of social relationships, educational achievement, psychological adjustment, self-concept, behavior/conduct, and social relations, according to Amanto and Keith (cited in VanderValk et al., 2005).

There have been numerous studies (Dykeman, 2003; Jeynes, 2001; Wallerstein, 2005), that have documented the impact divorce may have on children. Sun (cited in ValderValk et al., 2005) found children of divorced parents may have a lower sense of psychological well-being than children who grew up with intact families. Research also confirms that children of divorced parents may experience emotional problems such as loneliness and depression (Asetline & VanderValk cited in VanderValk et al., 2005).

Children may also feel the impact of divorce as it carries over into the classroom. “Studies comparing the school records of children from one-parent and two-parent families have found that children raised in one-parent homes have an increased risk of poor academic achievement” (Burns & Brassard cited in Hargreaves, 1991, p. 40).

Whitemarsh (2008) found that educators are often the first to notice a change in behavior when a family is in transition. Teachers have observed that some children from divorced families may show decreased functioning in academic performance and display oppositional behavior, or signs of anxiety and depression. Whitemarsh (2008) further noted diminishing ability to concentrate in class, declining attendance and willingness to participate in class may indicate a child is having a difficult time adjusting to a transition in family dynamics.

According to Hargreaves (1991), children’s resilience in a one-parent household is believed to be a significant indication of success in other areas of their lives, including academics. Similar to a domino effect, children under emotional heartache and stress at home often have emotions that interfere with concentration during the school day. Poor school performance often agitates the parent and the dominos continue to fall as the child loses self-confidence and experiences decreased performance in school. Children may

have a difficult time concentrating on school work from divorce-related stress occurring at home. Children may face unique challenges of completing homework assignments when organizing their homework, backpack, and paperwork between multiple homes.

According to Smith (1999), some children are flexible and adapt well to change largely due to implementing effective coping strategies, while other children may react in the opposite way. Children may lose confidence, blame themselves for the break-up, and see their parent's separation or divorce in a complicated way. The range of feelings that a child may encounter include: disbelief and denial, sadness, loss, loneliness, depression, anger, anxiety, fear, relief, and hope. Response to these feelings often results in different levels of intensity (Smith, 1999).

While some children may experience mild anxiety and sadness, others may feel more intense emotions. Smith (1999) also found that children's reaction to their parent's divorce varies based on the child's age. Older children may have more resilience than others due to their support systems, maturity level, and coping skills. There are certain expectations in response to divorce depending on the child's age. Younger children may have a more difficult time.

According to Robert Hughes (2008), limited details are known about the impact of divorce on children younger than two-years-of-age; however, there may be negative effects on toddlers if the relationship with their parent is greatly disrupted. Younger children may cry more than usual or may become clingy. If both parents stay dynamically involved in parenting, they can continue to build a healthy relationship with the child, and may reduce the amount of stress in the home. Children may become more agitated and clingy to one parent when the other parent is absent from the home. When the child

encounters the absent parent the child then may be more attached to that parent out of fear of his or her absence from the family (Hughes, 2008).

Three- to five-year old children of divorced parents have the tendency to be anxious and may resort to immature or aggressive behavior. Children may return to comforting blankets or familiar favorite toys. Children also may struggle with toilet training at this time. These behaviors can last for a lengthy period of time because children may be confused about the different living arrangements when shifted from one home to another (Hughes, 2008).

During the preschooler stage, children may become less cooperative in their play. Preschoolers who are experiencing separation or divorce in the family may spend more time playing by themselves than interacting with others. In social situations children may spend more time seeking attention and being close to adults. With time, most children begin to comprehend and adjust to their parent's divorce (Hughes, 2008).

School-age children from six- to eight-years of age may have a perception of what a divorce is, and are capable of coping with the transition. Children may grieve over the change in their family and may yearn for the absent parent.

Children who are nine- to twelve-years old somewhat understand the divorce and are generally able to keep both their feelings and behavior manageable. For this age group, anger is often the most powerful emotion. Children may physically act out their emotions and imitate family dynamics during play in order to cope with their feelings (Hughes, 2008).

