



DEALING WITH RESISTANT PARENT JOB SEEKERS

If you have not yet been faced with an angry and resistant parent who is unhappy with mandatory participation requirements – then get ready! They'll be arriving in droves after the 1st July.

So why are parents angry? Let's take a look at some of the possible reasons

- ✓ Feelings of discrimination – families with higher incomes are not pressured by the government to go back to work
- ✓ Parents who have been through trauma (divorce, domestic violence etc) may be more protective of children and more resistant to child care
- ✓ Lack of care for children over 12 – many parents are not willing to leave 12-15yo's unsupervised
- ✓ Value system may be being impeded on. Some parents really believe that they should not work until their children have fully grown.
- ✓ Exhaustion – many parents feel they are already overloaded with the work of raising a family
- ✓ Concern that the impact of work will affect children negatively
- ✓ Mis-information. Word of mouth and incorrect media reports have led to unwarranted fear about changes.
- ✓ Anxiety and crisis in self esteem when faced with returning to paid work after a long break
- ✓ Fear of loss of benefits and costs involved in child care
- ✓ Resistance to change or resentment at being 'forced' into compliance
- ✓ Pride and ego. Feeling 'put out' by having to answer or report to a JN service.
- ✓ Concerns about sick children. Many parents have children with chronic Asthma or other diseases. These illnesses may not be enough for an exemption, but may require ongoing treatment, school absences and medical appointments.
- ✓ Active involvement in voluntary activities including work within their children's school – these parents may resent that this 'contribution' is not recognized and that they may have to give up this work to take on employment.
- ✓ Hidden concerns – some clients may have major issues at home including domestic violence. Don't expect clients to disclose this type of information – most victims of Domestic Violence keep their situation secret from even their closest friends and family.



How can Employment Consultants address some of these issues?

- ✓ Empathy is a great tool. It doesn't mean you need to agree with your clients complaints – it just means that you respect their right to be upset. As an industry, we are used to dealing with resistant job seekers, and it is very easy to become jaded. Treat your new parents with respect. Imagine they have just been retrenched from a job rather than being lazy or unproductive or long-term unemployed
- ✓ Interestingly, many working parents are often the most unsympathetic. I've often heard working parents say "I've been working since my youngest was 4 – if I can do it, then they should get of their back sides too...". Be careful here. Everyone's situation is different. I also was back in full-time work (Managing a JN site!!) when my child was 1 year old. My decision was mine, but I respect that other parents have different values. Instead of comparing, we need to share the benefits of our experience and how working has been positive for our own families. You don't need to go into details, just reassure that working has been great for your own family and that you understand or at least respect the concerns they have.
- ✓ We've said before that child care should be one of the first issues you deal with in an Activity Agreement. Slowly, slowly may be the approach for parents resistant to child care. Firstly, have your client investigate local child care centres to find the one that best suits their values or needs. Encourage your client to access After-School care one afternoon a week. They can leave their child there for 15 minutes to start with, then increase the time each week. Sometimes 'separation anxiety' may be suffered more by the parent than the child. Here are some great links and resources to provide to your clients:
 - [Out of School Hours Care Flyer](#)
 - [Care for Kids – Article on OOSH](#)
 - [Best Practice guidelines for OOSH](#)
- ✓ Crises in self-confidence or anxiety about returning to work is not something you'll fix quickly. It is unlikely that your client will disclose their insecurities to you immediately (or ever). Be aware that it is completely normal for a parent returning to work to feel fearful or insecure about this transition. Tread gently, and encourage your parent that if they can manage a family, they will have no problem managing a part-time job.
- ✓ If you have a client who is suffering extreme anxiety or panic attacks, take this seriously and arrange a referral to the JCA. You simply won't have successful outcome with a person who is suffering clinical anxiety or depression.
- ✓ Provide information on Centrelink thresholds if possible. Show your clients how to use the online rates calculators. They may also be worried about the effects of employment income on Child Support – refer them to the calculators on the Child Support Agency website. www.csa.gov.au
- ✓ Provide information on JETCCFA to reassure the costs of child care will not be excessive – if possible, provide some information on Child Care Benefit or the Child Care Rebate.
- ✓ Wherever possible, build a positive relationship so that your client feels that you are there to help them rather than police their compliance.



- ✓ Encourage parent's to continue their voluntary activities while they seek employment – this volunteer work should be a real positive and may open doors to many careers as employers will often value the experience and skills a volunteer may bring to an organization.
- ✓ Work-life balance is a big subject, but if you can, provide resources or information about how parents can effectively balance their home and work responsibilities. There are plenty of websites and publications that promote work-life balance - a simple google search will bring up hundreds of articles.
- ✓ If a parent does have a child with a chronic illness, take this barrier seriously. Find out what issues the parent feels will make managing a job difficult. How often are doctor's appointments, what happens when the child becomes ill, how much time has the child had in hospital or ill over the past year? Once you start to get a good picture of the issue, you may be able to work together to find a career choice that offers some flexibility for the parent.
- ✓ Domestic Violence is a major issue – not just for partnered parents, separated parents often struggle with being harassed by an ex-partner. If you suspect there is a problem with Domestic Violence, contact a local DV service and ask for advice – remember, it is highly unlikely that a victim will disclose to their Employment Consultant, and never expect them to do so. If they do – do not offer advice!! Refer back to the JCA and wherever possible, provide telephone numbers and contact details for local DV service providers.

Further suggestions:

- ✓ Attend specialized training to help understand and deal with resistance.
- ✓ Network with agencies in your community that can support the different needs of parents
- ✓ Provide specialist training or workshops for parents to help address and alleviate concerns