



Parentline ACT Annual Report 2019-20



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Acknowledgements

Parentline would like to thank the following organisations, businesses and individuals for support throughout the year. We look forward to working closely with them all in the future. Without their support we could not continue to deliver this vital service to the ACT community.

Supporters and Sponsors of Parentline

Commonwealth bank
Commonwealth Government
Southern Cross Club
Capital Chemist
ACT Playgroups
Community Services Directorate
Marymead
City Renewal
The Snow Foundation
Hands Across Canberra
ACT Government Chief Ministers Charitable Fund

Supervisors

Nancy Miller, Dorothea Wojnar, Nasrin Lucas, Michael von Treifeldt and Joanna Szczudlowska

Committee Members

Cathi Moore –President, Kirsten Cross –Vice President, Sue Jeffs-Treasurer, Kathy Moffat-Secretary, Hilary Martin, Megan Ward, Claire Addison, Leanne Taylor, all our Volunteers and Members



About Parentline ACT

Statement of Purpose

Parentline ACT Inc. is a community based not for profit organisation that provides assistance to families and children and young people through the provision of information, support and referral services.

Vision

Our vision is that families, in all their diversity are able to access the information, skills and support they need to raise children and young people.

We work to achieve this vision through:

- Providing accessible and confidential services to support parents;
- Promoting positive parenting and enhancing family relationships;
- Building community capacity and social inclusion;
- Informing social policy about parenting issues;
- Facilitating excellence in counselling and support; and
- Ensuring that Parentline ACT is sustainable over the long term.

Our primary focus is the Australian Capital Territory and surrounding region.

Our Values

Parentline ACT is an organisation which values:

- A respectful, non-judgemental, client-centred counselling framework;
- Acknowledging and building on the existing strengths of parents;
- Supporting parental decision making;
- Respecting cultural, gender and religious diversity;
- An organisational environment of professionalism, respect and development;
- The contribution of staff, volunteers and members.; and
- Collaborative and cooperative relationships with other organisations.

Key Activities and Objectives

Parentline ACT provides:

- Free, confidential telephone counselling between 9-5pm, Monday to Friday, to any parent or person with a parenting concern;
- Ongoing telephone support to parents of trained volunteers;
- Free face-to-face counselling, where resources allow;
- Paint and Play at Ainslie once a week in school term time;

- Guidance regarding child development and appropriate strategies for parenting children and young people;
- Written information regarding services and parenting strategies;
- Accurate information about, and referral to, relevant services;
- A service of the highest possible standard of professional practice and management; and
- Paid and unpaid staff with appropriate training and supervision necessary for their work with parents.

We also:

- Recognise that children of parents who are clients of the services are, indirectly also clients;
- Act in accordance with relevant child protection legislation, including notification where there are child at risk concerns;
- Liaise with and maintain positive working relations with Government and community agencies providing services for families;
- Allow clients in crisis and needing support to use the service as often as is needed; and
- Invite feedback about the counselling and services provided.





President's Report

During 2019-20 Parentline has continued to deliver services to parent's, carers and children in the Canberra Community despite the challenges of COVID-19. Parentline continued to operate throughout the lock down and the remote learning for schools. The seamless continuation of our services was due to the tireless efforts by our Volunteer Co-ordinator Joanna and her dedicated team of volunteers and students.

Our services were much needed during this period as demand grew by 36% on the same period in the previous year.

Another major achievement in the early part of COVID-19 was the number of additional students that Parentline provided placements to so that they could complete their degrees. Many of these students face the possibility of not finalising their degrees for another 12 months due to a number of their placements with other agencies being cancelled. Once again it was due to Joanna's organisational skills and an additional voluntary commitment that enabled this to occur.

Parentline was also greatly assisted during this period by a rent holiday from the ACT Government, and one off COVID-19 funding payment from the Snow Foundation and Hands Across Canberra. The Australian Tax Office also contributed funds to not-for-profits which combined, enabled us to continue to deliver our services. We have continued to receive sponsorship funding from Capital Chemist.

In fact the availability of services has grown and we have expanded our offering of free face to face counselling. This growth has only occurred through the dedication, commitment and enthusiasm of a team of skilled volunteers, paid staff, the financial support of ACT Playgroups and the Marymead Auxiliary and a number of sponsors of the organisation.

