

Children's Contact Service

INFORMATION BOOKLET



Indigo

Family
Connections




NEUTRAL
SUPPORTIVE
SAFE

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and acknowledge their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past, present and emerging.

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 Ballarat VIC



GENERAL INFORMATION

The Contact Service is a safe and supportive space allowing family members to have supervised contact visits with their child/ren in order to develop or maintain meaningful relationships. For some, a separation can be a time of stress and conflict for both parents and children, and arranging contact between one parent and the child can be very difficult.

We strive to provide high quality programs in the family support field by constantly innovating, collaborating, and advocating for families.

We are committed to Child Safe Practices and work in the best interest of the child, meaning that children have the right to:

- Feel safe and be free from harm or violence.
- Have a voice and be free to express their views.
- Have their developmental, psychological, emotional, social and cultural needs met by the adults in their lives.

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What we provide

- Child focused approach
- Qualified and experienced professional staff
- Trauma informed practice
 - A safe and secure environment
 - Privacy and Confidentiality
- Support with parenting practices
- Factual Observations and Reports

Our focus

The children's contact service focus is the child's safety and wellbeing. It is imperative that a child has a stress free experience when at contact visits. Therefore, the child's voice will be heard, their wellbeing protected and their experience positive.

The centre

The centre is well equipped, offering a homely environment. This allows the child to settle in easily and feel more comfortable in their surrounds. Activities, toys and games provide great opportunities to build relationships in a relaxed and private setting, away from outside interruptions.

OUR SERVICES

We offer three main services from the Children's Contact Service for families to choose from. One or several may be utilised, and there is no limit on how long you use the programs. While using our service, parents are encouraged to be working toward self-managed contact arrangements.

Supervised Contact

Centre Based Visits are usually scheduled as 2 hour fortnightly visits. Most families will attend 10 -12 sessions, though as each family's needs are different, we are happy to discuss alternatives.

Community Based Contact

In cases where the family is not able to attend the centre, we may be able to schedule supervised visits within the community. For those that live a distance from Ballarat, this can be a good alternative.

Facilitated Changeovers

If supervision is not required, this is a service that can be used as a stepping stone to self-managed contact. Changeover times can be scheduled during the centre open times to meet your requirements.

The parent who lives with the child will arrive at the rear of the centre at the allocated time, the Supervisor will walk the child through the centre to the contact parent. The contact parent and child leave, then after 10 minutes, the other parent may leave.

Court Orders & Parenting Plans

While we will try, it is not always possible to meet exact recommendations as stated in a Court order or Parenting plan, so negotiations may need to be made. We will always work with parents and their legal representative to make fair and suitable arrangements where possible. The Service maintains the right to make changes to any arrangements to ensure the child's best interests are being met.



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In the beginning

For some children, it may take time before they feel comfortable in this new situation.

We may need to shorten visits initially and lengthen them as the child adjusts. For those children aged 12 months and under, all visits will begin at a shortened length - with 1 hour being the maximum time spent.

Time spent will be completely dependant on each child's needs.



Child Refusal

Sometimes, the child may refuse to attend visits completely. If this happens, the

Supervisor will encourage the child to attend, and allow them to go at their own pace. Although the Supervisor will encourage a child, they will not force or pressure a child to attend a visit. If the child continues to refuse, we will discuss the best course of action with both parents and legal representatives.

Respectful Relationships

We understand that this is often a difficult and emotional time, but we do request that respect be shown to all those involved. We can do this by;

- Listening to advice
- Understanding that decisions will be made with the child's best interests in mind
- Not using derogatory language when speaking about the child's other parent
- Avoid swearing or using language that is inappropriate
- Refrain from adult conversations when a child is present
- Not discussing legal matters when a child is present

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Supervisor Support

The Supervisor's role is not only support the child, and ensure a safe and secure environment, they are also available to support the parents. If needed, they will offer advice on age and stage appropriate toys and activities that will help enhance engagement between you and your child, as well as provide information on child health, development and wellbeing.

Please note: Supervisors will not engage in conversations about legal matters. Please refer any questions you have to your legal representative.

