

Resources

In addition to community resources, Alberta Family Justice Services provides:

Parenting After Separation (PAS) — is a no cost, six hour workshop to help parents understand the effects and impact of separation or divorce on parents and their children. PAS provides suggestions on how to make positive choices while living apart. Anyone who is separated (married or not) and anyone who is considering separation should attend.

For information on the course, including how to register, call:

Family Justice Services

Calgary (403) 297-6981

Edmonton (780) 427-8343

Elsewhere in Alberta (403) 340-7187

Dial 310-0000 first for toll free access in Alberta.

Focus on Communication in Separation

(FOCIS) — is a no cost, six hour communication workshop teaching parents how to communicate effectively while living apart. Parents will learn how to reduce conflict through good communication and problem solving skills, decrease the tension that arise from conflict and most importantly, decrease stress for children and their parents.

To register:

Calgary (403) 297-6981

Edmonton (780) 644-5092

Elsewhere in Alberta (403) 340-7187

Dial 310-0000 first for toll free access in Alberta.



Family Justice Services

Family Justice Services are a group of programs and services offered by Alberta Justice in collaboration with the courts of Alberta. Family Justice Services works directly with individuals and also with the judges of the Alberta Provincial Court and Court of Queen's Bench to help people get appropriate solutions for their family law issues.

For matters including parenting, access and custody, child and spousal/partner support, Family Justice Services provides:

- information
- referrals and information to other agencies
- assistance with court documents and some court appearances
- education programs for parents and families experiencing separation or divorce
- mediation and dispute resolution programs and
- assistance for assessments and interventions.

Family Law Information Centres (FLIC)

Calgary – (403) 297-6600

Edmonton – (780) 415-0404

Grande Prairie – (780) 833-4234

Lethbridge – (403) 388-3102

Red Deer – (403) 755-1468

Toll free access – dial 310-0000

www.albertacourts.ab.ca

WHAT CHILDREN NEED WHEN PARENTS SEPARATE

Family
Justice
Services



Parenting is a tough job with ups and downs, even when things are going well. Parenting becomes even harder if you are feeling strong emotions about separation or divorce and are fearful about the future. At a time when your children need you the most, it can be difficult to know what they need and how to help.

Family change may cause many different feelings, including loss, sadness, worry and excitement. Every adult is different and will go through separation or divorce in different ways. Children are also different. Children within the same family have different needs and may act differently about the family change depending on their age, development and personality.

Children find it hard to put feelings into words. Feelings of sadness, anger or fear may be shown in ways that include:

- aggression
- nightmares
- regression (acting as if they are younger)
- withdrawing
- acting out
- hoarding food in their rooms
- separation anxiety (crying and/or clinging when leaving a parent).

Children may repeat or show different behaviours as they go through different stages of their development, or on special days such as birthdays or holidays.

All children need to feel loved, cared for and safe, especially when they may feel different or alone because separation or divorce is happening in their family. They need support from the people who can help the most, their parents. One of the best

things you can do for your children is to parent cooperatively with the other parent.

Parents and children leaving situations with family violence and/or substance abuse face special issues. Safety must come first, rather than the development of a cooperative parenting relationship.

How can parents help?

- Be in charge. You are the parent and are still responsible for your children.
- Tell all the children about the separation or divorce at the same time.
- Tell the children and keep telling them, that the separation or divorce is not their fault.
- Tell the children that the decision about the separation or divorce is final.
- Make decisions based on the children's needs.
- Keep some things the same, like bedroom, babysitter, school, church, and playmates.
- When changes are going to happen try to tell your children what will happen and when it will happen.
- Try to have structure and routine in children's daily lives.
- Be consistent with discipline.
- Plan your spending and budget for basic family needs.
- Never let your children hear you speak badly about the other parent.
- Recognize that although your personal relationship has ended, your parenting relationship is forever.
- Make an effort to communicate with the other parent. You may need to try new ways of communicating.

- Try to reduce conflict between yourself and the other parent.
- Look after yourself. If you are feeling overwhelmed by your feelings or situation — get help.

Little things that can mean a lot to a child:

- lots of hugs and kisses and being tucked-in at night
- time each day (even a short time) to sit down and talk to a parent
- hearing positive things about themselves
- celebrating birthdays and special events
- having pictures of the other parent and extended family on display
- hearing stories about your parents and you as a child
- seeing you show respect for all family members, including children and the other parent
- feeling free to express their feelings.

