

OUR POSITION

Separating parents need support and information to make good decisions about the care of their children and to minimise the harmful effects of separation on their children.

OUR GOAL

Quality information and support that is easily available for separating parents when they need it.

WHAT THE COMMISSION HAS DONE SO FAR

2006: *Two parents two households* research published.

2008: *Putting the Kids First- Caring for children after separation* report published (sample size: 39).

2008: Colmar Brunton study, *New Zealand Child Support Arrangements* (sample size: 1,602).

2008: *Reaching Out – Who New Zealanders turn to for relationship support* (sample size: 50).

2009: *What separating parents need when making care arrangements for their children* Issues Paper 01 released ahead of IRD Child Support review.

2009: *Pathways Through Parental Separation – non resident fathers* research published.

COMMISSION'S VIEW

- > Separation is a difficult time for families, especially when children are involved.
- > It is important that parents are encouraged to put their children first and develop a constructive working relationship with their former partner.
- > Most parents are able to agree about the care arrangements for their children, often with help from others.
- > Parents who are able to cooperate and put their children's needs first, are more satisfied with their care and financial arrangements than those who have arrangements imposed on them by the court.
- > Most adults with relationship issues prefer to talk with their family and friends before seeking formal support. Family and friends need to feel equipped to offer support and advice on relevant services.
- > Community-based professionals, such as GPs, nurses, church elders, ministers and school teachers, are often an important port of call for people with relationship issues. They are local and trusted. They need to be better equipped to offer support and referral to services.

- > We would like to see better promotion and provision of the information and support services that help separating parents with their relationship and communication. Many parents, for example, use counsellors effectively, and many gain positive benefits from 'Parenting Through Separation' courses funded by the Ministry of Justice.

REFERENCES AND LINKS

Families Commission

<http://www.familiescommission.org.nz/category/topic/family-relationships/separation>

Statistics New Zealand

2008 Divorce figures: http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/people_and_communities/marriages_and_relationships/MarriagesCivilUnionsandDivorces_HOTPYeDec08.aspx

Minister Dunne speech

<http://taxpolicy.ird.govt.nz/news/2009-08-28-minister-welcomes-families-commission-paper-care-children>

Ministry of Justice, PTS evaluation report

<http://www.justice.govt.nz/publications/global-publications/e/evaluation-of-the-parenting-through-separation-programme/publication>

