Information for Separated Parents

Confidentiality, Privacy and Parent Sessions

This sheet explains how psychologists at childpsych manage confidentiality and privacy when parents are separated. We follow the APS Code of Ethics, APS guidelines for working with young people, the Australian Privacy Principles in the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), and relevant family and child protection laws.

1. Who is our client?

- When we see a child or young person, the child is our primary client, even though parents hold legal parental responsibility.
- Our first obligation is to the child's safety, wellbeing and best interests, including where there is family conflict or court involvement.

2. Consent, parental responsibility and information-sharing

- Under the Family Law Act 1975, both parents are generally presumed to have equal shared parental responsibility unless a Court order says otherwise.
- We ask about parenting plans or Court orders at intake and keep a copy on file where relevant.
- Where it is safe and appropriate, we aim to involve and inform both parents, even if one parent initially makes the booking.

3. Confidentiality and its limits

- What your child says in session is confidential and we keep clinical notes as part of their health record.
- We usually agree with your child on what can be shared with you (for example, general themes and goals) and what stays private, as long as it is safe to do so.
- Confidentiality is not absolute. We may share information if there is a serious risk of harm, if we are legally required to (for example, child protection reports, subpoenas or court orders), or when needed to coordinate care with other health providers.

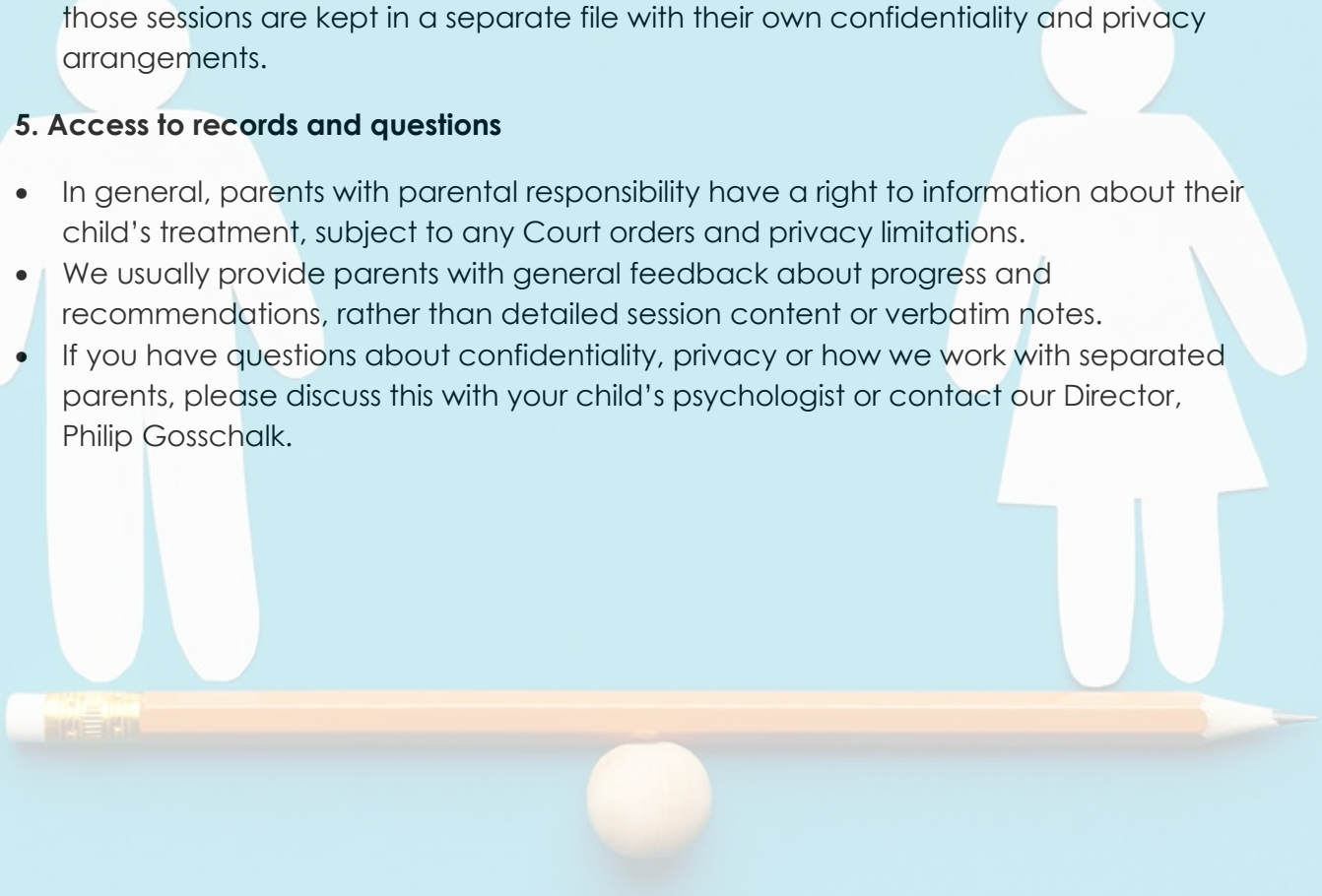
4. Parent sessions and parents' right to privacy

- As part of your child's therapy, we may sometimes meet with one or both parents without your child present. These sessions help us understand family dynamics and support your parenting.

- As a general rule, what is discussed in a parent-only session is treated as confidential between the psychologist and that parent. We do not routinely share the detailed content of one parent's session with the other parent.
- When parent-only sessions are part of your child's treatment, brief notes are kept in your child's file. Parents with legal parental responsibility may, in some circumstances, request access to their child's records. In responding to any request, we consider everyone's privacy and safety and may provide a summary or withhold parts of the record where allowed under privacy law.
- If a parent also sees the psychologist as an individual client for their own support, those sessions are kept in a separate file with their own confidentiality and privacy arrangements.

5. Access to records and questions

- In general, parents with parental responsibility have a right to information about their child's treatment, subject to any Court orders and privacy limitations.
- We usually provide parents with general feedback about progress and recommendations, rather than detailed session content or verbatim notes.
- If you have questions about confidentiality, privacy or how we work with separated parents, please discuss this with your child's psychologist or contact our Director, Philip Gosschalk.



This handout provides general information only and is not legal advice. Laws and guidelines may change, and specific situations can be complex. Your psychologist may need to seek legal or professional advice about particular requests or circumstances.