

## Fact Sheet

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### Therapy at True Child and Family Service

True Child and Family Service (True) is funded to work with children and adolescents who:

- Have experienced sexual abuse or sexual assault
- Are showing signs they may have experienced sexual abuse;
- Have been identified as being at risk of sexual abuse;
- Are engaging in problematic sexual behaviour.

#### Our work:

Therapists at True work with children and adolescents by drawing on knowledge and practice that is:

- Based on a wide body of evidence.
- Developmentally and age appropriate.
- Designed to find the easiest way for the child or young person to communicate (recognising that 'talking therapy' is not always the most effective option).
- Safe, fun, predictable and useful.

#### Our Therapists and Counsellor/Case Managers

All therapists and counsellor/case managers at True are registered with the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), Australian Psychological Society (APS) and/ or Australian Counselling Association (ACA). In addition to achieving a university qualification, our staff have comprehensive training and experience in trauma-informed practice.

True therapists and counsellors are supported to continue to update their professional skills. Each therapist draws on several counselling modalities designed to meet the needs of your specific child or adolescent. These modalities may include:

- Narrative Therapy
- Expressive Therapy
- Creative Art Therapy
- Sandplay and Symbol work
- Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)
- Play therapy
- Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)

*We have additional information sheets available on each of these therapeutic modalities.*

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### Outcomes for our clients

True recognises that a 'wrap around' team of support for your child or adolescent, including parents/ carers, teachers and/or sports coaches, provides the child or adolescent with the best potential for positive counselling outcomes. Outcomes may also reflect the readiness of the child (developmentally and emotionally) for therapeutic work. At times the therapist or counsellor will encourage the adults in the child or adolescent's life to recognise tiny changes in mood, behaviour and resilience as important outcomes, worthy of celebration.

### The process at True

- Your therapist or counsellor will meet with you, the parent(s) and/or carer(s), to learn more about the worries or problems that brought you to True.
- The therapist or counsellor will then meet your child or adolescent for 4-6 appointments to get to know them and to undertake what we call an *assessment* – a therapist's perspective of what might be contributing to the worries or problem.
- The therapist or counsellor will then have an appointment with you and your child and discuss the therapist's suggested plan for counselling over the next period (perhaps six, nine or twelve weeks).
- Sometimes the therapist or counsellor may assess that your child or adolescent is not actually ready for therapeutic work now. There are several reasons why this may be the case. The child may not be in a stable, consistent home life for reasons such as changes in foster care arrangements or due to illness in the child or family. The child or adolescent might describe themselves as not needing or wanting counselling and is reluctant to engage with the process.
- When this occurs, the therapist or counsellor may recommend that parents/ carers and other important people in the child or adolescent's life receive psycho-education and other practical support from our service as an alternative.
- When everyone agrees on the plan, the next stage of therapy begins.

### What happens in appointments at True?

- Most appointments with the child or young person and the therapist or counsellor will follow a familiar pattern so there is a sense of predictability (this is very important in the healing process).
- This may include time in each appointment for a child to engage in activities that are led by the therapist or counsellor, like psycho-education, therapist-led creative art or therapist-led play.
- It may also include a period in each appointment where the child or young person is given space to choose or engage in an activity they particularly love or are interested in.
- It is useful for children to know that the time at True is not simply play time or an art lesson. The therapist or counsellor will carefully balance activities for healing with activities that the child or young person enjoys.

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### How you can help explain the appointments

- Parents or carers sometimes struggle with knowing how to describe 'counselling' to children or young people.
- Sometimes, when we ask children if they know why they are seeing a therapist or counsellor at True they tell us that they 'don't know', or that we are their 'art teachers' or the 'fun people'.
- It helps children to have an age-appropriate understanding of why they are coming to True, what they can expect and what might be expected of them.

### Useful explanations may include:

- *At True there are adults who have been trained to help people with their feelings, their thoughts and their actions.*
- *These adults are called therapists or counsellors and their work is called counselling.*
- *Your therapist/ counsellor's name is (Barbie/ Aly/ Courtney/ Sophie/ Gemma/ Jess/ Zikra/ Beth) and I've met them already.*
- *When you go to counselling you will do some fun things, like art, play and making things.*
- *There will also be times when you will be learning things from the therapist or counsellor, things that hopefully help you feel more comfortable, peaceful, and safe.*
- *True is a place where you can talk about your feelings, your memories, things you might be doing that worry you or the hard things in your life right now.*

### Why do therapists and counsellors do more than just talk to children?

- Talking (verbal communication) is only one way that human beings share their thoughts with each other.
- Talking is also only part of the way humans 'process' new ideas or insights.
- We often don't have words for what we are feeling or why we might be feeling this way.
- This is particularly true for children who are yet to develop their full skills in verbal communication.
- There is an additional **Information Sheet** that describes in detail the science behind the counselling that does not involve words. This includes information about the human brain, child development and trauma.
- Your therapist can explain to you the theory behind their practice in addition to providing you with the written information and scholarly references.

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### Feedback opportunities

True is committed to providing opportunities for our clients, their families or carers and other important people in their lives to provide feedback on the service provided and the impact on the child or young person's life.

Electronic, confidential feedback opportunities are provided through an iPad app, offered to clients and parent/carers at least monthly. The iPad is available each appointment to encourage feedback as frequently as the client would like.

Clients and their family or Carers are welcome to provide feedback at any time to the Senior Practitioner or the Manager, Sandi Brown. This can occur via email, phone or face to face, depending on your preference.

### Takeaway message

Your True therapist or counsellor will provide you information about the therapeutic tools they are using in appointments with your child or adolescent:

- During your catch ups between appointments
- through the therapeutic plan reviews
- and before the appointment if they will be using a modality that might be particularly messy or result in a creation that requires practicing 'boundaries' at home (like the creation of slime).

Each appointment is carefully planned to meet the needs of your child or adolescent... and equally ready to let go of those plans if your child needs something else on the day.

**We hope you find your contact with True Child and Family Service to be nurturing, safe and a valuable component of healing for your child or adolescent.**