Parentline has also undertaken some one-off projects which included work by Elizabeth Moran to research our services to the CALD community. This research recommended a number of ways we could improve our services to this community. We also undertook a Parenting in the Park a project funded by the City Renewal Authority.

I am delighted to report that this financial year our financial position has improved. However Parentline continues to seek some sign and commitment from the ACT Government that they value and will fund early intervention and support for parents and carers.

We are very grateful that ACT Playgroups supported some of Parentline's activities in this financial year and we worked collaboratively with them on a number of Paint and Play Playgroups throughout Canberra.

Parentline has continued to provide telephone counselling support, ongoing home based, telephone support to parents and carers, written advice and free face to face counselling. Detailed statistics are



provided in the report. We have assisted over 3170 requests for advice and counselling from parents and carers in the past twelve months.

The face to face counselling is provided by paid staff and skilled and supervised volunteers. This service is provided to clients who think they would benefit from face to face counselling, we have also counselled couples.

Our volunteers have also introduced a number of innovatory groups including Lads to Dads a program for male parents.

The Management Committee has focussed on seeking funding for the organisation. We have been successful in obtaining grants from the Southern Cross Club, Capital Chemist, Commonwealth Government Volunteer Grant, Chief Ministers Charitable Fund (2 projects to be carried out in 2019-20) and ACT Playgroups. A significant grant received for 2019-20 was for \$8,000 from the Commonwealth Bank Staff Foundation. This was final year of 3 years of funding and we are very grateful to the Staff Foundation of the Commonwealth bank for this support.

Parentline is also in receipt of support from the ACT Government through a concessional rent arrangement. The volunteer training was undertaken this financial year with funds received from Capital Chemist.

Parentline's direct collaboration with Marymead came to an end this financial year. However Marymead has continued to seek funding, along with Parentline for the proposed Pair Up Program.

We would like to acknowledge the fantastic work that Joanna Szudlowska continues to do for Parentline as the part time volunteer co-ordinator. Joanna has established the face to face counselling and was instrumental in working with the University of Canberra's Counselling course to continue the successful student placements program. The student placement program has been very successful and we have attracted a number of committed and skilled counsellors to the volunteer team.

We would not operate without our volunteer counsellors, volunteer external supervisors and home based counsellors. Thank you all for your invaluable support of Parentline. I would particularly like to thank Nancy and Nasrin for all their work in mentoring and supervising our staff, volunteers and students. Nancy has also contributed a great deal of her time in interviewing and selecting volunteer counsellors. We plan to honour Nancy at our AGM as she has indicated that she is planning to retire from her dedicated role as a supervisor of our staff and volunteers. We cannot thank Nancy enough for her devoted service to Parentline throughout its entire history.

Thanks also to the Management Committee who have worked tirelessly to ensure that we continue to provide a much needed service to the Canberra Community. I would also like to acknowledge the ongoing support from ACT Playgroups, financially and in kind. In particular Kirsten Cross has been tireless in her



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support of Parentline. Thanks also to Sue Jeffs our dedicated and hardworking Treasurer. Thanks also to Mary Jenkins for compiling our statistics.

We are continuing to focus on the viable future of Parentline. We have continued to seek opportunities to place Parentline in a more sustainable position. Our collaboration with Marymead has come to an end but we continue to seek opportunities to work with them for clients. We will keep our volunteers and members briefed on any options that emerge. We did not meet our target of initiating a merger with another organisation this financial year. However we continue to explore options to work with other like-minded organisations.

Early intervention is a key to ensuring the successful development of children and their families and Parentline is committed to continuing to deliver a free and universally available service to parents and carers in Canberra and the surrounding NSW region.

Cathi Moore
President
December 2020
Cathi Moore
President
December 2020





Coordinator's Report

To say that this year has been unusual would be an understatement... The impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the Parentline operations has been enormous:

1. Student placements:

Two students – Simon Tidy and Anne Vitharana – began their 2020 placements at Parentline (Simon) and Parentline/ACT Playgroups (Anne) at the end of 2019. Because of Covid-19, Anne's placement at ACT Playgroups was disrupted and Anne completed her practicum having worked more hours at Parentline. While Anne and Simon were nearing the completion of their placement hours, Parentline was approached by several other students who had been unable to continue their placements in the original organisations. Irmgard Heiner, the placement coordinator from the University of Canberra, also contacted Parentline enquiring about placement opportunities for some of her students. Ultimately, the following students joined Parentline:

- March/April 2020 – Shaista Waqar and Eva Bali,
- the end of May 2020 – Rabia Muqtadir and Jodie Cottell; and
- the end of July 2020 – Demeter Davis and Maninder Minhas.