Intake Session

Intake sessions are usually completed over the phone, and will gather information that will help us to get to know your family's needs, and provide valuable information about how we can make this the best experience possible for the children.



Orientation Visit

At the Orientation Visit, the child gets to meet the Supervisor and have a look around the centre.

This gives us an opportunity to talk to the child about how they are feeling about the visits. If there are any areas of concern, we are able to address these prior to the visits.

When you arrive

When you arrive at the centre, the front door and the rear gate will be locked. Please text the Supervisor and they will unlock them for you to enter.

It is extremely important that you arrive ready to come in at the time you have been allocated to ensure everything runs smoothly.

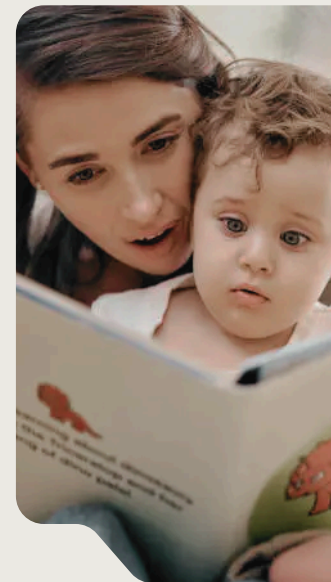
When you leave

As with arrival, you will need to follow the departure directions on the map. Even if there are no Intervention Orders, this will ensure parents will not be placed in a position that is uncomfortable or may be conflictual.

The contact parent will remain in the centre for 10 minutes after the session to ensure there are no crossovers.

Where are we located?

Before your contact sessions begin, you will be provided with the address of the centre and a map detailing which route you will need to take to enter the centre. The contact parent is to enter at the front of the building, while the parent who resides with the child will enter from the rear.



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Family or friend dropping off or picking up

If you are unable to make the drop off or pick up yourself, and have someone else to do this on your behalf, it will need to be arranged with us 24 hours prior to the service provision. The person's full details and relationship to the child must be provided, and photo ID shown before the child will be released into their care.

Running late

If you are running late for a scheduled contact visit, please let us know as soon as possible via phone. A child will not be required to wait more than 15 minutes, and if so, the session will be cancelled. If lateness becomes frequent, or procedures are not adhered to, a service review will be put in place.

Cancellations

Please inform us by phone as soon as possible.

Cancellations not received 24 hours prior to the visit time will incur a full fee charge unless they are for a medical reason.

Cancellations for medical reasons, will require a doctor's certificate to keep on record.

Depending on the circumstance, it may be possible to schedule a make up visit.

If your child is unwell

If your child is unwell, and not able to participate in their usual activities, please do not bring them to the centre for a contact visit. With regard to infectious diseases, we follow the recommendations of the Department of Health, Victoria. <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/school-exclusion-table>

Medication

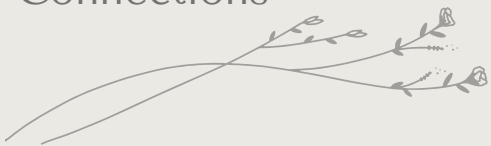
If your child requires medication during the supervised contact, it must be in it's original package that shows name, dosage and expiry.

If specific directions are required, please provide written instructions. Please note that the Supervisor will not administer medication.

This is the responsibility of the parent. If your child has an asthma or epilepsy plan, a copy must be provided.

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PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The parent who is with the child is the person who is responsible for the child. They are responsible for meeting all of the child's needs including the child's safety, discipline, food and drink intake, toileting and hygiene requirements. Each parent is also responsible for encouraging the child and making the visits a positive experience. The Supervisor may make recommendations or suggestions, and will step in if there are any safety concerns.

Supervision

The parent understands that as the contact is supervised, the child must be in view of the supervisor at all times. This includes when toileting or nappy changing is required.

The parent will be required to speak in English where English is a first language. If it's not, arrangements can be discussed. Conversations will need to be at a volume that is easily heard by the supervisor.

Food, drink & supplies

For the 1st and 2nd contact visit, all supplies are to be provided by the parent the child lives with. From the 3rd visit onwards, it is the responsibility of the contact parent to provide food, drink, nappies, wipes, change of clothes etc.