By adolescence both boys and girls are likely to comprehend divorce more than younger children because of their maturity level. Hughes (2008) suggested adolescents

may feel they are competing with their parents when they see adults going on dates and becoming passionately involved. Adolescent girls are capable of being involved in premature sexual behavior which may increase the risk of teenage pregnancy. Hughs (2008) further found some adolescent males struggling with the stigma of divorce are more likely to be involved in criminal behavior while interacting with peers, and adolescent boys are equally as likely to participate in early sexual behavior as girls. Some mature boys take on the adult male role in the family and still other girls with strong coping skills become remarkably resilient young women because of their increased challenges and opportunities (Hughes, 2008).

According to Golden and Henderson (2007), the impact of separation or divorce can have negative consequence on adolescents if they do not understand what is happening within their families, and if they lack the essential coping skills to manage and adjust to the new changes in their lives. Coping skills may include communication about feelings, developing strategies to remain organized between homes, and not playing a messenger between parents. It takes a level of maturity to develop these coping skills. Parents also play an important role in easing the outcomes of divorce.

Carlson and Hines (cited in Dykeman, 2003) determined that parents can help make a smooth transition for their children during a divorce. Parents can present a reliable and cooperative parenting style when providing their children with discipline and behavior expectations. Putting the child in the middle and asking them to “spy” on the other parent or report back information regarding dating, finances, and life styles may hurt the child trying to cope with life in two different residences. Children tend to be

more resilient when their parents offer strategies such as joint-parenting, similar discipline styles and not competing for child-loyalty with gifts and presents.

Hargreaves (1991) documented behavioral issues and emotional problems exhibited by children proceeding their parents' separation or divorce. Hargreaves (1991) noted that children may frequently feel angry, bitter, apprehensive, frustrated, and even guilty. Children may respond to these major changes by becoming more moody or temperamental. Other children may react by becoming rebellious or by acting violently towards peers, siblings, or adults.

Wilkinson (cited in Hargreaves, 1991) found most children of divorced families are normal, healthy children who are experiencing a tremendously stressful situation. Parental separation, divorce, and marital conflict may cause behavioral problems that result in a need for psychological help for some children. Parents may also have different expectations and rules for their child presenting inconsistencies which may confuse the child. Research suggests that a child's adaption to successful transition depends on each parent maintaining a healthy relationship between one another and with the child (Hargreaves, 1991).

Wilkinson (cited in Hargreaves, 1991) reported children's stressors throughout divorce may include disorganized daily routines, change in parenting style, reduced family income, parental conflict, limited resources, and parental accessibility. Families can usually maintain and adapt to the short-term changes of divorce in a two- to three-year span.

According to Hertherington et al. (cited in Hargreaves, 1991), children display problems during a variety of stages of family deterioration including times during this

alteration period, either before parental separation, or directly subsequent to a parental separation. Children will sometimes experience delayed stress responses occurring years after a divorce in a form of post-traumatic stress (Hargreaves, 1991).

These issues further spill over into the school setting, raise concern for classroom teachers, school administrators and school counselors. Awareness of the stages of family transition, age-appropriate behavior plans, and support for the victims of fragmented families are topics helpful for school counselors to know when advocating for all children.

Statement of the problem

One-third of school age children in America experience changes in family dynamics that show up in the school setting. Indicators such as depression, decline in academic achievement, poor attendance, loss of confidence, and disorganization may signal adjustment issues pertaining to divorce in a child's home. School counselors are key players in helping children with personal issues, social needs, and academic success. Knowing human developmental stages, emotional needs during separation and divorce, and strategies to support children who are dealing with feelings pertaining to divorce are critical to the role of school counselors. The problem therefore becomes this: how can school counselors recognize warning signs for children struggling with divorcing parents and in turn help children whose parents are going through separation and divorce?

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this literature review is to gain a better understanding of the current research regarding the impact divorce has on children. Literature will be explored to determine strategies to assist children as they cope with the stress related to their

parents' separation or divorce. The literature review will be conducted during the fall of 2008.

