

Parental Conflict: It can be very harmful for children

The wish of all children of separation or divorce is that their parents do not argue or fight with each other and can, in some way, 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 has shown that ongoing, unresolved, chronic conflict between separated parents 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, put-downs, mocking, 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, their parents!

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"



Don't let your children be damaged for life because of parental conflict

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@familyconflictservices.com

Providing support and advocacy services for children and their families

.....Helping parents of divorce and/or separation reduce conflict



Family Coordinator and Supervised Parenting Services



Services of interest to parents of separation and/or divorce in need of help to deal with their high conflict and supervised parenting issues

Are these issues affecting you or your child?

- ❑ *Are you having conflict with your ex-spouse over access time with your child?*
- ❑ *Are you and your child being subjected to supervised parenting at an access centre?*
- ❑ *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 they are not happy with the parenting time with their parents?*
- ❑ *Could you benefit from third party transportation of the child?*
- ❑ *Is your child reporting problems such as abuse but saying 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 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. The information provided to parents by the Parent supervisor or family coordinator during the time that services are provided will help them to lessen conflict and get their lives and the lives of their children back into a more normal state of functioning.

Community-based supervised parenting transition services

In some situations when parents separate and emotions are high, parenting time with children may be a problem. Sometimes, difficulties arise at the time of the child's exchange between parents or between a parent and a relative, such as a grandparent. Other times there may be concerns by one parent about the child being alone with the other parent.

Although fixed-location supervised access centres can provide a useful service for very young children for a very limited period of time, such facilities often are unable to meet the needs of children on a continuing basis. Too long of an exposure to a fixed location supervised access centre can actually cause emotional harm to a child and damage a child's relationship with a parent.

In many cases children want to spend time with their other parent at home or they want to get out to explore, play and do things in the community that most other children like to do.

The Supervised Parenting Support/Transition Program is a service designed to get children and parents back into a more normal environment and to assist them to resume their lives that have been disrupted because of separation or divorce. During the supervised parenting children and their parents are given the opportunity to participate in activities, eating out, visiting relatives and more.

A trained parenting supervisor accompanies the child and his/her supervised parent during scheduled supervised parenting periods to activities outside in the community or even to the other parent's home.

Supervisors are specially trained to observe the child and parent at events in a more normal community setting. Trained parenting supervisors ensure a safe and adequate environment for the child. Supervised parenting reports are made available for court if necessary.

The program takes children and supervised parents from fully supervised parenting to unsupervised parenting over a transitional period of time.

Family Coordinator services

In situations where conflict between parents exists and supervised access is not required, family coordination services may be a helpful solution.

Trained family coordinators 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.

Family coordinators provide both parents with information about cooperative parenting, causes of conflict and the harm it causes to children and how to resolve issues through comprehensive co-parenting strategies.

Program guidelines ensure that family coordinators and parenting supervisors and their support team members 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 court reports regarding the supervised parenting or family coordination as needed in a timely manner**
- **Make honest referrals to other outside third party services which could be helpful to the parents and/or the children**