

## **Parental Conflict: It can be very harmful for children**

The wish of all children of separation or divorce is that their mom and dad and extended family members do not argue or fight with each other and can, work out difficulties in a mature fashion without resorting to hurtful comments and behaviors. Most children want to have quality time with each parent without interference from the other.

This wish has a strong basis in reality as research shows that ongoing, unresolved, chronic family conflict especially between parents who are separated and/or divorced has an extremely negative impact on the current and future mental health of their children.

It is common and normal for two parents to have different ideas, opinions, values, and priorities. Part of being successful in a post separation relationship with another person is being able to use appropriate communication skills so that ideas and opinions can be expressed and received with respect and differences of opinion can be worked out using healthy conflict resolution strategies.

If separated or divorced parents do not communicate respectfully with each other and do not have a good strategy for resolving conflicts, the result is chronic, unresolved conflict between the parents. There is an ongoing hostile emotional tone between the parents that continues to erupt over time and in the same patterns.

This harmful conflict can range from yelling, criticizing, blaming, interference with a child's access to another parent, refusing to allow the other parent to attend school functions, making unnecessary calls to police and child protection authorities, sarcasm, ignoring, intimidation and threats of harm, to actual physical violence such as throwing or destroying things, or grabbing, shoving, slapping, hitting, kicking, or other forms of physical assault. Chronic parental conflict is most common in families where parents with children have separated or divorced, or have never been married or lived together.

## **Your children are depending on YOU, as their mom and dad to set up healthy relationships for them to learn and develop from!**

**Parental conflict is far more disadvantageous to the formation of a child's relationship with family and friends and the child's social behaviour than any other aspect of the family's background\*\***

\*\* Findings by Statistic's Canada' longitudinal study on children and published in their report called "Growing up in Canada"



**Parents who strive to achieve a conflict free and cooperative post separation and/or divorce environment help to create happy stable, loving and successful children**

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For further information about this program contact the parenting facilitator or the agency listed below:

**Family Justice Review Committee**

Tel: (416) 410-4115

Email: [info@familyconflictserivces.com](mailto:info@familyconflictserivces.com)

Providing support and advocacy services for children and their families

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*.....Helping parents of separation and/or divorce resolve conflict with minimal involvement of the family court system*

## **Community-Based Family Conflict Resolution Program**



*A community based service of assistance to families affected by separation and/or divorce and in need of an effective, timely resolution to their high conflict family court/child protection related issues*

## Are some of these issues affecting your family or your child?

- ❑ *Are you finding it too costly and inconvenient to resolve your family related conflict through the family court system?*
- ❑ *Do you feel that the family court system is taking too long and not being effective?*
- ❑ *Are you and your ex-spouse unable to communicate effectively?*
- ❑ *Has the conflict between you and your ex-spouse caused child protection services to get involved with your family?*
- ❑ *Is your child indicating that he/she is not happy with the parenting schedule or is your child reporting that no one is listening to him/her?*
- ❑ *Do you find it too cumbersome and expensive dealing through lawyers in matters relating to the minor day to day parenting and child exchange issues?*
- ❑ *Do you need help to work out long term solutions relating to custody, child access, exchanges and/or child support?*

## The FACTS about Separation and Divorce

Post-divorce or separation conflict between parents and members of extended families can have life-long negative impact on your children.

Most research shows that of all factors which cause harm to children, parental conflict is the most damaging with significant long term effects. It is vitally important that parents learn about the causes of their conflict and to learn what they must do to effectively eliminate conflict with their former spouse in a timely and cost effective manner.

## The FACTS about the current adversarial family court system

There is a serious access to justice problem in Canada's family courts. The family justice system is too complex, too slow and too expensive. It is too often incapable of producing fair outcomes for the problems brought to it or reflective of the needs of the families it is meant to serve, especially the children who are often the ones most adversely affected.

While there are many dedicated people trying hard to make the current system work, the system continues to lack coherent leadership, institutional structures that can design and implement change, and appropriate coordination to ensure consistent and cost effective reform to meet the needs of families. In summary, the existing family court system is failing families and resulting in significant damage to the public's respect to the administration of justice.

## The Community-Based Family Conflict Resolution Program can resolve family related conflict

The Family Conflict Resolution Program is a service designed to find solutions to family conflict in a timely and just manner and to assist parents and their children resume their lives after being disrupted because of separation/divorce and/or child protection issues.

Under the family conflict resolution process a team of three or more workers are assigned to the family. Each party in the dispute works with their own assigned program worker.

The conflict resolution team gathers the issues identified by the parties and any supporting information the parties may have to support their concerns. Where children are of an age and maturity to express their wishes and preferences, information will be gathered from the children as well.

Members of the support team analyze and summarize the issues and collectively formulate effective strategies designed to resolve the issues causing conflict.

Where additional outside resources may be necessary such as may be required for mental health or legal issues, referrals will be made to the parties to obtain other services. The conflict resolution team will communicate with any of the lawyers working with the parties.

Members of the conflict resolution team will assist parents to communicate more effectively and work with parents on a day to day basis to resolve various issues which may arise concerning the best interest of their children, including issues relating to child support.

Also included as part of the conflict resolution process is an educational component for the parties involved. Parties involved in the conflict will be provided with information and/or workshops relating to cooperative parenting, causes of conflict and the harm it causes to children and how to resolve issues through effective co-parenting strategies. Parties in conflict will be required to attend online educational webinars.

Program guidelines ensure that all members of the mediation and intervention team provide services in the following ways:

- **Remain neutral and objective**
- **Work with parents and within court requirements to provide the best outcome for both the child and parents**
- **Stay focused on the child's health, safety and well being**
- **Provide ongoing progress reports to parents during the program. A final report with recommendations can in some circumstances be completed in as little as 30 days.**
- **Make honest referrals to other outside third party services which could be helpful to the parents and/or the children**