

Parentline Insights 20 Years



yourtown
let's create brighter futures



20 years of strengthening families across
Queensland and the Northern Territory.

About Parentline

Parentline has provided professional counselling, education and support for parents and carers of children and young people for 20 years.

In that time, we responded to more than 200,000 telephone and online contacts from parents and carers and had close to 195,000 unique visitors to the Parentline website.

We respond to an average of 145 contacts and make 40 outreach offers of support each week to Queensland and Northern Territory parents and carers concerned about issues like:

- parenting strategies for challenging behaviours
- parent-child relationships
- custody and access
- mental health/emotional wellbeing of children and young people.

We aim to strengthen parents and families by helping them:

- obtain a better understanding of the way their family works
- believe in themselves and their own skills and strengths
- develop strategies for changing how things are done in their family in a way that suits their family's needs
- identify their information needs—counsellors can provide callers with relevant tip sheets regarding more than 40 topics.

The telephone and email service operates between 8am–10pm, seven days a week. Web counselling is available 11am–2pm, Tuesday and Thursday.

1300 30 1300*

www.parentline.com.au

**[facebook.com/
ParentlineQLDNT](https://facebook.com/ParentlineQLDNT)**

*Cost of a local call from landlines.
Mobile phone charges apply.

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Our journey

Operating in Queensland since 1996, we expanded to the Northern Territory in 2004.

28 July
1995

Trial of Parentline service initiated in Queensland

28 April
1996

Parentline service commenced in Queensland

1 August
1997

Parentline service funded by Queensland Government

10 May
2004

Northern Territory Government funds extension of Parentline service to Northern Territory families

January
2010

Parentline Email Counselling launched

August
2010

Parentline WebChat Counselling launched

28 April
2016

Parentline turns 20!

Introduction

Celebrating 20 years of Parentline

As many would agree, being a parent is one of the most rewarding experiences in life but it can also be one of the toughest. Like many of yourtown's services, Parentline came about because we identified a need.

In 1995, close to 10% (15,000) of calls to our Kids Helpline service were from parents and carers asking for help related to being a parent. Topics discussed included pregnancy, managing child behaviour, infant care, relationships with families and partners, as well as child custody issues. Around half of these callers were over the age of 25 years.

Parents and carers clearly understood the important role they played in their children's lives. In addition to providing for their physical needs they also steered their learning, language development and problem-solving abilities, as well as shaped their social-emotional skills. For some, this responsibility appeared overwhelming and parents found an objective, confidential chat a big help.

Responsive to this need, we began a nine month trial of a Parentline service in south east Queensland. The aim was to provide a professional counselling service that educated and encouraged parents and carers to build on their strengths to better understand and work with their family, and find solutions to challenges. The trial confirmed there was an immediate need for a parenting telephone counselling service in the State. Parentline was officially launched across Queensland in 1996, with the Queensland Government funding the service from 1997.

In 2004, we extended the service to the Northern Territory with funding support from the Northern Territory Government. Twenty years on, Parentline continues to work with parents and carers to find solutions to challenges and provide a friendly ear when needed.

In producing this report, we are proud to present valuable insights into issues affecting families over the last 20 years. The reasons why parents and carers contacted us has remained more or less the same throughout the last two decades. The top reason why we are contacted today remains managing child behaviour, followed by parent-child relationships and relationships between parents. The most notable change is the number of contacts we receive about child mental and emotional health, which has almost doubled since 1996. This, however, is likely due to increased awareness in the community about mental health issues and how it affects behaviour.

That much has stayed the same is not surprising. Being a parent today is no less rewarding and often presents similar challenges to that experienced 20, 50 or 100 years ago. What has also remained the same is that Parentline is here to ensure parents and carers will always have someone to go to for help and reassurance when they need it most.

Tracy Adams

TRACY ADAMS
CEO
yourtown



The confidence to keep going

"It gave me the confidence to keep going through with a situation that was difficult—to keep going with what I was doing. It reaffirmed things I thought I knew and gave me some tips on some other ways to continue with. It was very clear advice and I got what I needed."

