



*A five session parenting program for separated parents where there is a medium to high level of on-going conflict*

### **Information for Referring Agencies**

#### **Aim**

This program is designed to:

1. Assist parents to see through their children's eyes the experience and impact of being trapped in medium to high level chronic parental conflict
2. Develop greater awareness and understanding about how to support children following family separation

#### **Introduction**

Keeping Kids In Mind (KKIM) is a program for separated parents where there is a medium to high level of on-going conflict. KKIM is a two and a half hour weekly psycho-educational group for a duration of five weeks for up to 12 participants focusing on the development of parental reflective functioning; that is, developing the parents' awareness about the impact of their behavior upon their children and developing their ability to think and consider their children's wellbeing in their actions and communications with their child's other parent.

Evaluations have shown that the content and process of the KKIM program is consistent with best practice and current research. Further, the results strongly suggest that:

- Attendance at KKIM has a positive impact on parents' abilities to manage the emotional turmoil which ensues from relationship breakdowns
- New knowledge, improved skills and change in attitudes regarding the other parent and the co-parent relationship in the post-separation period are of benefit to both parent and child.

The initial concept of KKIM developed from the Family Law Court and the Federal Magistrates Court of Australia's need for post-separation parenting programs and referral pathways for high-conflict separated couples with children. Many were not ready to participate in family dispute resolution; some clients required a range of both counselling and therapeutic interventions to assist them to process their grief, loss, depression, anxiety

and/or anger about the separation. It was felt that mothers and fathers would also benefit from a greater understanding of the impact of their conflict on their children's social and psychological development.

The move to place greater emphasis on the wellbeing of children during the process of separation and divorce through improvements in processes and support services for parents and families is also recognition of the paradoxes that exist during the emotional turmoil of separation and divorce; namely, that the emotional upheaval and trauma experienced by adults during separation and divorce severely limits their ability to support their children at the precise time that children need the emotional support and reassurance of their parents.

While most couples will experience some level of conflict in the post-separation period there is also increasing acknowledgement at legislative, research and community levels of the need to prevent post-separation conflict becoming entrenched.

Post-separation education programs can help parents understand the effects of their conflict upon their children, increase parent knowledge about how to be a co-parent, and encourage parents to communicate and problem solve between each other, all of which will reduce the exposure of children to parental conflict. It is believed that highly conflicted parents can still enter into a successful co-parenting relationship, somewhat like a business relationship.

For more information, go to [www.keepingkidsinmind.org](http://www.keepingkidsinmind.org).

Please call 4987 4674 to refer.