Limitations and assumptions of the study

It is assumed that some children may be negatively impacted by divorce that may result in behavior problems, depression, conflict within families, and academic problems. The change in the child's functioning is assumed to be caused by divorce, but may also be caused by other reasons. It is assumed that the literature was from credible and reliable sources. The study is limited to the impact of divorce on school-age children. Although there may be additional issues of remarriage, blended, and step-family issues, this literature review will focus on families in divorce transition and the impact it may have on school-age children. Further limitations include a wide variety of literature and limited amount of time for the researcher.

Research questions

There are three research questions this study will attempt to answer.

1. What are the age-level anticipated reactions and warning signs children experience when the family is in transition related to separation or divorce?
2. What can school counselors do to assist students who are struggling academically, personally, and socially as a result of a family in divorce transition?
3. What recommendations does the literature present for school professionals to help children from divorced families most effectively?

Definition of terms

There are terms that need to be defined for further understanding on this topic.

Divorce- any formal separation of husband and wife according to established custom (Dictionary.com, 2008).

Transition- movement, passage, or change from one position, state, stage, subject, concept, etc., to another; change: *the transition from adolescence to adulthood* (Dictionary.com, 2008).

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

Divorce impacts children in many different ways. Literature detailing the effects of emotional, social and behavioral, and academic stressors of divorce that children may experience in the home and later spill over into the school classroom will be presented. Strategies for school counselors and recommendations for assisting children in the schools will be found at the end of the chapter.

There are many emotional variables that play a role in how a child feels prior to divorce during separation, throughout the process of a divorce, and after the divorce is finalized. Some impacts of emotional issues may occur long after the divorce happens. The impact a divorce has on a child are often influenced by the following factors: age (stage of development), gender, and maturity (Golden & Henderson, 2007).

Children's Feelings and Behaviors

Parental separation may negatively influence children in a variety of ways, and problem behavior of children and adolescents is a warning sign that a child is having trouble adjusting according to Amato and Simon (cited in VanderValk, Spruijt, Goede, Maas & Meeus, 2005). Children may be disruptive, misbehave, and ignore parent requests as a way of showing frustration or anxiety regarding the pending divorce.

Other researchers support the behavior and conduct warning signs mentioned previously, and add that the major effects of divorce on children are also found in areas of social relationships, educational achievement, psychological adjustment, self-concept, and social relations according to Amanto and Keith (cited in VanderValk et al., 2005).

Smith (1999) found children may try to hide their intense feelings of sadness and anxiety which may result in difficulty expressing feelings. Children may have difficulty expressing feelings which might make parents, siblings, and friends feel uncomfortable, frustrated or angry. Smith (1999) determined how children react to parental divorce varies based on their age.

Younger, less mature children act out and regress more than older children who are developmentally capable of understanding what is happening in the family (Smith, 1999). During this early stage, some children find it difficult to speak to their parents about how they are feeling and may seem uncomfortable talking about the divorce. Still other children are worried about one parent in particular and sometimes are hesitant to show their concern toward them. Loyalty issues may also surface during this stage if the courts pressure the child to choose which parent he or she wishes to reside with.

Age of Children and Response to Divorce

According to Spruijt et al. (cited in VanderValk et al., 2005), girls tend to internalize their emotions, whereas boys tend to act out emotions through externalized problem behavior. Most children are impacted by divorce in a variety of ways; however, particular age groups may suffer from specific reactions.

One-third of divorces occur when children are under the age of five. This is the age group with the most difficulty verbalizing feelings. When a baby is mirroring their parents' laughter or smiles, it is possible that babies can mimic similar sadness and anxiety when their parents feel those emotions also (Smith, 1999).

During middle childhood, both boys and girls may find it challenging to focus in school because of the stressors at home. Forgetting assignments, leaving homework at the

other parents' home, or daydreaming in school contribute to lack-of-focus in the classroom. Permission slips may go unsigned or are lost in the movement from half a week in one household and the remainder of the week with the other parent. It is a big responsibility to keep track of homework, paperwork, and assignments at this age with a family in transition.

Teenagers are generally a high-risk group during a family divorce. Teenagers are susceptible because they mourn as children; however, they are beginning to gain an understanding of the adult world and sometimes are conflicted in how they should show their emotions (Smith, 1999).