Since then Shaista, Eva and Maninder have completed their placements and have stayed at Parentline as volunteers.

The two 2021 placement students, Karthika Thomas and Zahra Vahaji, have already been confirmed, contacted and met on Zoom, ready to begin their induction training in November 2020.

I would like to thank the students for having ensured uninterrupted service provision in the last twelve months. I look forward to supporting our new placement students in the first half of 2021.

2. Office telephone counselling volunteers:

Working from home has been a new, Covid-19 generated feature of volunteering at Parentline. Meeting clients (and team members) via Zoom has been another one. The waiting list of prospective Parentline volunteers contained twelve names in mid-August, as the focus had been on supporting placement students and Parentline had not been in a position to take on and train new team members.

Since November 2019 six interviews with prospective new volunteers have been conducted: five applicants have been successful; one volunteer has not completed the interview.

- Here are the office workers and volunteers who have provided services between November 2019 and October 2020:
 - i) office telephone workers/volunteers (available either from home or from the office): Joanna Szczudlowska, Lisa Anderson, Susan Olsen, Noble Singh, Eva Bali, Shaista Waqar, Nida Ajmal, Andrew Cohn and Niko Bakker; as well as (no longer available for shift work): Mercedes Pasco, Anna Rawlings, Gisela Pullen and Leonie Davies.



- ii) Counsellors providing and available for in-person counselling: students and most office team members as well as Michael von Treifeldt (relationship counselling), Simon Tidy, Shirley Villarreal and Graham Bourne;
- iii) Parent Effectiveness Training trained counsellors who may provide P.E.T. introductory face-to-face sessions: Alison Scott, Susan Olsen and Joanna Szczudlowska;
- iv) volunteer support workers (active and available for work with a client): Leonie Keelan, Barbie de Smeth, Joanna Szczudlowska, Donna McMillan, Jodie Cottell, Anna Rawlings and Shanti Athugalage. A big thank you to Gisela Pullen for her volunteer support work with clients in 2019/2020!
- v) Circle of Security-Parenting training provider: Joanna Szczudlowska.

It has been a great privilege and pleasure to co-ordinate our team of volunteers who have so generously offered their time and skills to the organisation and its clients and callers. Many thanks to all of them!

3. Management Committee

I would like to thank the indefatigable Management Committee members led by our Cathi for having seized the opportunities afforded by the pandemic and for having secured considerable funds to run the organisation. Cathi, Kirsten, Sue, Hilary, Kathy, Claire, Megan and Leanne – Parentline would not exist without your tireless support!

4. Parentline Groups:

Thanks to Lisa's and Simon's visions and enthusiasm, Parentline has launched two parenting groups in 2020 – *Parenting in the Park* and *From Lads to Dads*. The *Parenting in the Park* group was sadly interrupted in March by Covid-19; however, it was re-established in September with the October and November groups still to go ahead. Simon completed the four sessions with his group participants in mid-March and is going to run the second *From Lads to Dads* group in October/November. Noble's Yoga/Meditation/Mindfulness classes are also on the agenda, to be launched in term 4.

Thank you, Lisa, for your wonderful group ideas and for coordinating all the groups that are available at Parentline!

5. Supervision

Many thanks to all the supervisors – Nancy Miller, Dorothea Wojnar, Nasrin Lucas and Michael von Treifeldt – for continuing to provide free supervision to our counselling team members. **A special thank you goes to Nancy and Michael for their help with supporting placement students on a regular fortnightly basis.**

6. Collaboration with ACT Playgroups



Our collaboration with ACT Playgroups came to end in June 2020.

7. Professional training for Parentline team members

One Parentline team member has completed ASIST training in October 2020 at Lifeline. More team members will access this training opportunity in November 2020, courtesy of Parentline.

