

Co-parenting app a 'game-changer' for New Zealand families

MANDY TE Last updated 09:44, February 15 2018

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Family Works Resolution Service is New Zealand's first supplier of an app which helps separated parents communicate more effectively.

An app for co-parenting families is being welcomed by New Zealand professionals and families.

In February Family Works Resolution Service started offering OurFamilyWizard for free to separating and separated parents who use its services.

The Family Works Resolution Service helps co-parenting families by facilitating discussions for family dispute resolution. It is the first supplier of the app in New Zealand.

The app offers co-parenting families a platform to organise childcare duties and offers advice on messages parents sent to each other.

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Family Works Resolution Service manager and New Zealand's 2017 mediator of the year Timothy McMichael said the app would help parents communicate "more effectively, more securely and with greater comfort and security".



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Family Works Resolution Service manager Timothy McMichael and general manager of development Wendy Hoskin believe the app will have a significant impact on co-parenting families.

OurFamilyWizard has features which allow parents to communicate, lodge expenses and reimbursements, and share a calendar that has a "day swap request" function.

The app also has a service called ToneMeter which can check whether a message being sent is potentially aggressive or offensive through a bar rating system.

The ToneMeter not only analysed the words used but also examined the emotional context of what was potentially being said through the messages, McMichael said.



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The co-parenting app OurFamilyWizard lets parents communicate via email, text and share pictures.

"It's intuitive so the more you use it, the more it learns and you also learn," McMichael said.

What mediators continually heard from children was how upsetting and distressing it was to hear their parents arguing and shouting, and to see angry emails being sent between parents, he said.

When parents were anxious or upset they often sent messages before they really thought about it, McMichael said.



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Mediator Timothy McMichael says OurFamilyWizard app will help parents communicate more effectively.

With the app parents were given an opportunity to really think about the messages they had written and with ToneMeter they were also given an indication of how the receiver may feel, McMichael said.

"It's going to be a real game-changer here in New Zealand," McMichael said.

"We see OurFamilyWizard as a way of mums and dads being able to send much better quality messages and that sends a really good message to children in separated families."

The app was a good way for children to learn about relationships and equipped them for the future, he said.

"OurFamilyWizard is the start of something here in New Zealand and I think it will have a significant impact on the way separated mums and dads deal with each other."

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