Smith (1999) explained there are many feelings teens have in reaction to divorce. Disbelief and denial result when teens feel divorce could never happen to their families. When the teen acknowledges that the separation is permanent, unhappiness and loss are the emotions most likely to follow. Sadness, loss, and loneliness result when grief is too devastating to comprehend. Sadness represents the loss of the two-parent home they are missing. Depression is the feeling of isolation from the world and the sensation of loneliness. Anger results when teens feel they have failed to keep the parents together. Teenagers may also feel ineffective, attacked, unloved, or insufficient as a result of the trauma of divorce (Smith 1999).

Smith (1999) further found teens may encounter guilt as they may blame themselves for their parents' decision to divorce. Anxiety, fear, and confusion often surface in some children as well but eventually, most will encounter feelings of relief and hope. In time, children accept they cannot change their parent's marriage situation and may realize they will no longer encounter anger, embarrassment, or confusion.

Parent and Child Bond

Wallerstein (2005) noted that the bond between parents and their children will transform during the breakup period and can bring about immediate emotional and behavioral changes. Parent-child relationships may continue to develop during these transitions resulting from changes in family dynamics. There is a relationship between changes in parental actions and mirrored changes in feelings and behaviors of children.

Changes in maternal depression for females may impact parenting response and practices, according to Granic and Sameroff (cited in Patterson et al., 2004). If a single mother is experiencing depression this emotion may be a significant influence on her discipline style, response to children's behavior or the time and the amount of attention given to a child. Depression in mothers and depression in children are intertwined.

Parenting practices can improve as soon as the parent becomes aware of the sadness and seeks professional help or treatment to parent effectively and successfully once again.

Jeynes' (2001) research indicated that most children recuperate from divorce within two or three years following the process of the divorce. When a child experiences divorce in the family, the stage of adjustment is swift. After the major changes, the child encounters post-divorce transition, and eventually, the child will reach a psychological equilibrium that is similar to children from intact families (Jeynes, 2001).

Academic Impact of Divorce

According to Dacey and Travers (cited in Dykeman, 2003), there are many contributing factors that impact children who have experienced divorce: the age and gender of the child at the time of the separation, the level of collaboration among the divorced or separated parents, and the intensity of conflict within the family. All of these

factors may influence the mental health of the child, and additionally may influence the child's academics. Poor attendance, decline in grades, and inability to concentrate are often warning signs that may show up in the classroom. Teachers may observe these behaviors and refer the child to the school counselor for help (Dykeman, 2003).

When children experience the trauma of divorce, their emotional state may impact interactions with their classmates. Students may wish to have alone-time to reflect and think about life at home. Other students may choose one or two close friends with whom they can identify and with whom they trust to talk to about the divorce. The level of motivation, focus, and emotion may be an indicator in how they are reacting to the divorce that is influencing their lives (Hargreaves, 1991)

Children of divorced parents may also see a change in academic success. According to Hargreaves (1991), children adjust more effectively, learn successfully, and misbehave least when home and school are both consistent, predictable and proactive in meeting the child's needs. A significant predictor of the child's academic success is continuing a consistent, cooperative, and beneficial relationship with both parents.

Some one-parent families can also put children at risk for academic difficulty. Children who struggle in the classroom may encounter themes related to grieving over their parents' separation, concern about financial problems at home, or living in stressful or emotionally tense households.

Carlson (cited in Dykeman, 2003) found children who have experienced a recent divorce in their family may have more difficulty academically at school than children from intact families. According to Hargreaves (1991), the number of years of schooling is

another significant indicator of academic success. Taking into account variables such as race, parent's education, and financial income, Hargreaves (1991) noted children in two-parent families completed more schooling than children who spent time in a one-parent family household, even if it was only short-term.

Children from one-parent families may have more difficulty adapting their behavior to teacher expectations than children from two-parent households. Teachers reported negative behavioral changes in two-thirds of the children after divorce. These changes consisted of an increase in impatience, inattentiveness, unhappiness, lack of concentration, and more need for attention from their teacher (Hargreaves, 1991). According to Wallerstein and Corbin (cited in Dykeman, 2003), when children experience divorce, they may also experience a significant impact upon their school performance.

Some children may experience long-lasting emotional effects into their adulthood that damage their ability to preserve relationships. The result of parental divorce shapes children emotionally and may impact self-esteem, future relationships, dating and marriage (Simons et al., cited in Dykeman, 2003).

