



E. craftycounselling@gmail.com

M. 0468 324 819

ABN: 63 819 802 502

Parental Conflict, Family and Domestic Violence, Separated Parents Policy

The emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing of children is always held as the priority when commencing engagement in therapeutic support. Mindful of this, there may be situations where it is not in the child's best interests to commence counselling at this time. This may include;

- times of high parental conflict, separation
- current family and domestic violence and/or
- mediation/family court proceedings

During the intake and assessment phase you will be asked questions around whether these factors are relevant for your family with the aim of thoroughly assessing the safety of the children and family prior to commencing support.

Cases where alternative referral options may be discussed;

- **Family Law Court proceedings;**

Other referral options will be discussed if the purpose of counselling is in obtaining information via a **subpoena** of a child's case notes or reports for the purposes of Family Court or other legal proceedings. Engagement in counselling for this purpose can be counterproductive and unsafe for children when a child's words may be publicised, heard in a court setting or by a parent who may have perpetrated family violence.

- **Family and Domestic Violence;**

Further to the above information, if Family and Domestic Violence is prevalent, other referral options will be discussed if it is assessed to be unsafe for children to engage in counselling at the time. While there may be genuine reasons underpinning a referral for a child to build their emotional regulation resources, for education around safe relationships etc. throughout such periods of conflict, this may create compromised safety particularly where there continues to be contact for children with the parent who has perpetrated violence.

- **Withholding medical information;**

In cases of parental separation if both parents have the right to access health and wellbeing information of their children, gaining the consent of both parents for their child to engage in counselling is preferable to prevent withholding medical information. **Except** in cases of Family and Domestic Violence/no contact orders/other parent incarceration or court order stating the contrary.

Please note: Crafty Counselling **does not advise** that the referring parent contact the child's other parent to seek consent in such cases where family safety is at risk.

If **circumstances change** for the family during the counselling phase regarding matters mentioned above, Crafty Counselling may make an informed decision to;

- **cease support** until there has been an increase in safety for the family, matters of parenting orders are resolved or
- **discontinue support** and discuss alternative support options following an informed assessment of the family's safety and the child's best interests

It is imperative that changes of this nature are shared with your Counsellor ASAP, prior to the following appointment.

Alternative options;

Specialist Federal Government funded referral options:

Upon assessment if there is risk identified in cases mentioned above it may be recommended to contact local services to discuss support options. Interrelate hold specialist funding in the area of family relationships where conflict is present and have wraparound services in place to provide a holistic response throughout this process.
Phone 1300 473 528

Commencing at a later time:

In other situations, if there are matters mentioned above it may be recommended the option for therapy to commence at a later time for the child, once there has been an increase in safety for the family following mediation or conclusion of family court for example.

While understanding this may not always feel like the right outcome when you are feeling concern for your child and wanting to access supports as soon as possible, please be mindful that Counsellors have a **duty of care** to assess all aspects of the child's relationships and environment and formulate an assessment based on the child's best interests and safety.

In some cases, this may mean that accessing support for yourself may be the priority for now which includes parenting support/resources and nurturing your children with the safe responses they will likely require at this time.

Responsibility of the referring parent:

In cases where there are **no safety risks** as mentioned above, and parental relationships are amicable and prioritise children's emotional wellbeing, it is the responsibility of the referring parent to involve the other parent of the therapeutic process which may include; gaining consent, invitations to attend care planning meetings, sharing of reports/other communications. Providing separate communication in terms of reporting, feedback etc. to each parent is not within the scope of practice due to funding and time constraints.