

Separated Parents Policy

Break up of marriage and parenting relationships is common. Our priority is the wellbeing of the children and young people we see. The purpose of this policy is to outline our practice framework to ensure their best interests are always prioritized. This policy specifically addresses issues that may arise during and after relationship break down.

Our Expectations Of You

Family law has two important principles that we assume when working with parents who are separated or divorced.

1. The first is **joint parental responsibility**. This means it is the responsibility of parents to work out how they exchange information (e.g. letters, appointment information). More generally it applies to how parents collaborate regarding the care of their child/children. We expect that parents will cooperate for the benefit of their child. If we send a letter, or provide an appointment time to one parent only, we assume they will pass that information on to the other parent.
2. The second is that each child has the **right to a meaningful relationship with both parents**. In our practice this means that if either parent calls us to organise an appointment regarding their child, we will proceed with that request*

*Except when there is a court order restricting involvement in your child's care. If this is the case it is your responsibility to provide us with this information prior to treatment or at the time of the court order.

We Communicate With The 'Nominated' Parent

Unless otherwise specified, our practice management software identifies a 'nominated' parent. Communication regarding that child, by default, is addressed to that parent.

This applies to:

- Automatic communications such as reminder emails (sent to the email address of the primary parent); and
- Reminder text messages (sent to the mobile phone number of the nominated parent).
- Written communication including **letters** and **reports**. If we copy letters of communication to parents, such as medical reports back to the referring General Practitioner, we send one copy to the nominated parent. It is the responsibility of this parent to distribute this accordingly.

Sometimes this leads to situations where information such as confirmation of an appointment is sent to the "alternative" parent ie the parent who is not attending the appointment. It is the responsibility of the parents to communicate with each other about this appointment. Appointment reminders are sent as a courtesy and we reserve the right to charge a cancellation fee for non attendance or late cancellation in the event that reminder communication has been sent to the alternative parent.

Please note that if not nominated by you, we will consider the parent who contacted us to arrange appointments as the nominated contact.

If Your Circumstances Require Alternative Arrangements

We understand there are circumstances where communication may not work well between separated/divorced parents. In some circumstances the court makes orders that differ from these central principles (above). If this is the case with you, please let us know. We require a copy of the court orders before making alternative arrangements.

We do not have much capacity or flexibility to make complex individualised arrangements. If our communication practice is potentially a problem for you, please discuss this with our administration staff, and your clinician. We will do our best to accommodate individual circumstances for the benefit of the child where this is reasonable and achievable.

In these instances we may also be willing to meet with each parent in separate appointments. These will be billed as separate appointments. Please note that the child must attend each appointment for the parent to claim a Medicare rebate for the appointment. If this is to be arranged, please let your clinician know.

Payment

As per our payment policy, payment is to be made on the day of your child's appointment. If there is a legal agreement that requires the other parent to pay all or part of the treatment costs, it is the attending parent's responsibility to settle the account and collect reimbursement from the other parent. Alternatively, we are able to store the responsible parent's payment details on file and process on the day.

Legal Matters

Please let us know if there are any legal processes pending. Please note the reason for engagement with us is to provide treatment for your child. We do not provide reports for court and can recommend you to another service if this is something you require. We also do not accept referrals where the purpose is to inform custody decisions.