Challenges of Less Income

Children from one-parent households tend to have less income and may also have fewer resources. Because money and time are characteristically more limited in one-parent households (Milne et al., cited in Hargreaves, 1991) some children may choose not to join band, cheer, sports or other activities or lab classes that require money or special equipment to participate due to limited income at home. School personnel who are aware of these needs should contact the school counselor to access resources to help the student.

The family may qualify for free or reduced lunch based on a reduction in income due to a recent divorce or separation. Scholarships can be established for family needs to help students stay active in extracurricular activities.

Perceptions of Children with Single Parents

Teachers may have pessimistic views concerning children from single-parent families. In some cases teachers might expect negative behavior from one-parent children and react to their behavior issues in a negative way. Teachers may also perceive children's intellectual ability in a stereotypical way as well, and teachers may also expect less from children who have encountered a parental divorce (Stedman et al., cited in Hargreaves, 1999).

According to Hetherington (cited in Hargreaves, 1991), children may experience mood changes, anger and frustration while at school and children from divorced parents may be more disorderly in class, have less proficiency in study habits, and be tardy or absent more frequently than children from two-parent families. Amato (cited in Hargreaves, 1991) suggested children in one-parent families may have more household tasks and chore responsibilities adding to their stress level than children from two-parent families.

Hetherington (cited in Hargreaves, 1991), indicated children who have behavior problems in the classroom tend to show less quality work in the classroom and have more unfinished homework assignments. Hetherington further found children in a single-parent family may be more likely to underachieve due to the anxiety related to the major changes within the family.

Parental Influences

Children are often more resilient when their parents offer dependable, constant, and similar parenting styles when providing their children with guidance, discipline, and expectations according to Carlson and Hines (cited in Dykeman, 2003). It is important for parents to put aside their personal conflicts while they are around their children and avoid including children in parental differences. Communication among divorced parents is essential and will require a business-like relationship without conflict in front of their children (Dykeman, 2003).

Strategies to Help Children of Divorce

According to Capuzzi (cited in Dykeman, 2003), there are Primary, Secondary and Tertiary levels of interventions for improved cognitive, affective, and behavior outcomes of divorce. The Primary level consists of programs that usually assist children in coping with understanding stages of divorce. These might include establishing counseling groups with students experiencing divorce at similar ages and grade levels. Helping students realize they are not alone, recognizing others have been through a divorce and survived, and raising awareness that there are common emotions that are generally experienced are topics a school counselor may wish to incorporate (Dykeman, 2003).

A Secondary level of intervention identifies programs offering services to help children who are at risk of experiencing harmful side effects of divorce. This might include Secondary interventions such as referrals to community based counseling centers, individual therapy, or family therapy that could be court-ordered. Parenting workshops

that guide adults from a dual-parent household to single-parent homes may be helpful. Children may participate in groups for families-in-transition in the school setting.

The Tertiary level program present services to children who recently experienced destructive cognitive and behavioral effects resulting from the divorce. Each child will experience his or her parents' divorce differently (Dykeman, 2003). Depending on custody battles, joint custody, or restraining orders, schools will need to be aware of legal documents that support the best interest of the child. School counselors provide services at the previous two levels of intervention, but the level of tertiary intervention usually occurs outside school. Instead, school counselors may provide referral to community resource agencies to assist with domestic situations, secure financial aid, and answer legal questions. School counselors can play an important part of the intervention program for children in need of these services.

Coping Skills

According to Golden and Henderson (2007), children of divorced parents may not clearly understand the rapid changes that are occurring within their families. It is essential that children learn the appropriate coping skills to handle and adjust to the new changes in their lives. Some children will benefit from group therapy. This often gives children a safe environment to discuss their feelings and concerns, while talking with other children who are also experiencing similar issues. Children need to understand that they are not alone in dealing with their feelings and that other children are experiencing divorce in their families as well. Children have a chance to learn how to be compassionate for other group members as well (Golden and Henderson, 2007).

Goals of group therapy often include having a chance to investigate how children feel about their parents' divorce, recognizing their feelings with other group members, and learning coping skills to manage their feelings in appropriate and effective ways (Golden and Henderson, 2007).

