

# Karina Allen

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST  
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Community Visits

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## **Additional Information – Children & Adolescents**

In working with minors and families Karina bases her practice on research in the field, industry standards, the Guidelines for Working With Young People (Australian Psychological Society), relevant state and federal legislation and other psychological ethical codes.

### **Psychological treatment with minors**

Treatment for children and/or adolescents with emotional and behavioural problems is best delivered within the context of their families. As such, Karina encourages parents/carers to be active participants in the therapy process. Dependant on a minor's age a parent/carer will normally attend the initial session to assist with providing relevant information. Treatment direction and goals will be developed in collaboration between the child, parent/carer and Karina. After the initial session, if regular parental attendance at a child's therapy session is not possible, then parents are encouraged to arrange a separate session to share information regarding the child's ongoing needs and therapy progress. You may like to discuss this with you GP, as you may be eligible to obtain your own Mental Health Treatment Plan for Medicare funding.

As appropriate Karina welcomes involvement in sessions and/or input from step-parents, siblings, grandparents, and others. However, this is determined on a case-by-case basis based on the child's needs, the referring parent's wishes, and the family circumstances. When working with a child whose extended family members are estranged or conflicting desires exist, treatment decisions are always made in the context of the 'best interests' of the child.

### **Consenting to treatment**

Of course, it is always best that all carer's of a child are on board with that child receiving therapy. Although the consent and involvement of both parents is desirable, it is not legally required. Psychological treatment may also be provided under the following circumstances:

- A young person, who has the capacity to give informed consent, is entitled to engage psychological services for himself or herself.
- When carers/parents disagree about the need for a child's access to therapy, a psychologist may make a professional judgement about whether to provide a psychological service to the young person. In making that decision the psychologist considers the best interests of the young person as paramount.
- When psychologists are aware that parents are separated, they may assume that the referring parent has the legal authority necessary to engage psychological services on behalf of the young person.

### **Confidentiality of a minor**

For a young person to feel comfortable sharing their feelings and thoughts, their privacy must be respected. Children have the same rights to confidentiality as an adult.

In some specific situations, psychologists can share information without the client's written consent. Limits to confidentiality that apply:

- Psychologists must disclose private information to protect the client or public from serious harm.
- Psychologists are required to report ongoing domestic violence, abuse or neglect of children or people with disabilities.
- Psychologist may be required to release information if they receive a court order.

Often at the first session, the child, carer and psychologist will all discuss ground rules for confidentiality. It is helpful for a minor to build trust in the therapy process, by seeing that their carer is supportive of their privacy.

### **Important information for separated or divorced families**

The general principle in working with children is that treatment decisions and communication efforts should always be made in the context of the 'best interests' of the child. This is particularly important in cases when extended family members are estranged and/or have conflicting desires. Please let Karina know at the outset if you have any concerns regarding another family member's role in your child's therapy.

In the absence of consent by the referring parent and the young person for disclosure of information to the other (non referring) parent and in the event that the other (non referring) parent seeks information about the psychological service provided to the young person, psychologists have a duty to protect the confidentiality of the young person, which includes refraining from acknowledging whether or not a psychological service has been provided. If the other parent does contact the psychologist for information, the presenting parent will be informed and encouraged to resolve the issues directly.

However, it is important to note that when separated parents have shared care arrangements of their child it is generally best practice to involve both parents in the child's therapy. The exceptions are:

- In cases of abuse or serious impairment on the part of one or both parents.
- When the involvement would be detrimental to the child's mental health.
- When the involvement would interfere with the child's treatment.
- When a young person who has the capacity to give consent, does not wish for communication with one or both parents to occur.

Parents should understand that in many circumstances (other than the above exceptions) open communication, regarding a child's therapeutic needs and their therapy progress, is often in the child's best interest. If consent has been obtained, it may be beneficial for Karina to engage in telephone, face-to-face, e-mail, or written communication with either parent regarding the treatment of their child. This communication may be shared, as is clinically appropriate, at the discretion of the therapist, with the other parent or with the child. Written communications, e-mails and telephone messages become part of the child's permanent record. It is however, impractical for a therapist to send a summary letter, note or email after each appointment to a non-attending parent, unless payment arrangements have been made for this service. Rather, the expectation of collaborative therapy for a child would be that parents are willing to communicate with each other openly regarding treatment and that each parent will cultivate a healthy relationship and open communication with their child.

Separated parents are welcome to alternate who attends their child's therapy sessions. Regardless of who is attending the session, the reminder text message will only be sent to the referring parent. It is expected that parents will inform each other about scheduled appointments. The referring parent is responsible for a late cancellation/no-show fee if an appointment is missed, regardless of which parent was planning to attend the appointment.

## Further Information

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If you have any further questions please feel free to ask Karina.

Information about the practice of psychology in Australia can be found at the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency website or the Australian Psychological Society website:

[www.ahpra.gov.au](http://www.ahpra.gov.au)

[www.psychology.org.au](http://www.psychology.org.au)

Information specifically about and/or devised for young people can be found at:

<https://healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au/seeking-support/professional-support/understanding-confidentiality>

<https://au.reachout.com/articles/age-and-confidentiality>

[http://www.lawstuff.org.au/qld\\_law/topics/medical](http://www.lawstuff.org.au/qld_law/topics/medical)