Parentline caller

Parentline—key insights over 20 years

Fast facts about Parentline over 20 years:

How many contacts did we receive?

There were:

301,478

attempts to contact the Parentline service

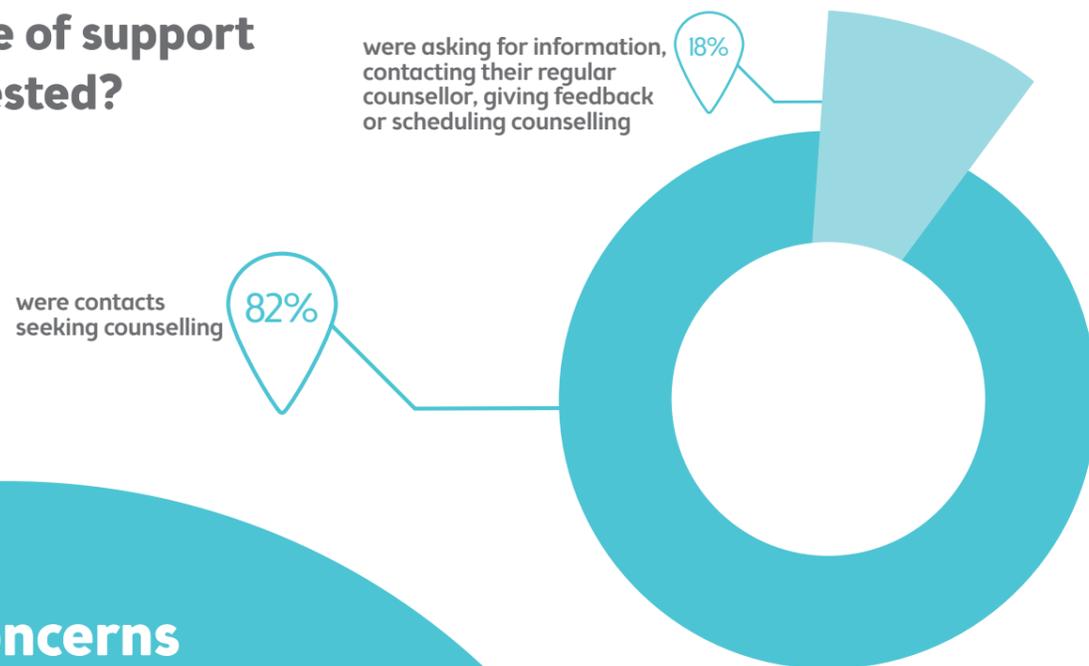
204,656

responses provided

194,303

unique Visitors to the Parentline website with **425,788** unique page views

What type of support was requested?



Top 5 Concerns

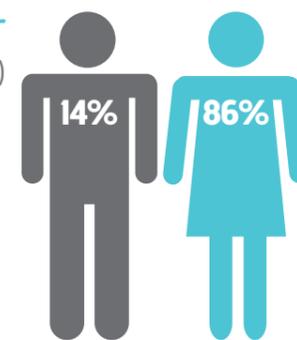
- 1 Challenging behaviour and discipline
- 2 Parent-child relationships
- 3 Parenting strategies
- 4 Parent relationships
- 5 Parent mental and emotional health



Who contacted us?

