



SERVICES WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH OF SEPARATED AND DIVORCED PARENTS INFORMATION SHEET

When a child is referred for service, and there has been a separation or divorce, ***Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth*** will always consider the best interest of the child in making decisions about service.

Mental Health Best Interests of Your Child is Our Priority

Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth will provide mental health services to children and youth dealing with the impact of parental separation and divorce, even when matters of custody are being discussed. When appropriate, ***Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth*** will build collaborative working relationships with both parents who share decision-making and parenting time.

Will Open Doors Complete Custody and Parenting Time Assessments and Reports?

Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth will not prepare assessments or make recommendations related to decision-making and parenting time decisions. ***Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth*** will also not provide written reports to lawyers in a decision-making and parenting time dispute, with the exception of third parties acting in the best interest of the child such as the Office of the Children's Lawyer and the Family Court Clinic.

Limitations of Service

Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth may limit, postpone, or terminate services if services seem ineffective or detrimental to the referred child.

PROCEDURE

As part of the initial referral process for a child whose parents have separated or divorced, Administrative Coordinators and/or the clinician will determine the relationship status of the referred child with their parents, unless there is a Court order that stipulates one of the following:

- only one parent has rights to plan and participate in treatment with their child,
 - the parenting time parent is not available and is essentially absent,
 - the CAS, FCSLLG, police or a court has instructed that the parenting time parent has restricted access, ***Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth*** will assume both parents are interested in child's wellbeing and will have some level of involvement in the child's treatment.
 - If requested, supporting documentation must be provided.
1. The referring parent will be informed that it is ***Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth's*** practice to notify an involved but non-referring parent of the referral. A plan is developed with the referring parent for ensuring notification of the non-referring parent.
 2. If the non-referring parent, upon notification, contacts ***Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth*** to indicate their wish to participate, they will be given the opportunity to have input into

the referral process. In such a circumstance, the client record will identify the stated preference of the parents to contribute to work to support the mental health of their child.

3. Both parents will receive correspondence clarifying ***Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youths'*** role as a children's mental health service. The letter will also outline clearly for both parents, ***Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth's*** policy that states that employees of ***Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth*** will not prepare assessments or provide information for lawyers regarding services received at ***Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth***. If beneficial, the assigned counsellor may invite both parents, together or separately, to an orientation meeting to discuss the same.
4. Both parents will be called to initiate service. **However, it is necessary to seek the opinion of the youth. If the youth is able to demonstrate capacity to understand the terms of consent, the youth can decide to what extent they wish to have each parent involved in service. The youth can decide to have parents involved or to have one or both parents excluded from mental health service.** In such an event, either or both parents can request supportive intervention for themselves with a Family Caregiver Support Worker. This Family Caregiver Support Worker services exclude direct service with the child or youth.
5. Discussion with involved parents will occur in advance of child treatment in order to affirm shared commitment to treatment goals, and address barriers to successful treatment (i.e. parent conflict). Ideally, that discussion will take place in a joint meeting.
6. The case will proceed if one parent has sole decision-making parental responsibility. Documentation, usually through a Court Order, will need to be provided at the first appointment.
7. Once accord is reached with parents, the ***Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth*** Counsellor will determine in collaboration with parents and child(ren) how to proceed with child mental health treatment.
8. If parents, or the child(ren)/youth are unable to make a decision as to how they prefer to proceed, alternate options will be discussed with the referring parent. Parents are informed that treatment options will be limited to crisis response for the child, treatment for mental health issues distinct from parent conflict and/or participation in a parenting group or separation/divorce group. These services will be considered on an individual basis. A letter will also be sent to both parents indicating that treatment for the child is contraindicated at this time.
9. Clinical records will report on a child's mental health progress in a manner that is accessible and respectful of both custodial parents.