

1 – Relationships Australia Victoria Client Information Sheet

Welcome to Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV). Please read the following information carefully.

SPECIALISED RELATIONSHIP SERVICES

RAV provides a range of specialised relationship services. Descriptions of all the services provided by RAV are in our various brochures. RAV is staffed by qualified professionals, chosen for their ability to provide these specialist services.

Qualifications and internships

You will receive a statement about your practitioner's qualifications. Please feel free to ask about his / her qualifications, training and experience. From time to time at our Centres, course interns / students undertake work placement closely supervised by experienced practitioners. If you have any concerns about this, please discuss this with your practitioner. All practitioners receive regular supervision.

CONSENT, CLIENT DATA, CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

Consent

You will be asked whether you consent to receive a service on the conditions in this Information Sheet.

Basic information

In order to provide a service to you, RAV needs some basic information, including your name, address and telephone number. This information will be stored securely by RAV.

Client data

The Commonwealth and State Governments provide funding to RAV to help us provide a variety of different programs. To assist in the planning, development and evaluation of programs, information you provide on the Client Details Form (i.e. your main language, country of birth, relationship status, household, employment etc.), is de-identified and that data is then forwarded to the relevant Government Department.

This means that you cannot be identified from that data and your personal information is therefore completely protected, as required by the Privacy Act 1988. If you require further detail about this process, please ask to speak to the Centre Manager.

In the case of the Commonwealth, the de-identified data is stored on the DSS data Exchange, an IT system hosted by the Department of Social Services. To view the Department's Privacy policy, please see the Department's website: www.dss.gov.au.

Confidentiality

In general, information provided by you cannot be disclosed to anyone outside RAV without your permission and, under the Family Law Act, RAV's family dispute resolution practitioners and family counsellors must maintain the confidentiality of client information. RAV protects client information in all its programs, as required by the Privacy Act 1988.

The main exceptions which permit disclosure of your personal information outside RAV are:

- Reasonable suspicion of child abuse, or risk of child abuse – we have a legal obligation to report this to the Department of Health and Human Services (Child Protection);
- A risk of physical harm to a child;
- A serious risk to the life, health or safety of yourself or others;
- Other matters of a serious or criminal nature involving threats of violence, or damage to property;
- If RAV receives a subpoena in Court proceedings and the information may be admissible as evidence e.g. legal proceedings not covered by the Family Law Act;
- If a Court or Tribunal orders RAV to disclose that information, or as otherwise required by law;
- If you consent to the disclosure of that information.

For further information about the exceptions, please read paragraph 3.6 of the RAV Privacy Policy.

Personal information will be shared **within RAV** where there is a serious risk to the life, health or safety of yourself or others, a reported breach of a Family Violence Intervention Order (or equivalent order), to review previous service delivery, where it is necessary for the purpose of supervision, or otherwise with your consent.

Privacy

We take seriously our commitment to the privacy of your personal information, and encourage you to raise any concerns with your practitioner or the Centre Manager.

RAV's Privacy Policy is available on our website at www.rav.org.au, or in hard copy format, free of charge, upon request. The policy contains information about:

- how RAV manages your personal information
- how you may obtain access to your personal information and, if necessary, seek correction of that information
- how you may complain about a breach of the Australian Privacy Principles and how RAV will deal with your complaint.

FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

We invite clients to participate in the evaluation of our services after completion of their time with RAV. This feedback assists greatly with the review and planning of our services.

RECORDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

To ensure our service is of the highest quality, your practitioner may request your written permission to record a session using visual / audio recording equipment, for supervision or related purposes. Recording a session provides an opportunity for feedback or reflection, and can greatly assist the work of the professional staff. The recording is deleted once supervision has occurred.

Recording of a session by a client using any form of electronic device is not permitted, unless there are special circumstances approved by the practitioner and also the prior knowledge and consent of all persons in the session.

COMPLAINTS AND SUGGESTIONS

RAV is concerned if a client is dissatisfied with any aspect of service. If you have a complaint or concern, please:

- raise your complaint or concern directly with the practitioner; or, if you prefer,
- make your complaint directly to the Centre Manager, either orally or in writing.

If your complaint remains unresolved, the RAV Complaints Officer will investigate and respond to your complaint. At this point, you will need to put your complaint in writing.

If you remain dissatisfied about how your complaint was managed within RAV, you can forward your complaint to the relevant external funding body, such as Department of Social Services Feedback Coordination Team in Canberra, the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services or the Victorian Department of Justice. For contact details, please ask the Centre Manager.

Suggestions about any aspect of our services are also welcome, and may be made orally, or by completing a Client Feedback / suggestion form – available in the reception area.

FEES

RAV is a not-for-profit organisation. No fee is payable for some of our services. For other programs, such as counselling and family dispute resolution, a fee is usually charged and is based on a sliding scale according to gross family income per annum, or gross individual income where you are separated and attending as an individual. If you are experiencing financial hardship, you can ask to pay a reduced fee. The fee will be discussed with you at, or prior to your first visit. Fees are payable at the time you attend.

APPOINTMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS

Appointments for counselling usually take 50 minutes, and for family dispute resolution and group sessions, 2 hours. Individual assessment appointments for family dispute resolution usually take 1 to 1.5 hours.

If **24 hours' notice** of cancellation is not given, a fee will be charged to cover the session.

CHILDREN ON THE PREMISES

RAV abides by the recognised Occupational Health & Safety practices and does not have an appropriate environment to care for children in the waiting room. Our centres do not provide child care. Children under 13 must not be left unattended, as RAV staff cannot take responsibly for children while a carer is in a session. If it is necessary to bring children to the Centre, they must be accompanied by another adult who can supervise them at all times in the waiting room. We can provide information about local occasional childcare facilities, if required.

Family Dispute Resolution (FDR)

Research informs us that it is not in the best interests of children to be exposed to the issues relating to their parent's separation. Therefore, unless children are attending to see a child consultant as part of an agreed FDR process, we do not permit children to accompany parents at FDR Information Sessions, individual assessments or joint FDR sessions.