

The Collaborative Process: A Guide for Separating Couples

The Role of a Child Specialist

A Child Specialist is a mental health practitioner who is a member of an accredited professional body. They have training and experience in working with children and families and understand the separation /divorce process.

When relationships break down, parents welcome clear guidance on how to address the best interests of their children. The role of the Child Specialist in Collaborative Practice is to act as a consultant to the parents and the team. Key to the process is recognising the strengths of the family and increasing parents awareness of their children's developmental and emotional needs.

The Child Specialist is also an advocate for the child, providing the opportunity for the child to share thoughts, feelings and concerns in a safe, supported environment. When parents gain an insight into the impact of separation on their children, there is a forum to discuss child - related issues and concerns.

The co-parenting relationship and implementation of parenting plans can then be advanced with all parties committed to open and honest dialogue. Parents are respected as the primary decision makers for their children. They are guided in strengthening their capacity to address issues such as the provision of emotional support for their children, discipline, supervision and minimising conflict in a changing family dynamic.

The Child Specialist as a neutral third party, may at the parents behest, liaise with other professionals (i.e. school) to obtain or provide information or activate appropriate referrals in relation to their child. Parents may also wish to consult with the Child Specialist to support their parenting post-divorce.