

AUGUST 1, 2024

PROGRAM INFORMATION

KIDS IN MIND:

HELPING FAMILIES SEPARATE AND
DIVORCE WHILE TAKING GOOD
CARE OF THEIR CHILDREN IN THE
PROCESS



Email: KidsinMind@resolvelegalgroup.com

or Call: 1-833-33-4KIDS or 1-833-834-5437



Resolving Custody/Parenting Disputes in a Holistic and Healthy Way!

WHILE KEEPING KIDS AND THEIR NEEDS AT THE CENTRE

KIDS IN MIND



When serious conflict arises in a marriage, and it becomes clear that separation and divorce are inevitable, many people believe the way for it to be resolved must include the courts. Custody and Parenting matters can become very contentious and if the parents cannot reach a settlement, often time they turn to the Court to make a decision for them. The Court, however, can only address the legal issues, and the process is very time consuming and expensive. The Court process also tends to polarize parents, instead of facilitating an environment that fosters a coparenting arrangement.

The Kids in Mind “Program” aims to provide "wrap around" resources and expertise to help separating and divorcing families resolve parenting and custody disputes while caring for the needs of themselves and their children from an emotional, psychological and individual perspective, while also taking into consideration any budgetary restraints.

Kids In Mind is an alternative to the adversarial court system and prioritizes the needs of families through the use of a multidisciplinary team assisting them. This six-month program is run by a panel consisting of a consulting child psychologist, a neutral lawyer (to provide a legal information to the parents and to draft agreements in real time), and the panel is lead by a mediator/arbitrator who together work with parents to help them make informed decisions and sustainable parenting plans that promote healthy coparenting.

PROGRAM PROFILE

Title: Kids In Mind

Proponents:

Mediator/Arbitrators

Wes Thiessen, PhD, QMed - Mediator/Arbitrator

Katie Ayer JD Mediator/Arbitrator

Eric Law JD Mediator/Arbitrator

Consulting Psychologist

Illisha Patterson, BA, MA - Registered Psychologist

Neutral Advising Lawyer

Cyndy D. Morin LLB Litigator/Mediator/Arbitrator

Implementing Unit:

A combined effort of "Resolve Legal Group" and "Resilience at Play" Psychology

Program Site:

All Kids in Mind Panels will take place at Resolve Legal Group in Calgary located at

440, 318 - 11th Ave SE

Program Duration:

The program takes six months to complete, followed by a follow up review 6 months after the program completion.

Brief Executive Summary of the Project:

- Every client at the start of their legal matter asks the question "**How much is this going to cost, and how long will my matter take?**" As any family lawyer can tell you, this is an impossible question to answer with anything other than "it depends".

One of the goals of this program is to address this question. The program was created in part to provide parents with some certainty as to the cost for settling their custody/parenting disputes, as well as a definitive timeline for this to happen.

- **There are often several underlying issues that impact high conflict family files, such as addictions, domestic violence, immigration concerns, mental illness, lack of financial resources etc. Courts are not equipped to deal with these underlying issues, so they are often left unaddressed or end up in dispute at a trial with expert witnesses; sometimes parents are ordered to engage in a bilateral assessment to assist the court when making a determination on parenting. Bilateral assessments are very costly, and they take a great deal of time to complete. That, coupled with court delays, can leave children in limbo for months even years before parents can receive a decision from the court.**

In its second "triage" stage, Kids In Mind is designed to address the family's most immediate concerns, identify any issues that may be impacting the file at the outset, and when necessary, the consulting psychologist may refer the family out for additional supports/treatment/assessments, which is achieved in real time and without delay. The other positive about this approach, is the panelists work with the family by providing them with sustainable and affordable supports and solutions based on the individual means, needs and circumstances of the family (rather than use a one size fits all kind of approach through the limited resources available through the court, which is not always sustainable financially).

In its third stage, the Program reviews the interim parenting plan and examines what is working and what isn't working. This occurs after the parents have received the recommended support to address the underlying issues that may impact the file. From there a more permanent parenting plan is created.

In its fourth stage, the final parenting plan is reviewed, and parents are invited to bring their lawyers and/or children to this phase where the parenting plan is shared with them. This allows the lawyers

and/or children to ask any questions they may have, and to explain how the Parenting Plan was reached. When the parents can't agree, an arbitrated decision will be made on their behalf.