Gender

(n = 171,198)



Intersex, trans and gender diverse <1%²

Age (n = 97,970)

Under 30 years



30–49 years



50+ years



Culture (n = 83,100)

Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander



Culturally or linguistically diverse



Neither ASTI or CALD³



Relationship to Child (n = 139,293)

Custodial parents



Non-custodial parents



Shared custody



Grandparents

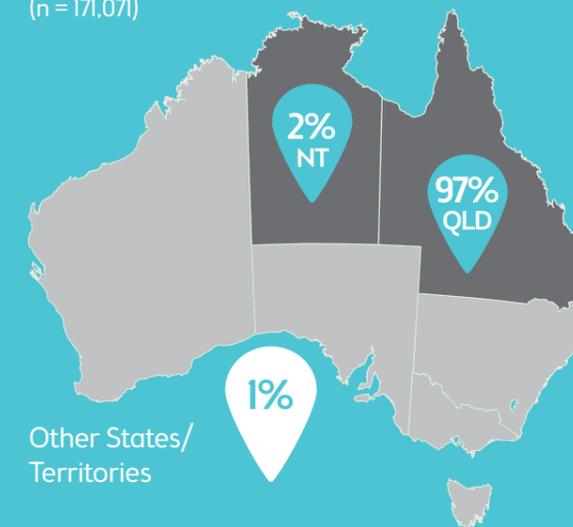


Others⁴



Where did they come from?

(n = 171,071)



Remoteness (n = 104,120)

64%

Major cities

36%

Rural and remote

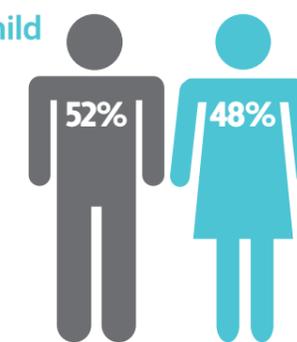
Who was discussed?

Age of Child (n = 130,843)



Gender of child

(n = 131,816)



Intersex, trans and gender diverse <1%¹

¹ Refers to 1995 to 2016. Incomplete data is available for the years 1995–1997 and 2000—figures for these years have been derived based on extrapolation from known data.

² Parentline expanded our gender classification system in 2015 to collect data on Intersex, Trans and Gender Diverse clients.

³ CALD = Culturally and linguistically diverse. ATSI = Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

⁴ Includes foster carers, other relatives, family friends, neighbours and professionals involved with children (e.g. teachers and social workers).

How we were contacted

Parentline engaged in **204,656** phone, email and web contacts with counsellors between 1995 and 2015.

Counselling contacts

| | Phone | Web | Email | Total |
|---------------------|---------|-----|-------|---------|
| Attempts | 300,549 | 419 | 510* | 301,478 |
| Responses | 191,265 | 347 | 510 | 192,122 |
| Response rate | 64% | 83% | — | 64% |
| Out-bound responses | 12,480 | — | 54 | 12,534 |

* Parentline responds to all emails where a response is required; as such email attempts are calculated as the number of responses sent.

Online counselling contacts

The Parentline website offers access to counselling and 24/7 parenting information and tip sheets.

Email counselling began in January 2010 and WebChat was introduced in August 2010.

Self-help resources

Tip Sheets accessed from the website provide information and strategies about issues facing children and young people. The more than 40 topics available include:

- body image
- bullying
- peer pressure
- anxiety
- blended families, and
- risk taking.



Real-time WebChat counselling
11am-2pm Tuesdays and Thursdays



Email counselling
8am-10pm 7 days a week

Email counselling often works for clients who need to take longer to compose their message or express their thoughts and feelings. It also benefits individuals who feel confronted by phone and web counselling. Parents are able to email a general enquiry or request to counsellors 24/7.



