

Involving Children in the Mediation Process

DIRECT CONSULTATION WITH CHILDREN (DCC)

RESOLVE : ASL

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1st KEY MESSAGE

Not all children want to be
involved in the Mediation Process

- Respecting this decision

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2nd KEY MESSAGE

- The decision to involve children is not taken lightly
- Parents are required to be committed to the mediation process i.e. what child says is valued and may contribute towards future decision making
- Parents are informed of what is involved and prepared for how the model works
- Participation in mediation is **voluntary** and **confidential** (extends to DCC)

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3rd KEY MESSAGE

- **Only Mediators trained in Direct Consultation with Children (DCC) will undertake this work**
- **Training is intensive – some of the How questions Mediators are asked to explore include:**
 - How do you ensure child understands what you are saying?
 - How do you focus on child's agenda?
 - How do you establish trust?
 - How do you explain process to a child?
 - How much real choice do children have about meeting with a mediator?

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4th KEY MESSAGE

PURPOSE OF DCC IS CLEAR TO PARENTS

The aim is to provide a safe and confidential environment for children to express their thoughts and feelings about their parents' separation, and to have these validated.

DCC MODEL

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Making the Initial Contact

Communicate directly with the children therefore made in appropriate language. Set out practical details - who, why, where, when. Seek their consent to come.

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Set the child or young person at ease

Begin on a topic which is not threatening and in which you might have a common interest. Reveal something of yourself.

Don't be patronising - feigning an interest in a subject which is completely false.

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Defining the Context

Recap on the information provided in the initial contact. Child or young person may have received an edited version. Establish the safeness of the location by referring to the safeguards in place - not alone in building, where person who accompanied the child is, door can be left ajar if the child wishes. Seat the child or young person so that they can see the door and are not obstructed from leaving.

8

Negotiate consent

Don't presume that child or young person's presence represents consent. Explain their participation is voluntary, they are not being forced to talk and that conclusions will not be inferred from their reticence.

9

Encourage questions from the child or young person ...

... and answer them as honestly as you can.

10

Watch your language

Don't use technical words without explaining them. Check out continually that they and you are understanding what is being said.

Use open questions, explain no right answers, accept "I don't know" as possibly accurate answer. Don't contradict the child or young person's version of events but don't collude in criticism of one or other parent. Avoid judgements of the child or young person's lifestyle.

11

Be honest

Don't pretend you've just come to have a chat.

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Explain what happens next

Always let child or young person know what you will do next and if you can what will be the next stage in the process. Information about timing should be provided for children aged 9/10 and older.

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FEEDBACK TO PARENTS

Choices are important:
child will write down feedback;
be present at feedback;
not be present at feedback or
there may be no feedback.

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And finally ... an experienced social worker advises:

“What’s most important is to believe in the young person’s potential or actual ability and to have ongoing expectations of them. They need to know you have a genuine interest in getting to know them, in establishing communication with them, and to making a possible difference in their lives.”

(Lewis Maddy 2000 Learning to Listen: Consulting with Children and Young People with Disabilities: Save The Children)