

# **Procedures For Client Interviews at the Children's Court Clinic**

## **1. Booking the Children's Court Clinic Assessment Room**

The Children's Court Clinic assessment rooms are available for the use of Authorised Clinicians (Children's Court Clinic) Scheme. Bookings can be made by telephoning the Office Manager on 8688 1530 or via email to [childrens\\_court\\_clinic@agd.nsw.gov.au](mailto:childrens_court_clinic@agd.nsw.gov.au)

The Children's Court Clinic understands that Authorised Clinicians may need to make more than one tentative booking in order to negotiate a suitable date and time with a client, but are requested to confirm the date of the agreed appointment once they have settled on a date with the client.

The Children's Court Clinic expects that Authorised Clinicians will be mindful of scheduled appointment times, in accordance with the age of the child, and the possible disruption to any routines that the child may have. If the child is to be seen with more than one adult, careful attention should be given to the way in which the assessment interviews and observation sessions are structured.

## **2. Cancellation**

The Authorised Clinician must advise the Office Manager or their delegate as early as possible if the assessment room is no longer required.

## **3. Facilities**

### **3.1 Assessment Rooms and Waiting Area**

The Children's Court Clinic expects that the Authorised Clinician will leave the assessment rooms and waiting area in a clean and tidy state, as they found it. The Authorised Clinician is to inform the Office Manager or one of the administrative staff when the room has been vacated so the Clinic knows it is available for use.

### **3.2 Equipment**

The assessment rooms and waiting area provide toys and books for client use. The assessment rooms contains toys for children of varying ages, from a small baby to a teenager. Pencils and paper are also provided for the entertainment of children.

The Authorised Clinician is free to change the configuration of tables and chairs in the assessment room, but upon leaving the room, must return it to the way it was found.

### **3.3 Audio-visual equipment**

Equipment is available in the assessment room that allows clinicians or other parties to observe a session from behind a one-way mirror or from a closed circuit television. This method can be particularly useful for example when observing parent child interaction and may be preferable in some circumstances to in vivo. Sessions may also be recorded to VHS using the electronic equipment in the observation room. There are instructions for use but help is available from Children's Court Clinic staff if you are not familiar with how to work it. Families need to be asked for written permission to videotape the sessions, and it must be emphasized that they are free to refuse, and that the recorder could be turned off at any moment.

### **3.4 Toilets**

Public male and female, and disabled toilets are available at the Clinic.

### **3.5 Baby Changing**

There is a baby-changing table in the bathroom area adjoining the assessment room.

## **4. Refreshments**

The Children's Court Clinic does not provide refreshments for children or clients. The Children's Court Clinic considers that the provision of refreshments forms part of a parenting capacity assessment. Filtered water is available.

## **5. Arriving at the Children's Court Clinic**

### **5.1 Authorised Clinician's Responsibility**

The Children's Court Clinic expects that the Authorised Clinician will be at the Children's Court Clinic at least 15 minutes before their first scheduled appointment, to ensure that they always arrive before their clients. If they are late, they must let the Clinic know so that those who are to be interviewed are informed.

### **5.2 Client's Responsibility**

Upon arrival at the Children's Court Clinic, clients should press the intercom on the entrance to the Clinic. When answered they should announce themselves. They will then gain access through the electronic doors.

### **5.3 Children's Court Clinic Responsibility**

When the client arrives, the Office Manager or their delegate will go to the Clinic entrance, and greet the client(s). The Office Manager will usually show them the location of the toilets, the reception desk and drinking water facilities. If the Authorised Clinician has not yet arrived, or is late for any reason, the Office Manager will ensure that the client is kept fully informed.

If the Authorised Clinician chooses to undertake these tasks, they should inform the Office Manager of this beforehand.

## **6. Managing Children's Behaviour**

Principal responsibility for the child rests with any adult escorting the child to the interview, such as the foster carer, parents, other relative or Department of Community Services escort. The Children's Court Clinic expects that those adults present for the assessment will manage the children's behaviour whenever possible. The Authorised Clinician can assist in this task by ensuring the children are adequately settled and taken care of before leaving them in the waiting area.

On those few occasions when a child in the waiting area is disruptive, the staff member should speak in a respectful tone to the adult present, asking them to deal with the child's behaviour. If staff from Children's Court Clinic need to respond to the child's behaviour themselves, the staff member should be firm but kind, asking the child to reduce noise levels, or to behave appropriately. A suitable intervention is to find an activity to settle or distract the child.

If the child continues to misbehave, the staff member may need to interrupt the assessment, and advise the Authorised Clinician of the child's behaviour but this should be done only as a last resort.

Note: It is important to be aware that the parents who are waiting with children to be assessed may lack some skills in child management and may need respectful guidance in terms of dealing with the child. The children who are to be assessed at the Clinic have often experienced emotional distress and significant disruption in their lives and should be dealt with sympathetically.

## **7. Department of Community Services Escorts/Supervisors**

DoCS have written a Business Help topic on this issue and it is hoped that this will lead to improvements in understanding of the role of escorts/supervisors amongst staff and contracted workers.

The Children's Court Clinic expects that the escorting officer will usually wait to collect the child/ren or sit with them while they are waiting for their parent/s to complete interviews. The escort/supervisor is responsible for the child(s) behaviour when they are waiting to be interviewed or when needs must be met in terms of changing or feeding.

Unless there is information that indicates that it is unwise to do so, it is preferable for assessment purposes that the contact supervisor is not present during the interview

Note: To avoid any confusion that may arise, it is advisable to contact the caseworker prior to the interview and establish expectations of the escort/supervisor for the visit.

## **8. Concerns Over Safety**

Advice from the Department of Community Services should be heeded and adequate precautions applied if a client to be assessed poses a risk of harm. This may include risk of abducting a child or threat of harm to others. Dependent on the degree of risk the Authorised Clinician may choose to proceed with the interview but put in place additional measures. For example, if the interview is to be conducted at the Clinic, then arrangements need to be made with administrative staff to have a Sheriff in attendance nearby. Other staff in the Clinic should be pre-warned if a client to be interviewed is regarded as violent or dangerous in any way.

## **9. If Contact is Usually Supervised**

On occasions there may be restrictions placed on a parent/carers contact with a child(ren). In such cases, where the parent is to be interviewed along with the child, the supervision of that contact may be delegated to the Authorised Clinician for the duration of the consultation. The Authorised Clinician will need to be fully cogniscent of the conditions imposed and make sure these are adequately managed.

## **10. Problems/Breakages**

From time to time problems will occur when using the Clinic for an assessment. This may include loss of items, breakages or certain amenities not working correctly. We want to ensure that the Assessment room is a comfortable and secure environment and while the room is checked regularly, we can rectify problems more promptly if they are reported to the Office Manager or a member of the administrative staff at the time they occur.

## **11. Ethical Considerations and Confidentiality**

The ethos of the Clinic is one of professionalism, kindness and respect for clients and this should be demonstrated in the behaviour that staff show at all times. Confidentiality is one of the core tenets of ethical practice and we have a duty to respect the client's trust and keep private any information we may hear in the course of their visit. Confidentiality also requires us to respect the client's privacy by restricting access of others to that information.