

## Consent and Practice Policy for Children and Adolescents of Separated or Divorced Parents

### Purpose and Guiding Principles

Developmental Paediatrics is committed to providing high-quality and ethical healthcare to our **patients**<sup>1</sup>. Our primary responsibility is to always act in the best interests of the patient, i.e., the child or adolescent, in accordance with Australian and NSW laws.

For parents who are separated or divorced, additional legal and practical considerations apply. This policy explains how consent, communication, confidentiality, fees and information-sharing are managed by Developmental Paediatrics. It also outlines the responsibilities of parents and guardians who are engaging our services.

We aim to work respectfully with all members of the patient's parenting team, while remaining neutral, consistent and focused on providing optimal clinical care.

### Parental Responsibility and Consent

Under Australian law, each parent generally has parental responsibility for their child or adolescent unless this has been changed by a court order.

Accordingly, either parent may initiate an appointment for their child or adolescent. This changes only when a court order grants sole parental responsibility or medical decision-making to one parent.

**Therefore, parents must promptly notify Developmental Paediatrics if and when court orders change.**

If input from both parents is not provided, our clinicians may not be able to complete a comprehensive assessment, reach a diagnosis or obtain consent for certain treatments.

### Joint Decision Making and Disputes

Where court orders outline shared parenting arrangements or specify joint consent for medical decisions, we require the **primary parent**<sup>2</sup> to:

- Inform the other parent of booked future appointment dates and times.
- Allow both parents to be present during consultations.
- Supply clinical documentation directly to the other parent.
- Inform the other parent of any changes to management plans.

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<sup>1</sup>**Patient:** As our patients vary in age, this is taken to mean the child, adolescent or young person

<sup>2</sup> **Primary parent:** the parent whose details are recorded in our practice management software. If circumstances change, it is the parents' responsibility to advise our reception team to update the records.

Where medication is recommended, our medical practitioners require consent from both parents before prescribing.

If parents disagree about treatment options, our clinicians cannot mediate disputes between parents.

The patient's care may be paused, declined or discontinued until the dispute is resolved between parents or by a court.

Please note that where no court orders are in place, shared parenting is the default position.

In urgent or emergency situations, care may proceed as permitted by law.

## Reports, Letters and Summaries

Reports are prepared for clinical purposes, not for family law proceedings unless expressly agreed in writing. We reserve the right to decline referrals that request assessments for legal decision-making or custody arrangements.

By signing this **Consent and Practice Policy for Children and Adolescents of Separated or Divorced Parents**, both parents acknowledge that information provided by either parent may be included in clinical records and reports relevant to the child's care.

## Appointments and Conduct

Parents and guardians are expected to behave in a courteous and respectful manner.

Developmental Paediatrics cannot manage parental conflict during or after consultations.

Clinical appointments may be ended, paused or declined where conflict or conflict of opinion arises, or where parental behaviour is incompatible with the child's wellbeing and /or adversely affects the clinician's ability to perform their role.

## Fees and Financial Responsibility

- All patient appointments must be paid in full at the time of or prior to the appointment.
- Developmental Paediatrics will not facilitate split payments.
- Medicare claims can only be submitted once on the date of service. The **primary contact** is the claimant by default. It is the responsibility of parents to provide our staff with accurate Medicare details before rebates are processed.

## Mandatory Reporting and Safety

Developmental Paediatric clinicians are mandatory reporters under NSW law.

Where there are concerns regarding abuse, neglect or risk of significant harm, clinicians are legally required to notify the appropriate statutory authority.

This duty applies irrespective of parental agreement, consent or court-ordered arrangements.

## Refusal or Withdrawal of Services

Developmental Paediatrics reserves the right to decline, suspend, or discontinue services where:

- required consent is not obtained
- relevant court orders are not provided
- parental conflict compromises the patient's welfare or the therapeutic process
- our clinicians and /or staff are subjected to unsafe behaviours and /or abuse which is inconsistent with the patient's best interests.

## Communication and Information Sharing

The parent who initiates contact with Developmental Paediatrics is recorded in our practice management software as the **primary contact** for a child.

Therefore, all communication, such as automated SMS or email appointment reminders, clinical reports, referral reminders and payments links, will be sent to the **primary contact**.

We will only send correspondence (as described above) to the parent identified as the primary contact even if we have contact details for more than one parent.

## Acknowledgement and Consent

By signing this consent form, you agree to abide by all of the terms and conditions contained in this policy.

**Child's full name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date of birth:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary Parent / Guardian 1/ Bill payer

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Parent / Guardian 2

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_