Tip Sheets
24/7

Website demand 2008-15

194,303

Unique Users

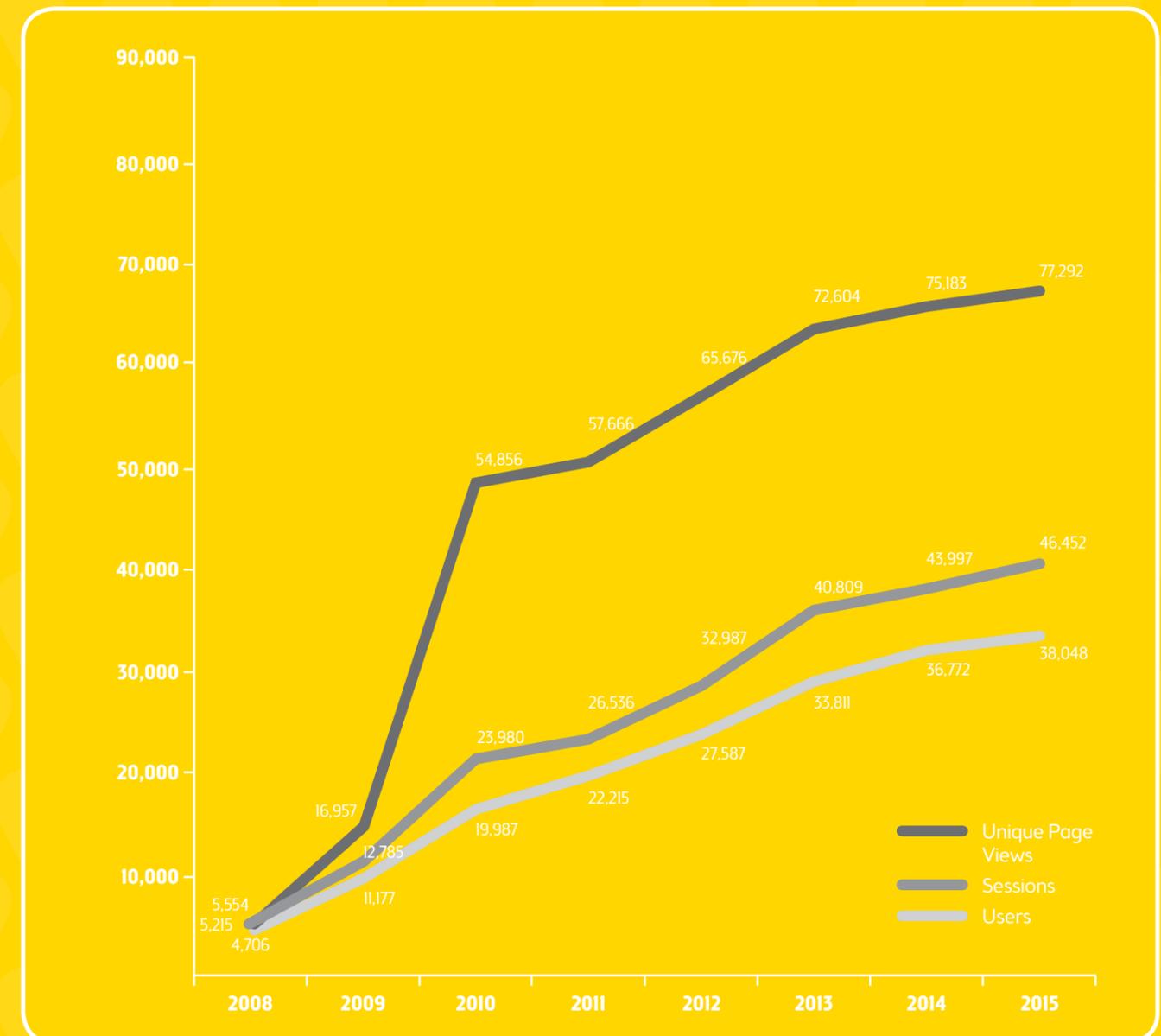
232,761

Visitor Sessions

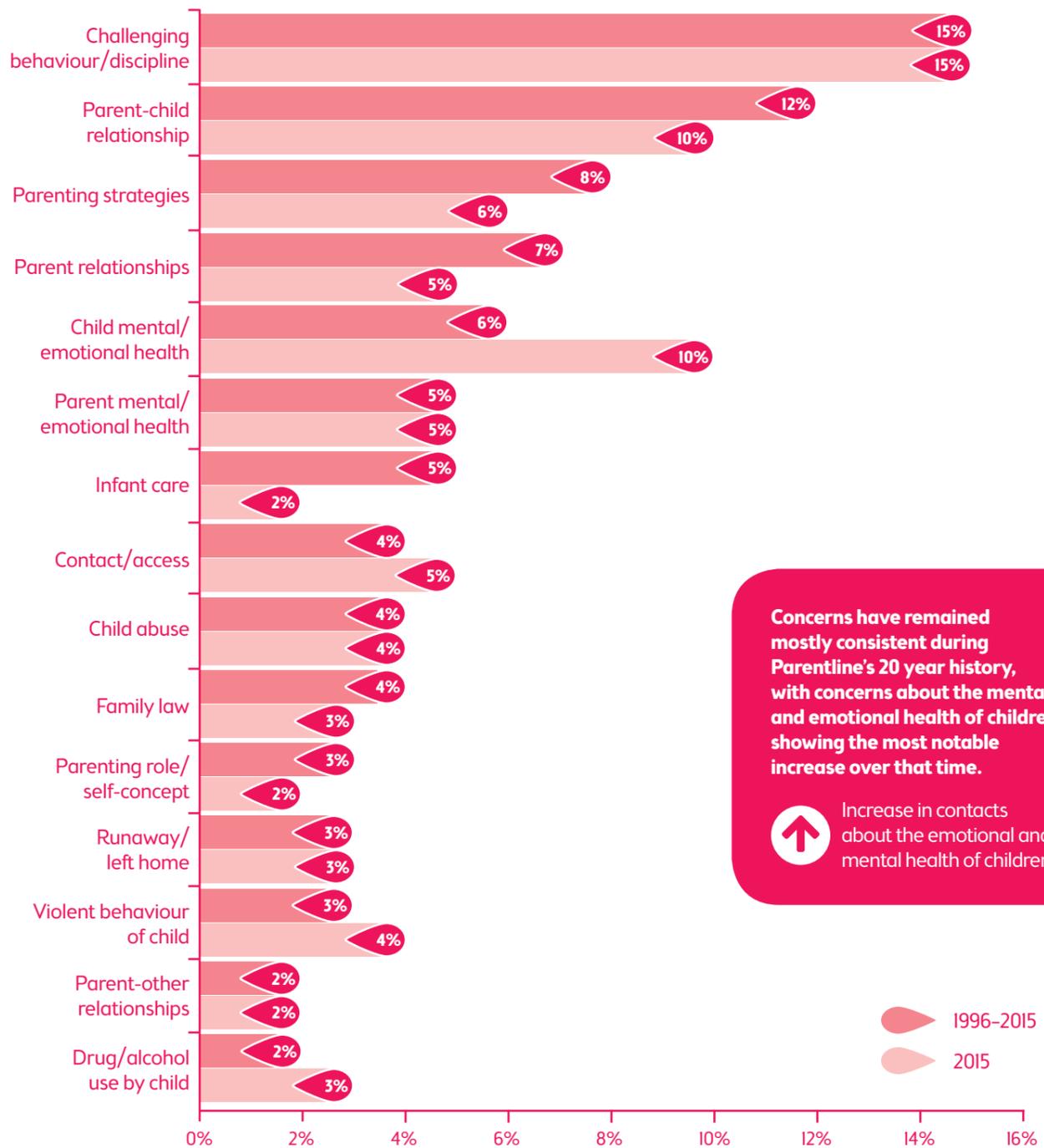
425,788

Unique Page Views

Parentline website use by year



Top 15 counselling concerns over 20 years



Concerns have remained mostly consistent during Parentline's 20 year history, with concerns about the mental and emotional health of children showing the most notable increase over that time.



Increase in contacts about the emotional and mental health of children



He became aggressive and started hitting her

Ann* contacted Parentline to talk about her 11 year old son, who had just received a school suspension for taking a prohibited object to school. When she tried to talk with her son about this he became aggressive and started hitting her.