It is the parents' choice to divorce and children may or may not agree with nor understand the choices that parents make within their families; however, it is the parents' responsibility to assist their children in understanding and encouraging them to express their inner feelings. Children can more effectively adapt to the new changes if parents continue to be respectful and harmonious toward one another (Golden and Henderson, 2007).

It is important to let children talk about what they are feeling and share as many thoughts or questions as possible with their parents or school counselor. Parents need to listen to their children about their unique thoughts and feelings. It is also important for parents and school counselors to help children develop coping strategies to deal with their deep feelings about divorce (Golden and Henderson, 2007). Parents, children, teachers, and school counselors all need to work together to support the child throughout the stages of divorce to ensure academic, personal, and social growth.

Chapter III: Summary

This chapter will include a summary of the literature, offer recommendations for school counselors, and suggest further research on the topic.

Summary

As nearly one in three American children will experience the heartbreak of divorcing parents, it is helpful to know the impact divorce has on children. While many children move from a two-parent home to a single parent family, some do so with ease, while others experience new challenges. Some issues may result in decreased academic success at school and behavior problems at school and in the home. The less stress and trauma there is in the home, the easier the transition is for the child.

There are a variety of emotions during a divorce that can surface in different developmental stages of children. These emotions can affect relationships with others, mental states and academic success. Some younger children may experience anxiety and fear for the absent parent. As children get older, they may understand the conditions and terms of the divorce and may develop coping skills that help them through this difficult time.

Parents should provide consistency and structure in the home. While trying to minimize conflict, both parents should continue to keep in contact with the child on a regular basis, reduce stressors at home, and focus on ways to insure their child's academic success as well. Mutual scheduling, open communication, and both parents' involvement with school seem to be most effective strategies.

There are also suggestions that can reduce the negative impact of divorce on academic achievement at school. Some effective techniques that school counselors may

wish to use to ease the transition after divorce for children are group counseling, individual counseling, letting children discuss and understand their feelings, and helping children develop coping strategies throughout the transition. Communication with both parents is important to creating a mutual support system for the child.

Recommendations for School Counselors

It is critical for school counselors to be familiar with warning signs for children having difficulty coping with the stress of divorcing parents. Warning signs a child is having trouble adjusting to a divorce at home may include attendance and discipline issues, loneliness, depression, self-blame, and sadness. The following are recommendations for counselors to use with children of divorced parents.

Group counseling is a helpful support mechanism for children experiencing a divorce in the family. School counselors can facilitate discussion on feelings and offer coping strategies for the children to practice during the group. Some children may prefer individual counseling where they will receive one-on-one attention and may feel more comfortable voicing their thoughts.

School counselors can organize a parent meeting to explain some positive techniques to help smooth the transition after divorce for their child. The school counselor can also meet with the student and parents to organize an easy-to-read calendar that identifies what days the child goes where and what transportation will be used. This might help the child keep up with the day-to-day transitions between homes. Duplicate copies of grades, behavior contracts, and updates are also encouraged as that way both parents feel involved and included in parenting the child through school activities.

Counselors need to be aware of financial issues that may limit a child from having school lunch or participating in school activities. A reduction in family income during a divorce may change the family status enough that the children may qualify for reduced lunch prices, fee waivers for college testing, and college applications deposits. A counselor who communicates well with parents is open to information that can help a child with these needs.

Finally, school counselors can serve as a liaison between classroom teachers and the parents. If a child of divorced parents needs additional assistance, support or attention, the counselor may need to advocate for the child by partnering with the teacher and parents to resolve the student's needs during transition throughout the stages of divorce.

Recommendations for Further Research:

As family dynamics continue to change, further research could document the impact of separation and divorce of gay parents. Research to investigate the impact of same gender parents who divorce might elicit similar or different reactions from traditional parents. Also, more research should be considered to study the impact of divorce on culturally blended families, families of teen parents, adopted children with divorced parents, step-parents, or military families who are separated or experience divorce during difficult economic times or even military deployment. There are many variables that could impact children and their academic, social and emotional development where further research could provide new insight and strategies for counselors.

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