In its fifth stage, the family has a follow up session after 6 months to ensure that things are working for the family and/or to make any changes that are necessary.

The goal is to resolve issues in contention through a more streamlined, more affordable process that not only addresses the legal issues but also the practical issues the family is facing based on their specific means, needs and circumstances.

This holistic approach allows the spouses to deal with parenting and custody matters in a manner that reduces conflict, creating a better atmosphere for all family members involved, especially children.

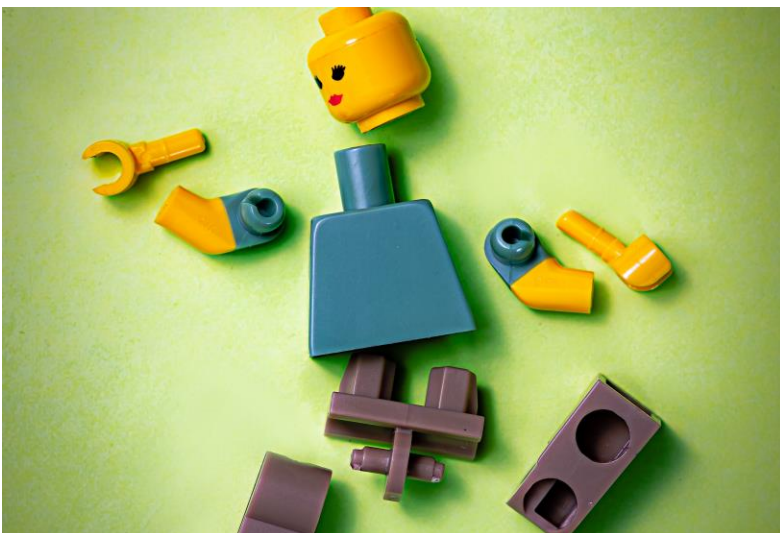
PROGRAM PROPOSAL PROPER

Introduction

From the beginning to the end of the process, clients will have access to and receive services from a consulting psychologist, neutral lawyer and mediator/arbitrator. The services from each of these professionals ensures that:

- Clients receive additional assessments/supports they may need where counselling or other like services would be of benefit to them. If patterns of negative behaviour have contributed to the breakdown of the marriage, these can be identified and addressed, so that going forward each parent will be more equipped with relational skills to create deeper and more meaningful relationships.

- Clients will receive the necessary support from a legal perspective. This does not preclude the clients seeking their own independent legal advice; however, the services of a legal professional will ensure that the process is compliant with all necessary legal procedures.



- Clients have the professional skills of a trained mediator that will navigate them through the resolution process to arrive at solutions that work best in their personal situation.

Rationale

Kids In Mind began with a desire to ensure that the most valuable individuals in a family, the children, are cared for in a way that demonstrates that value. Divorce is fraught with conflict. This conflict can be detrimental to the growth and well-being of the children of the marriage. When a marriage is dissolved through the use of the courts and litigation, the potential damage incurred on the children can create lasting effects and negatively impact the children's future relational potential. In trying to reduce conflict and harm to the children, Kids In Mind puts the needs of children first while providing necessary services to families in their time of great need. The sooner and the easier the separation and divorce process can be carried out, the less likely there will be significant damage to the health and well-being of the children. Kids In Mind is a framework for resolving custody and parenting issues while at the same time providing beneficial resources to reduce delays, conflict and obstacles in dissolving a marital relationship and/or creating a sustainable parenting plan.

Detailed Program Description

I) Intake, Assessment and Psychoeducational Learning

During this phase of the program, clients will receive a detailed description of the program elements, provide necessary personal background to the Program providers, receive domestic violence screening as well as an ACES score, and they are expected to watch a psychoeducational video on the effects of toxic stress and the effects of high conflict divorce on children. The purpose of these elements are, respectively:

- To ensure that the clients understand the services provided by the program and answer any questions they may have;
- To inform the Program providers of the background of each client to ensure that they are suitable for the proper delivery of the Program services;
- To determine the psychological or community services which would be most beneficial for each client, enabling the Program providers to refer Clients to the appropriate agency in the community; and
- To bring better awareness to the parents about the effects of toxic stress exposure to children involved in high conflict parenting disputes.



II) Initial Mediation

This segment of the program will provide an initial "triaged" mediation service for the clients in order to resolve any immediate needs in order for the family to be best served during the service delivery phase of the program. Terms and Conditions agreed upon by each parent during this initial phase will be seen as temporary, enabling the parents to have a safe and secure environment when exploring more permanent options. Some families may be able to complete this

phase very rapidly. It is expected that this phase will be a maximum of two days (12 hours) of mediation.