Play activities

The centre has toys, books, arts & crafts etc. that will help the experience enjoyable for both parent and child. As the visits progress, the contact parent will be encouraged to bring games or activities that are of specific interest to the child.

Phones, Photos & Videos

As phones (or other devices) can be a distraction, we ask that they are put on silent or turned off for the duration of the visit. The child's wellbeing is a main priority, so where the child is able, they will have a say in what they are willing to participate in.

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Phones, Photos & Videos (cont.)

If the child agrees and there is nothing stated in the court order or parenting plan;

- calls to other family members can be made if agreed upon by both parties and arranged prior to taking place.
- photos may taken as long as they are not posted on social media sites or the like.

Staff are not be in any photos. Videos are not to be taken.



Parenting Strategies

The parent who is with the child is responsible for them while at the service. This includes any sort of behaviour guidance or discipline. The rights of the child will be respected at all times and therefore any intimidating, threatening, yelling, blaming or physical punishment is not acceptable and will lead to a case review. The Supervisor is able to assist you with ideas and strategies that can be used in place of inappropriate discipline. This may be trying new things and responding in different ways that will support your child and their relationship with you.

If inappropriate behaviour continues the visits will cease.



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Passing from parent to parent

The Supervisor will not be responsible for passing information, personal items or any form of toy, game, gift etc. from one parent to the other. It is recommended that you speak to your legal representative for advice if this needs to take place.

Visitors

Other family members may like to attend a contact visit. This can be considered after 6 visits are completed. The Supervisor will assess each individual situation before making a decision. Both parties and the child would also need to be in agreeance.

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Feedback to parents

During a contact visit, the Supervisor is available to provide feedback and ideas that will assist you to engage with your child and encourage a positive relationship. This information may be in the form of play, ideas about activities, games to play, or written information.

Gift giving

We understand that in many cases, special days or celebrations may have been missed and that parents may want to make up for that by bringing gifts with them to visits. We have found that this can lead to difficulties establishing a genuine relationship if gifts become expected each time the child attends a visit.

A small gift on special occasions or celebrations such as a birthday is more acceptable. All presents and cards must be checked by the Supervisor prior to being given to the child (gift bags make it easy). There are not be any gifts of electronic devices (phones, smart watches, tablets or gaming devices) unless arranged by both parties prior to the visit. In this case, you will need to inform us please.

Observational notes

During the visit, the Supervisor is required to take observational notes that are factual, non-judgemental and neutral. They do not include opinions. Notes will be taken on arrival and departure of both parties, the content of the contact visit, interactions and communication. If required, the notes will be used to format the Court Report.

Court Reports

Court Reports can be requested by you or your legal representative. It is preferred that six visits have been completed before a Report is written. A period of four weeks notice is required for the Court Report to be written.

Reports will be emailed to the legal reps., or parent if you are self-represented.



Accident or Injury

All possible care will be taken to ensure that the contact service is maintained to a safe standard.

As the child is under the care of a parent while at the centre, we cannot take responsibility for any injury a child may sustain.

Drugs and Alcohol

Parents are not to be drug or alcohol affected while attending the centre. If the Supervisor believes that a parent may be affected by drugs or alcohol, the session will end, and the parent will be asked to leave.

Suspension or Cessation of Contact

Suspension or cessation of contact visits may occur if:

- The child refuses,
- The child is and remains in distress,
- Regular cancellation or lateness
- There are safety concerns for the child or Supervisor
- Failure to comply with the service guidelines and agreement
- A parent is drug or alcohol affected
- A parent displays inappropriate behaviours

Pets

Pets are not able to attend the Contact Service.

Smoking

There is to be no smoking or vaping on the property.

Fees

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| INTAKE | \$165 per parent |
| SUPERVISED VISIT | Weekday \$130 ph Weekend \$160 ph |
| FACILITATED CHANGEORVER | Weekday \$20 each way Weekend \$30 each way |
| COURT REPORT | \$480 |
| AFFIDAVIT | \$120 |
| SUBPOENA | \$150 |

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