8. Conclusion

We have all worked very hard since last AGM, providing the best possible quality services to our callers and Support Link referred clients. We have engaged in a significant number of telephone interventions and in-person/Zoom counselling sessions; we have also offered Circle of Security-Parenting training to 3 families and two team members. Our IT system has been upgraded which has made a huge difference to all the team members working from the office. We all hope that we will be able to assist even more local and interstate families in the months to come.

Joanna Szczudlowska



Volunteers Perspective

I started volunteering at Parentline in 2016. I was in my first year of my Masters in Counselling and I wanted to gain experience as a counsellor. It was always my goal to become a couples counsellor and I thought my experience at Parentline would be a stepping stone to get to that goal. Little did I know that my experience at Parentline would change my aspirations and it was the foundation of my career as it is now. I always wanted to work with couples because I wanted to provide couples with the tools to create the relationship that they wanted. I felt I wanted to make a difference in people's lives. It was not until I started learning more about parenting, the importance of active listening and teaching valuable skills that I realised that we become more emotionally and mentally resilient through how we are parented. If we are able to address these issues when that person is a child, they will have the knowledge on how to approach relationships in adulthood in the most effective way.

I hold such great value in my experience at Parentline. They have provided me with the training and the knowledge on how to work with parents and how to address their concerns. At the core of everything we are taught to have unconditional positive regard for our clients. Remembering this has always guided my work with clients. I've been fortunate enough to get training through Parentline that I've found valuable professionally and personally. I was able to complete PET for Practitioners and ASIST suicide training. Parentline introduced me to PET and I have been so grateful ever since I learned about it. I became so passionate about it that I even ended up doing the 8-week professional PET course in Canberra. Not only am I able to teach it to clients, but I also use it with my own children. I have 4 step-children and 3 biological children, using these skills has changed my relationship with my children in a positive way. Interestingly, I always used to read self-development books, but it never occurred to me to read about how to be the best parent I could be. Thanks to Parentline those doors were opened up and now most of the books I read are about parenting and the self, the different parenting approaches and child brain development.

I currently run my own counselling practice (specialising in parents) whilst living overseas but I am still volunteering with Parentline. The clients I speak with at Parentline face a myriad of issues. When I first started with Parentline I assumed most of the callers would be parents of young children needing to know practical parenting skills. What I found was the total opposite. Out of the entirety of my time with Parentline, most callers were parents of adult children or teenagers. I soon realised that many parents just wanted someone to talk to, someone who would listen intently and be nonjudgmental. I have worked with many clients but there is one client in particular that I have been working with since 2018. She has a 16-year-old daughter and has experienced many challenges. She was a single parent up until her daughter was 7 and then she remarried. Remarrying caused issues in her relationship with her daughter. We worked on how to change perspectives and see things from her daughter's point of view, how to use PET skills and exploring how her own upbringing has impacted her parenting. She goes through phases of being able to hone in on her learned skills and also feeling helpless. I feel like what she gains the most from our therapeutic relationship is having someone to listen to her and support her whilst also being reminded of having compassion for herself in addition to her child. We started counselling face to face whilst I was in between moves overseas and we continued on with phone counselling after I left. We were talking regularly up until last year when her daughter moved out and there was minimal communication between



them. She contacted me again this year as she felt she needed support again. A few weeks into counselling with her I noticed a drastic change in her mentality and her approach. It was as if everything we had worked on in the last few years suddenly clicked. We were doing regular calls, but the calls have now become less frequent. It has been such a privilege to be part of her journey and to see her grow. She, along with all my other clients have taught me so much.

My experience with Parentline have been incredibly valuable in more ways than one. I will always be grateful for what it has done for me professionally and as a parent.

Donna McMillan

Volunteer

December 2020





Parentline Statistics

The first thing to say about this extraordinary year is that the Parentline Database has call entries for every week throughout the year. This is a testament to the dedicated staff and volunteers supporting parents and carers in the ACT and surrounding districts. Obviously the Parentline office has gone through various operating modes as the pandemic developed and Covid restrictions and social distancing have been adhered to. The staff have taken each variation in their stride and more clients have been helped than during last year. There has been an additional database category for Skype/Zoom to facilitate Face to Face consultations during these restrictions to normal office practice.

