Support services available for children after separation

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Following separation, children are learning to adjust to being in two households, potentially some conflict and finding their space and routine in the middle of it all. Luckily, there is a wide variety of publicly funded and private services available that can help your children during and following separation from your former partner.

We set out the support services available for parents after separation, in our blog “Support services available for parents after separation”.

This latest blog sets out the most common post-separation support services for children and where you can find further information and referrals.

Supporting Children after Separation Programs

Regardless of whether there is conflict between parents, there are several programs designed to help your children through the challenging period of parental separation. Every child reacts differently to change so having a range of options provides diversity and choices specific to your, and your child’s, unique circumstances.

These programs allow for children to develop tools for communication and confidence in expressing their feelings and to decrease feelings of stress and anxiety through the unknown.

Publicly funded providers include:

- Better Place Australia
- Relationships Australia
- Bethany Community Support

Individual or family counselling

Separation is not only an anxious and uncertain period for the adults but also for children of a separated family. Individual counselling can help give your child a safe space to express their feelings about the separation.

Family therapy also helps parents and children address family conflict, loss and trauma and may even be used to holistically rebuild a child's relationship with a parent.

You can contact your general practitioner for referrals to local professionals or contact any of the below publicly funded providers for services:

- Better Place Australia
- Relationship Matters
- EACH
- Kids HelpLine
- Headspace
- What's Ok At Home

Family violence support services

Children are most likely to be affected by family violence. This includes witnessing events of family violence including after the fact; for example, cleaning up an area after a fight between parents.

There are service providers that provide specific support to children who have been affected by family violence:

- WRISC Children's Counselling Program
- Safe Steps

Children's Contact Services

Sometimes the conflict between parents can make organising and implementing care and parenting arrangements for the children difficult.

Children's Contact Services (**CCS**) are designed to provide a safe, neutral and child-focused environment for supervised changeovers or care for children with their parent, to allow the opportunity for a child to build a relationship with their parent or

carer.

The Australian Children's Contact Service Association Inc advocates for a national accreditation system to follow best practice principles. They also offer a directory of CCS.

CCS include:

- Better Place Australia
- Upper Murray Family Care
- Bethany Community Support
- commUnity+
- OzChild
- The Salvation Army (Bendigo Community Services)

You may also find our blog, "Top 10 tips for co-parenting" useful.

Children with special needs

Parenting a child with special needs in one household can be challenging – let alone two households following separation.

Special needs include learning, physical, emotional, developmental and/or intellectual disabilities (for example, dyslexia, ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy, etc).

Children with special needs can benefit from additional support following separation to enhance their self-esteem and improve their relationship skills.

Your child's general practitioner or paediatrician can provide you with referrals specific to your child. The NDIS Contact Line can also provide you with referrals to general services in the area.

Indigenous Australian services

There are specific programs and service providers that can provide the above programs (and more) for your children in line with Our First Nations' community:

- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

Culturally appropriate programs

Thera are also service providers that can refer you to culturally specific programs to support your child:

- CatholicCare (Refugee Dads and Kids Weekend)
- Multicultural Health and Support Service
- InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence
- Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre

LGBTQIA+ appropriate programs

Members of the LGBTIQA+ community also require specific supports:

- Thorne Harbour
- Drummond Street Queerspace
- Gender Help for Parents
- Rainbow Families
- RainbowDoor

More information and referrals

More information and referrals to post-separation services for children can be found at:

- The Australian Government's Family Relationships Line
- The Victorian Family Law Pathways Network
- The National Family Law Pathways Network with links to Networks around the country.
- Child FIRST

How a family lawyer can help

Smith Family Law can help you find services near you and refer you to the appropriate service for your children. We can also refer you to our recommended private service providers.

Contacting Smith Family Law

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This blog is of a general nature and should not be relied upon as legal advice. If you require further information, advice or assistance for your specific circumstances, please contact us.