



Tamworth Family Support Children's Contact Service

PO Box 1088 TAMWORTH NSW 2340

Ph: 02 6763 2350 Fax: 6762 4836

CCS@tfss.com.au



INFORMATION FOR ALL PARENTS.

All children need, and have the right to love and be loved by both parents. Contact is viewed as the RIGHT of the child, and the responsibility of the parents.

Contact visits at The Children's' Contact Service should be pleasant experiences for children and their parents. Contact visits help to keep and/or develop a positive relationship between children and their parents.

Children have a natural tendency to use fantasy to fill gaps in their knowledge and thinking. Regular contact enables them to develop with a contact that is based on reality rather than on what they believe, which otherwise may be idealized through yearning, or detrimental through resentment.

Most parents genuinely love their children, and want to help them adjust to the separation. However, some parents may use children as weapons. Parents may also use children as messengers, relaying information about one parent to the other. **These strategies are harmful to the children.**

Give your children time and space to settle back in after a Contact visit. If you are calm and approachable, and do not interview the child/ren to find out details about the visit, it will be much easier for your child/ren to adjust and describe their experiences of contact.

At times the staff may need to intervene during the visit. For example, they will stop an inappropriate conversation, that is, a conversation about the other parent, Court proceedings, or details of their activities with the other parent. The staff will stop these conversations by first trying to catch your eye and indicate non-verbally to stop and if the conversation continues will make a suggestion that you move to another activity or talk about something else. Staff will take the children (who need assistance) to the toilet, supervise nappy changing, and if necessary will model appropriate interactions with children.

Staff understand that parents often feel anxious and resentful that they have been ordered to see their children under supervision. We ask you to keep in mind that we are just here to supervise the visit. We have no connection to the Courts and are unable to change the situation for you. Staff will do everything they can to make the visit relaxed and enjoyable.

It may help to know that the staff do not take sides. The staff respect the confidentiality of both parents and do not enter into discussions regarding any matters that are in dispute or about current Court matters.

We are not here to judge your parenting. We can however, assist you with skills that you may find you need or new ideas and strategies that may not have occurred to you now that your parenting situation has changed.



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SUGGESTIONS FOR SEPARATED PARENTS.

- Try to acknowledge the finality of the separation. It's over and, in all likelihood it is not going to reversed.
- Be a good role model. Try to recognize your stressors and resolve your anger.
- Lean on others rather than becoming isolated. Remember that life is not always fair. You have to work at making it right for you.
- Show respect for your ex-partner and others, especially in front of your children. Don't undermine or play games with your children's loyalties.
- Don't use your children as intermediaries for messages or money.
- Don't let your guilt intrude on your children's attempt to cope. Allow them to grieve. Don't negate their feelings. Allow them to develop attachments with others.
- Guide your children, but don't try to control them. Give them love, support and guidelines. Set your limits and respect theirs. Help them learn from the consequences of their actions.
- Develop a parenting plan in cooperation with your ex-partner if possible.
- Be courteous about Contact visits. Be predictable, on time and allow 're-entry' time.
- Don't try to buy your children's loyalty. Be a parent, not an entertainer.
- Be aware of each child's individual needs and expect them to change over time. Listen to your children. Encourage them to express their feelings and reactions and share yours with them. Watch your timing.
- Don't be personally offended by children who misbehave or teenagers who don't want to visit for a while.
- Have faith in yourself, your partner, and your children.
- Deal with arguments and conflicts without dredging up the underlying tensions. One thing at a time.
- Try to maintain connections with grandparents and other extended family members.
- Cultivate friendships, especially among people who allow you to be yourself.



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SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PARENT THE CHILD LIVES WITH.

- Children adjust more easily by visiting the service and meeting the staff. Please arrange an orientation visit with the Coordinator or Program Support worker before contact begins.
- Young children might like to bring a comforter, favorite book or toy along to contact visits (please ensure all items are labeled)
- Please consider bringing a change of clothes, as well as nappies and nappy wipes if required.
- We have many toys and activities suitable for many age ranges. Please dress your child/ren in play clothes. Please do not send children in good clothes as we want the children to relax and play and enjoy the visit.
- Explain to young children that the staff will help with toileting.
- It is helpful to adopt a supportive position towards your child's contact visits, and remember it is normal for children to react both before and after the visit.
- The staff are friendly and approachable. They are skilled at creating a relaxed and safe environment for children and parents.
- Staff will focus on the needs of your child/ren first and foremost.
- Leave home in plenty of time. Allow for unforeseen delays, as punctuality is essential.
- If you are worried about your own safety, please talk with the Children's Contact Service staff.
- Don't 'Interview' your children after contact. Allow the child their own time to come to you or deal with the contacts in their own time.
- Let your child share with you as much of their life as they choose.



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INFORMATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

(Please read this with your child if they are not of reading age or have trouble understanding this.)

- I have a right to have contact with both my parents.
- My parents have a responsibility to keep me out of their arguments.
- My parents have a responsibility to talk respectfully about each other in front of me.
- I might feel loyal to both my parents. My parents will avoid pressuring me into choosing with whom I live.
- Both my parents are responsible for keeping in touch with me. If it is not possible for us to see each other, my parent will stay in contact by telephoning me and sending me letters and cards.
- I have a right to enjoy the time I spend with my other parent.
- If I am not very old, I have a right to have my wishes understood and to be represented by an adult who will help me with contact.
- If I am worried about seeing my other parent I have a right for this to happen in a place where I feel safe and supported. To help me feel safer I can help make up rules for the visits.
- My parents have a responsibility not to pressure me about seeing my other parent.
- If I have a problem with the visit I understand the Children's Contact Service will help me talk to my parents about the things that are worrying me.
- If I have seen scary things happen between my parents or watched one of my parents bring hurt or frightened, my other parent should understand that I might be afraid of him or her. So it may take some time before I feel ready to see him or her again.



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SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENT WHO SPENDS TIME WITH THE CHILD.

- Come ready to have fun with your child/ren
- Some children feel they are being disloyal to the other parent if they relax and have a good time – be patient. Try to let the child/ren set the pace for building up the relationship. Do not overwhelm the child with affection.
- You do not need to bring presents every time, the children are coming to see you. The quality of the time that you spend with your child/ren is more important than the presents you bring for them.
- Leave home in plenty of time. Allow for unforeseen delays so that you arrive on time.
- Staff will focus on the needs of your child/ren first and foremost.
- The staff are friendly and approachable. They are skilled at creating a relaxed and safe environment for the children and parents.
- It is in your best interests to spend time with your children in such a way so that staff can see, hear and observe the contact.
- Children sometimes like to spend time with your painting, drawing, reading, etc. We have a lot of equipment but feel free to bring along things for activities.
- It is a good idea to bring drinks and a snack along for the children.
- Your visits are a time to enjoy being with your child/ren. It is not appropriate to spend the time trying to find out what is going on in the other parent's life. Asking many questions may be stressful to the child/ren, and may make them feel uneasy about contact. Let your child share with you as much of their life as they choose.
- Sometimes children ask questions about Court of Legal matters. These are difficult questions to answer and we encourage parents to distract the child and move the conversation on to other things as we believe that these are matters to be sorted out by adults and shouldn't concern children.
- The staff do not expect children to be on their best behaviour. Do not be concerned if their play is noisy or boisterous, go ahead and have fun together.