	DATABASE 1/7/19 – 30/6/20	1/7/18 – 30/6/20	OFFICE STATS 1/7/19 - 30/6/20	
TOTAL	3242 (849 hours)	2419 (578 hours)	TOTAL	3170
TEL IN	661	458	COUNSELLING	328
TEL OUT	1199	923	ADMIN	710
VOLUNTEER	284	387	VOLUNTEER	207
FACE TO FACE (+Skype/Zoom)	152	127	FACE TO FACE	152
WRITTEN IN (+SMS IN)	307	138	OTHER	1182
WRITTEN OUT (+SMS OUT)	639	386	WRITTEN	591

The above table is for the period of the 2019 -2020 financial year which had been the normal reporting period for Parentline. This timing was not used in the last couple of years because of lack of database data but we are now able to return to the standard financial year timing.

I have tried to report the statistics in as meaningful way as possible but comparisons with previous data may not be as reliable as in the past mainly because of the covid19 restrictions and changes in office procedures. We also have the statistics that Joanna records manually each week which give some extra information over the database by recording the counselling calls as a separate category which is not available from the database. The database just records Telephone In and Out and does not distinguish between administration or counselling call in the call type. This means that it is hard to establish from the database how many are direct contact with client calls. The disparity between the office records and the database for the Volunteer category is probably due to the fact that staff often do not update their

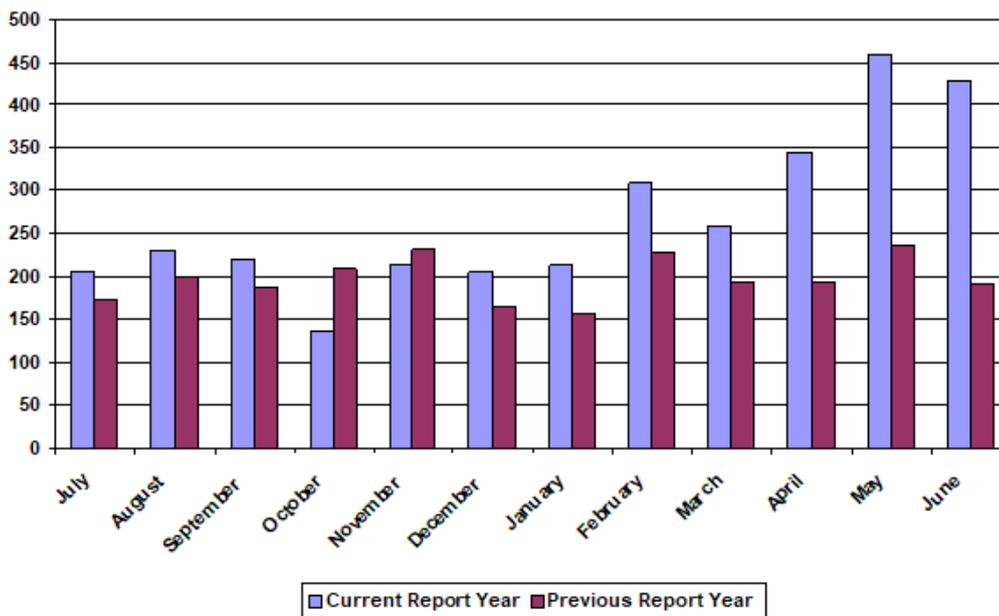


volunteer data until well after the call has been made and therefore they are not included in Joanna’s weekly records.

For the period 1/7/17 to 30/6/20 there was an increase of 34% in Total calls over the previous 12 months. The volunteer calls were down by 27% but the Face to Face including Skype calls were up 20%. The total hours were up 47% and Written communications up 80%. These numbers show how well the organisation has been able to function in spite of very difficult circumstances. Using the counselling call count from the office records, we can estimate that about 43% of calls are for direct contact with a client (office phone counselling, Face to Face, Written and Volunteer home calls). The remaining calls are for the administration of the office to coordinate and ensure the smooth running of the organisation. This is no small task as evidenced by the number of calls recorded for this purpose. There were 8% CALD and 2% Indigenous calls and 14% were from Males.

