

YOUTH HEALTH FORUM

Family breakup: Supporting young people through separation and conflict

29 November 2017

Uniting

Uniting Counselling & Mediation Programs

Options (Parramatta only) Gambling (Campbelltown, Wollongong)

Keeping Contact (Parramatta, Newcastle, Sydney CBD)

Anchor (Parramatta, Sydney CBD, Newcastle, Gosford, Campbelltown, Penrith, Fairfield, Wollongong)

Couple Counselling (Parramatta, Sydney CBD, Newcastle, Gosford, Penrith, Wollongong, Campbelltown)

Individual Counselling (Parramatta, Sydney CBD, Newcastle, Gosford, Penrith, Wollongong, Campbelltown)

Family Dispute Resolution (Parramatta, Sydney CBD, Fairfield, Penrith, Campbelltown, Wollongong)

Uniting

Uniting staff are mandatory reporters and are required to report risk of harm concerns.

Uniting does not provide reports for Courts or other services. In general we would only report on attendance or non-attendance.

Uniting requires written consent from the family to share information with other relevant parties.

Many of our clients are Court ordered to participate, but we also have a number of self-referred families in the various programs.

Warm referrals are accepted but at some stage our intake staff would need to speak with family members.

Uniting

8 July 2015 • 3

When a person contacts Unifam an intake interview is conducted.

This involves obtaining the person's concerns, family of origin details and an assessment of any safety concerns.

The process usually involves contact with both parents/carers.

The allocation team (intake team leader, clinical supervisor/s & manager) then decide which program would suit the family best and the case is then allocated to a therapist.

Wait times differ between different programs.

Uniting

8 July 2015 • 4

KEEPING CONTACT

- Established in 1999 to strengthen safe and respectful relationships between parents and children following separation.
- Specifically designed for parents seeking orders following contraventions or struggling to make existing orders work effectively
- Families are Court ordered, self referred or referred from other programs within Uniting or from other services
- Parents are expected to first attend the 'Talking with your kids' program, a one off 3 hour program designed to educate parents about the impact of conflict and develop better communication

Uniting

8 July 2015 • 5

Process

- Generally both parents and all children are involved in the process
- Staff work in a team of two, one adult consultant and one child consultant
- The adult consultant will meet with each parent separately and the child consultant will observe the session behind the one way screen
- The child consultant will then meet individually with the children (5-18 years) and then prepare feedback to the parents about the children's needs and the impact of the conflict on the children. Developmental feedback is given if the children are under 5 years
- The adult consultant is present during the feedback. They will then work with each parent separately and will refer to the feedback during their future work together
- This work may go on for up to a year

Uniting

8 July 2015 • 6

OPTIONS PROGRAM

Parents and adolescents experiencing conflict:

- Disagreements about family rules and expectations
- Conflict in relationships
- Violence
- School problems
- Behavioural issues
- Leaving home
- Depression
- Separation issues
- Step-families

Uniting

8 July 2015 • 7

The Options Team provide two types of services:-

Family Therapy Group work

Family Therapy. The practitioner allocated the case liaises with the Options team to decide which family members will be present in the initial session.

The initial session generally involves other members of the Options team, with one therapist in the room with the family and the others behind a one-way screen.

The model has a systemic approach, utilising a reflective team. The team will offer their ideas to the therapist during the first session via phone, and again at the end of the session in order to facilitate feedback and for further reflection.

Uniting

8 July 2015 • 8

Some families find this strange or awkward at first but our experience is that they soon relax and find it very helpful.

We introduce the team and invite family members to go behind the screen to see how it works. The children seem to find it all very exciting.

The therapist in the room is usually the person who continues to work with the family.

This work could be with a combination of different family members or individuals over many sessions, and even over many months or a year.

This systemic family therapy model is non-blaming/neutral and understands problems within the family to be relational and interational.

Uniting

8 July 2015 • 9

We note patterns of behaviour and track behavioural sequences (eg. when x happens, what happens next).

Issues may relate to early attachments and different situations may trigger family of origin issues in the family and/or couple which may require different responses.

Common issues relate to:

- Grief and loss
- Identity issues
- Structure – hierarchy, reorganisation
- Roles within the family
- Attachment disruption
- Trauma
- Re-partnering
- Difficult behaviour containment
- Parenting skills – containing behaviours
- Emotional regulation/soothing
- Self-harm

Uniting

8 July 2015 • 10

GROUP WORK

The Options team provides group work in schools.