III) Services Delivery, Investigation, Exploration, Further Assessment

In this part of the program, clients will receive, if necessary, any referrals or recommendations from the consulting psychologist on the panel, and/or community which will help them grow. The recommended and provided services will be based on the initial assessment and ongoing assessment throughout the program. Examples of services clients may receive include, but are not limited to, counselling, communication skills development, anger management, and so on. When it is determined that clients are sufficiently prepared to go forward to the next phase of the program, a second mediation will be scheduled.

IV) Mediation - Arbitration

During the Mediation - Arbitration phase of the program, clients, assisted by a mediator and the panel, will work out an agreement concerning the significant parenting issues to be resolved. This will include future plans for parenting the children (parenting coordination). The time it takes to mediate these issues will depend on the participation of both parents as well as the complexity of the issues between them. Three days will be dedicated to the mediation process. If after that time a resolution cannot be found, the process will move into arbitration where the decisions will be made by the arbitrator. Two days will be reserved for a potential arbitration process. If the parents are able to reach an agreement without having to go to arbitration, the parents will get \$10,000.00 returned to them (or \$5000.00 each). This also acts as an incentive for the parents to come to their own agreement. This is key, because research shows that parents tend to follow agreements where they were engaged in the solutions more so than with court orders imposed upon them.

~ Keeping families OUT of court is one of the main objectives of Kids In Mind ~

V) Follow Up

A six-month review will be conducted by the service providers to ensure that the program has achieved its goals. If there are ongoing issues that need to be resolved, or if complications have not allowed the parents to find a healthy way forward, further services may be recommended.

Objectives

Kids In Mind seeks to reduce potential conflict that can arise during contentious custody and parenting matters. Blame, shame, aggression and even high conflict within a marital relationship can lead to communication difficulty and shutdown, while also preventing individuals from being able to resolve simple and even very complex challenges. The initial assessment will assist in ensuring that clients get the services they need to provide a good framework going forward, along with an immediate mediation phase to resolve today's problems in a temporary working manner. These immediate objectives of the program will then allow the clients to work through personal issues better preparing them to deal with the resolution of the issues on a long-term, more permanent basis. The longer mediation phase provides the time and space to work through more difficult issues. Combined with the mediation, the arbitration phase may provide either motivation to mediate better in good faith, or the assistance that can come with arbitration when an agreement cannot be reached by the parents alone—help is always at hand.

Significance

Brain Science has demonstrated over the recent years that parents in high conflict create negative and sometimes long-term impact on children, including physiological changes to a child's brain chemistry. It is best to get this conflict resolved as soon as possible, and in a manner which causes the least stress for the children. The Court system and its adversarial process is likely the worst factor in exacerbating the stress a child experiences in this scenario. Avoiding the courts and demonstrating that clients are able to resolve their differences with professional help in a non-adversarial manner, is the most beneficial way in which to resolve the conflict with the least harm to the children. Combining psychological, legal and mediation services together in a package deal ensures that clients will receive well-rounded care in a more wholistic environment, satisfying the courts, individuals and their peace of mind.

Implementing Schedule

The unique features of the Kids In Mind program include the combination of services provided by professionals in the community in a collaborative framework, a set schedule of those services, and a fixed price for the program. These features provide excellent resources for the clients, while responding to the two most frequent questions asked at the beginning of a divorce process, “How long with this take?” and “How much will this cost?” Kids In Mind, while prioritizing a reduction in the potential harm that could come to children in an adversarial long drawn out and expensive court battle, also seeks to reduce stress and anxiety on clients arising from the unknowns of time and cost. With a cooperative clientele, it is expected that clients will complete the program in a six-month timeframe, with one additional six-month post program follow up.

Estimated budget

Clients will be provided with the above-described services for an all-in package price of \$40,000.00. While the number may seem astonishing, those who have been through a custody/parenting matter in Court will attest that this program is a far cheaper price tag than what they would experience going through litigation in the courts. This price point, combined with the added benefits of all the professional services they would receive makes the Kids In Mind program a winner in the hearts, minds and pocketbooks of all involved.

For more information, or to inquire about next steps, contact the Kids In Mind Program Coordinator through Resolve Legal Group at:

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