I also looked at the database data for 22/3/20 – 30/6/20. This time was when the pandemic was impacting people’s behaviour within the reporting period. It showed that 42% of the total calls for the year occurred in this period which was only 27% of the total report time. It can be seen in the following graph from the database that there is a statistically significant increase in calls from February on against the same period last year:

CALLS BY MONTH 2019 AND 2020

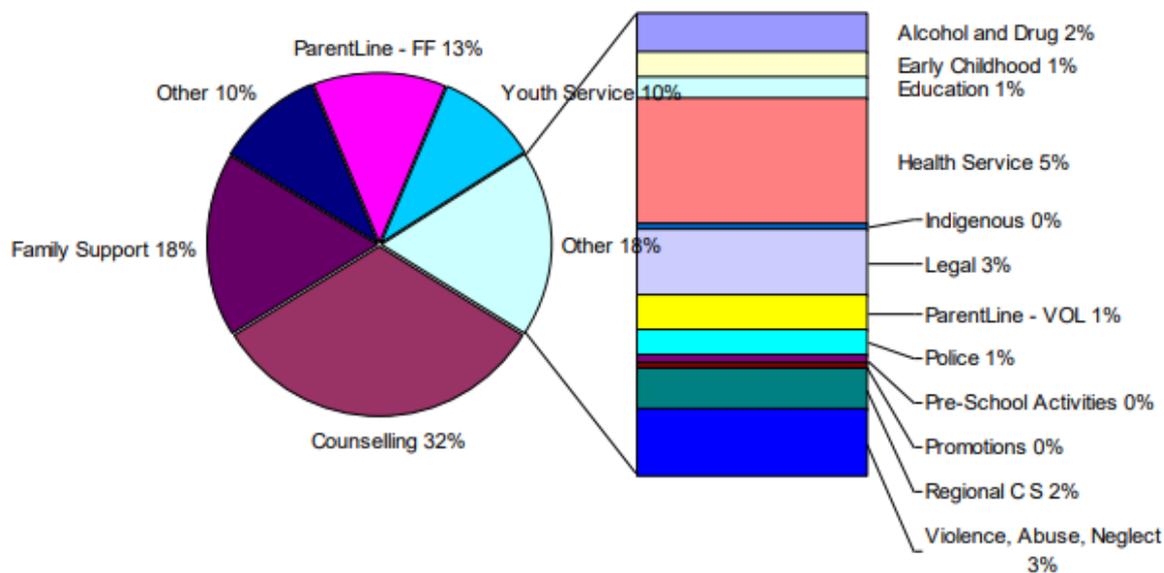


The following graphs are also taken from the database for the period 1/7/19 – 30/6/20 and show some of the characteristics of the clients. There was very little change in category percentages between this year and last year for all the graphs and none were statistically significantly different:

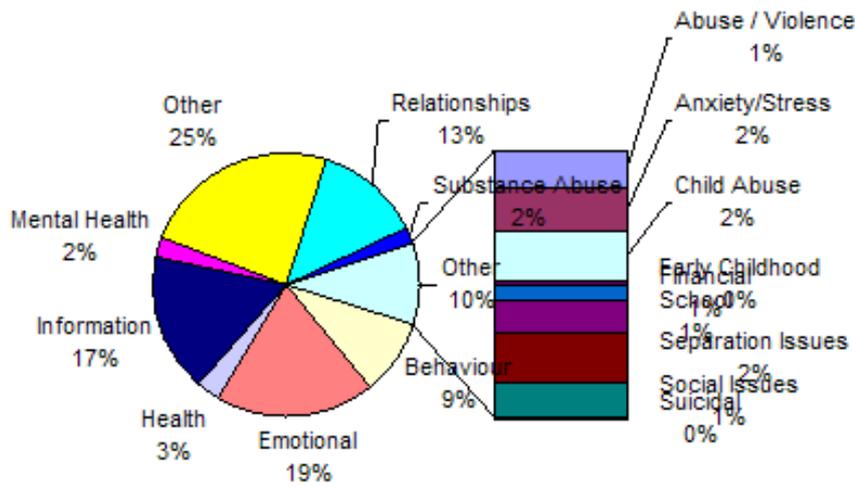
CHILD AGES



CALL REFERRALS TO



REASON FOR CALL



CALL OUTCOME