These groups cover issues that include:-

- Resilience
- Emotions
- Stress/Anxiety, including HSC
- Leadership
- Parenting Teens

Our group programs are often tailored to suit the needs of a particular school, however we recognise the need to deliver evidence based programs and are currently looking at a few different programs, for example a new one recently designed in Victoria with the aim of addressing the precursors to family violence, developing healthy relationships (emotional awareness and regulation).

Uniting

8 July 2015 • 11

THE ANCHOR: Supporting Kids Through Separation

- Attorney Generals Department
- Children and young people aged 5-17 years old
- Individual and group therapy
- Child consultancy and Parent Feedback
- Community education
- Referrals

Uniting

8 July 2015 • 12

The Anchor aims to:

- Decrease levels of distress
- Improve communication
- Build resilience
- Allow children’s voices to be included
- Child protection
- Early intervention and referrals to other specialists
- Systemic therapy



8 July 2015 • 13

Child’s Experience: what they need...

- Protection from conflict
- Someone to listen to their fears
- Someone to help reduce parental conflict
- Stability and security
- Space to resolve their feelings
- To know they are loved
- Clear communication about any changes
- Time to process what has happened



8 July 2015 • 14

Individual Therapy

- The child sets the agenda for the therapy
- Interventions are tailored to the child’s expressed/observed needs
- Safety assessments are ongoing
- Exploration of the child’s inner processes
- Helping with emotional language, emotional regulation



8 July 2015 • 15

Ways of Exploring and Communicating:

pictures
 meditation
 roleplay dance play
 letters clay games
 activities
 music art movement
 talking craft sandplay
 drawing writing
 painting



8 July 2015 • 16

Outcomes:



8 July 2015 • 17

The Anchor Groups:

- **Jigsaw**
 - **Connect Kids**
 - **Connect Youth**
- validating
 liberating
 fun
 challenging
 healing
 normalising



8 July 2015 • 18

Child Consultation:

- **What's working / what could be different**
- **What it's like going between two homes**
- **Distress, sadness, anger, fear, confusion**
- **Developmental needs**
- **Safety**
- **Feedback to parents**
- **Developmental feedback for children under 5 years old**



9 July 2015 • 10

Individual and Couples Counselling

How our service can help clients

- * Dealing with grief & loss, anxiety or depression
- * Coping with relationship stress or conflict
- * Difficulties experienced by couple i.e. closeness and intimacy
 - * Parenting Issues
- * Rebuilding after separation or divorce
 - * Keeping Children Safe
 - * Concerns about safety
- * Helping individuals with Trauma and traumatic memories



Family Dispute Resolution

Goals for mediation are to help resolve separation matters in a way that's less stressful and more affordable for the clients. We help clients to reach agreements about:

- * Where the child/young person will live
- * The amount of time spent with each parent
- * Who will be involved in parental decision making
 - * Child support arrangements
- * Property settlement or division of assets
 - * interim financial arrangements
- * Any other concerns or issues a family may have



Hybrid cases

Uniting's hybrid model involving both an FDR Practitioner and a Family Counsellor

The benefits of the two roles (hybrid) -

Hybrid model is open-ended and flexible, with components delivered based on assessed needs.

Key elements provided for each family include:

- * Individual counselling
- * Where appropriate, Child-Inclusive Practice
- * Additional interventions such as Family counselling, Anchor and mediation

Uniting has also developed partnerships with the courts and legal professionals to support separated parents to come up with solutions that meet the needs of their children/young people.



Unifam

- Parramatta – 02 8830 0700
- Campbelltown - 02 4629 7000
- Sydney CBD - 02 9373 5500
- Newcastle - 02 4925 6000
- Gosford - 02 4325 9666
- Fairfield - 02 9794 2000
- Penrith – 02 4732 3836



23

Our purpose
To inspire people, enliven communities & confront injustice.

Courageous Action

Community & Innovation Supporting people to build their own future through innovation and entrepreneurship.	Social Justice & Advocacy Working with people to address social inequality and disadvantage.	Empowering People Helping people to take control of their own lives and achieve their potential.
Better Together	Be the Change	Be Yourself
Inspiration	Respectful	Compassionate
Kind		

Christ invites us to serve humanity by creating an inclusive, connected and just world.



24