

Child-Safe Approaches In Children's Contact Services: Opportunities and Challenges

Presented at Child Aware Approaches Conference, 2016

Abstract

A meaningful ongoing relationship with their parents is the cornerstone of positive child development. Children's Contact Services (CCS) provide a service and space to enable parents to develop and maintain safe relationships with children. Families who use CCS tend to be experiencing high levels of conflict and multiple and complex issues. Good practice guidelines apply for government funded services, though CCS are an unregulated service type and often situated in a complex position where family law, child protection and criminal proceedings intersect.

In October 2015, Child Family Community Australia published *Children's Contact Services: Key Issues*, which identified that research to date is unclear as to whether the "best interests of the child" are being met, and there is need to better understand relationship, safety and wellbeing outcomes for children and families who use these services. This provided a catalyst for a review of Interrelate's CCS to increase service efficacy; measures of child safety improved following changes made as a result of the review.

This presentation will discuss the method of the service review and the practical implementation of a risk matrix framework. We will speak to the challenges of collaboration at the intersection of family law, criminal and child protection systems, and share insights that could inform sector reform and improved regulation. We will demonstrate the improved efficacy of our integrated case management processes, which can assist in leading parents to safe self-management. Finally, we will share summary analyses of client outcome measures, evidencing the positive effect of the review.

To learn more about *Child-Safe Approaches In Children's Contact Services: Opportunities and Challenges*, contact Interrelate's Research & Service Development team on rsd@interrelate.org.au.