

SEPARATED PARENTING SERVICES

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EDUCATION BEYOND SEPARATION

With the ever-increasing number of families separating in New Zealand today, the traditional family as we once knew it is becoming a *minority*. The diverse blend of families in our schools today is increasing, with each one having its own special needs and rights.

After separation a parent often feels alienated and left out from their child/ren's schooling. Often when there is a communication breakdown between parents, schools end up receiving the brunt of frustration. To avoid this, keeping communication channels open will help keep both parent informed and actively involved in their child/ren's education. This in itself will not only benefit the child/ren, but the school as well.

The Care of Children Act 2004 (The Act) has introduced Parenting Orders replacing Custody and Access, with the terms with Day to Day Care and Contact Orders. The Acts approach should make the position for a school clearer in their obligation to parents and guardians.

The Acts purpose is to promote children's welfare and best interest, and facilitate their development, by helping to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for their guardianship and care.

The Act defines the role of guardianship in Part 2. Guardians have duties, powers, rights and responsibilities to a child. This includes (without limitation),

(a) the child's name (and any changes to it); and

(b) changes to the child's places of residence (including, without limitation, changes of that kind arising from travel by the child) that may affect the child's relationship with his or her parents and guardians; and

(c) medical treatment of the child (if that medical treatment is not routine in nature); and

(d) where, and how, the child is to be educated: and

(e) the child's culture, language, and religious denomination and practice.

Definition of a Guardian can also be found in Care of Children Act 2004 Part 2.

A child's school does have a certain obligation to all guardians unless otherwise ordered by the Courts.

This involves, but is not limited to, general information that would normally be given to parents if they were still living together and taking an active role in their child/ren's upbringing. This is also covered under The Official Information Act 1982.

There are several simple ways to keep all guardians informed:

- Duplicate copies of information could be faxed, emailed or posted.
- A school could request self-addressed envelopes from the parents.
- Schools could adopt an open door policy to parents.

The welfare and best interests of the child must be the first and paramount consideration when a school is dealing with guardianship issues.

If you require more information, please email separatedparentingservices@live.com