



ICFE
INSTITUTE FOR COUPLE &
FAMILY ENHANCEMENT

new ways
FOR families

BEHAVIORAL DECLARATIONS AND REPLIES

Behavioral Declarations provide your New Ways Counselors with brief information about the three most serious concerns each parent has about the other's parenting skills. Reply Behavioral Declarations indicate whether each parent agrees or not with the concerns of the other. These help the counselors help the parents, by knowing the issues from each parent's point of view, and how much agreement or disagreement there is.

These are the only declarations which may be seen by the New Ways Counselors in your case. In preparing these two declarations, you are encouraged to seek the assistance of a lawyer to help you provide the most useful information and possibly to help settle your case. Your attorney can contact your individual counselor for information about this step if needed. If you do not have a lawyer involved in your case, your Individual Counselor can assist you in preparing the Behavioral Declaration and Response in your initial meeting.

The following instructions will help you prepare these declarations:

- A) **What to write in your Behavioral Declaration:** See the first attached blank form for headings about what to write. You can use this form. It should be no longer than 2 pages. Your Behavioral Declaration should describe specific *behaviors* that are a concern for you about the other parent, strengths of the other parent, and what you are requesting regarding parenting plans.
- B) **Provide to Individual Counselor 2 business days before your counseling begins:** Behavioral Declarations and any related parenting court orders should be provided to your Individual Parent Counselor at least 2 business days before your first counseling session. A copy of your Behavioral Declaration should also be provided at least 2 business days before your first session to the other parent (to give to his or her Individual Parent Counselor). Alternatively, the Individual Counselors can coordinate the exchange of Behavioral Declarations and Responses between sessions (professional fees apply).
- C) **What to write in your REPLY Behavioral Declaration:** See the second attached blank form for headings about what to write. This should be only 2 pages. Explain whether you Agree or Disagree (and why not) with what the other parent's concerns are about your parenting behavior, and any changes in your requests regarding parenting plans.
- D) **Provide 5 business days after receiving other parent's Behavioral Declaration:** REPLY Behavioral Declarations should be provided to your Individual Parent Counselor no more than 5 business days after you receive the other parent's Behavioral Declaration. A copy of your REPLY Behavioral Declaration should also be provided on the same day to the other parent (to give to his or her Individual Parent Counselor), or you may request for your Individual Parent Counselor to coordinate the exchange of Replies (professional fees apply).
- E) **Provide to Parent-Child Counselor 10 calendar days before Parent-Child Counseling begins:** Provide your Behavioral Declaration, your Reply Behavioral Declaration and any related parenting court orders to the Parent-Child Counselor at least 10 calendar days before your first Parent-Child Counseling session. Your Individual Parent Counselor will help facilitate this transition as you complete the individual sessions.
- F) **Do Not File With Court:** The purpose of these declarations is to inform the counselors of your concerns, strengths, agreements or disagreements, and requests. They should not be filed with the court, so that you can focus on changing behavior rather than defending your past behavior. If you go to court, consult with an attorney about filing different declarations/affidavits with the court.