

## **SUMMARY OF CHILDREN'S NEEDS**

### **WHEN EXPLAINING THE SEPARATION CHILDREN NEED:**

#### **A SIMPLE NO BLAME EXPLANATION**

- Tell your children this was an adult decision.
- Children can't understand complex adult issues.
- The temptation to tell your story is great.
- If children hear these stories, they will feel they have to choose between parents.
- Children feel bad about themselves when they hear bad things about their other parent.

#### **TO KNOW THEY ARE LOVED BY BOTH PARENTS**

- Children do best when both parents stay involved.
- In certain situations, supervision may be required.
- It is unusual for no contact to be in a child's best interests. Usually only considered if there is a risk for the child.
- If one parent does not stay involved with children, they need to know it was not their fault.

#### **TO KNOW THEY WILL CONTINUE TO SEE BOTH PARENTS**

- Children need to know that they will have time with both parents.
- Children need to know the time-sharing plan as soon as possible.
- Children need to know that they will be taken care of.

#### **TO KNOW THAT THE SEPARATION WAS NOT THEIR FAULT**

- Unless told otherwise, children no matter what their age, tend to think the separation was their fault.
- Children need to be told directly that they did not cause it, nor can they change things now.

#### **TO KNOW THAT THEY HAVE EACH PARENT'S PERMISSION TO LOVE BOTH PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

- Children cannot choose between parents – they love both.
- If a child is speaking badly of one parent, doesn't want to see them, the reasons need to be explored. The child may need help.
- Children may be feeling caught in the middle between not just both parents, but both families.

## **CHILDREN'S ONGOING NEEDS**

- Regular/continuous contact with both parents.
- Reduction in parental conflict.
- Parental cooperation, where possible / non-interference where cooperation is not possible.
- Help working through their feelings of loss.
- To be informed about the separation and reassured that it was not their fault.
- Know what arrangements are being made for their care and for contact with both parents.
- Know that decision-making is not their responsibility.
- Permission to love both parents.
- Consistency and structure.
- Clear boundaries.
- Reassurance.