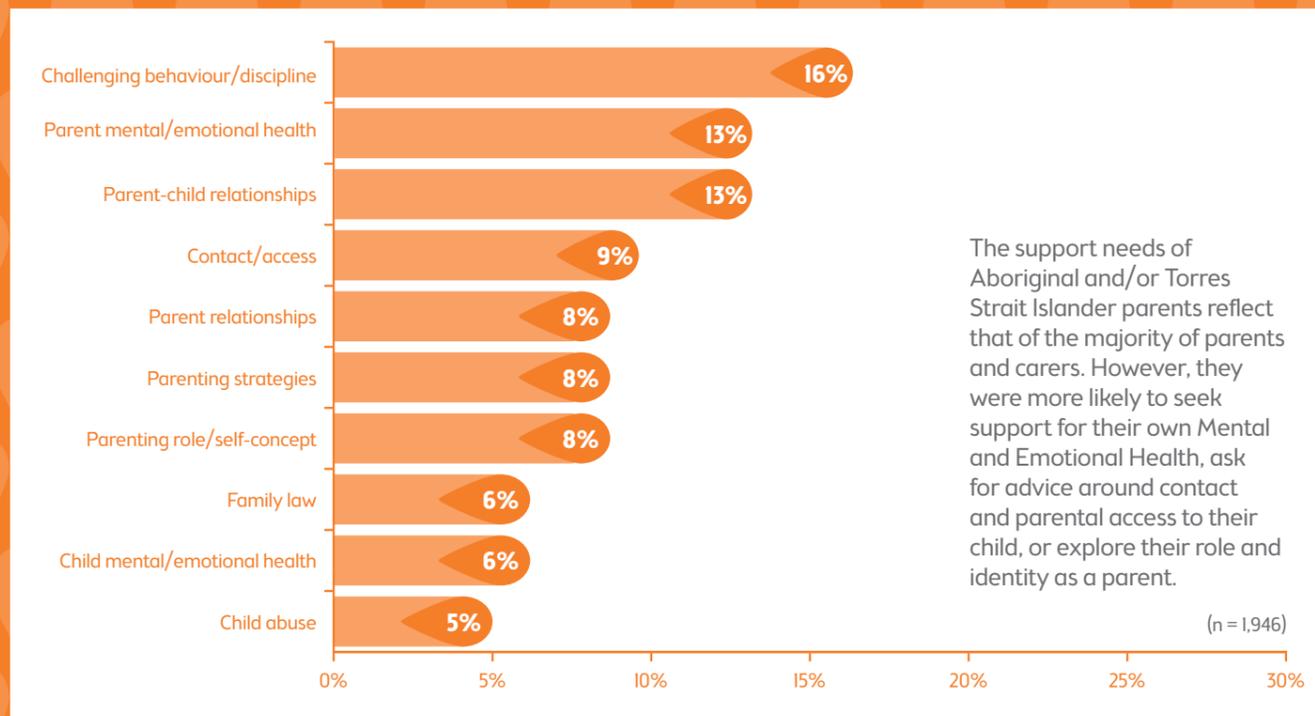
Ann said her son had a diagnosis of Asperger's Disorder, which made her question his behaviour and her discipline strategies. She wondered if his 'meltdowns' were caused by the disorder or by her inability to manage his behaviour. Ann cried and spoke about how her husband didn't support her parenting decisions and the consequences she tried to put in place. Ann was shaken from the fight with her son. She contacted Parentline for emotional support and advice on how to respond to her son's misbehaviour and get her husband to 'back up' her decisions.

She contacted Parentline at another time to let her counsellor know how strategies suggested had helped. Her son had apologised for hitting her and the two exchanged hugs. Ann's son then talked about the suspension and the peer pressure he felt to take the prohibited item to school. This became a teachable moment between Ann and her son, as they problem solved ways to manage peer pressure in the future. Ann planned to call Parentline again for ongoing support and accepted a referral to the online Triple P parenting program, which Parentline can support her and her husband to complete.

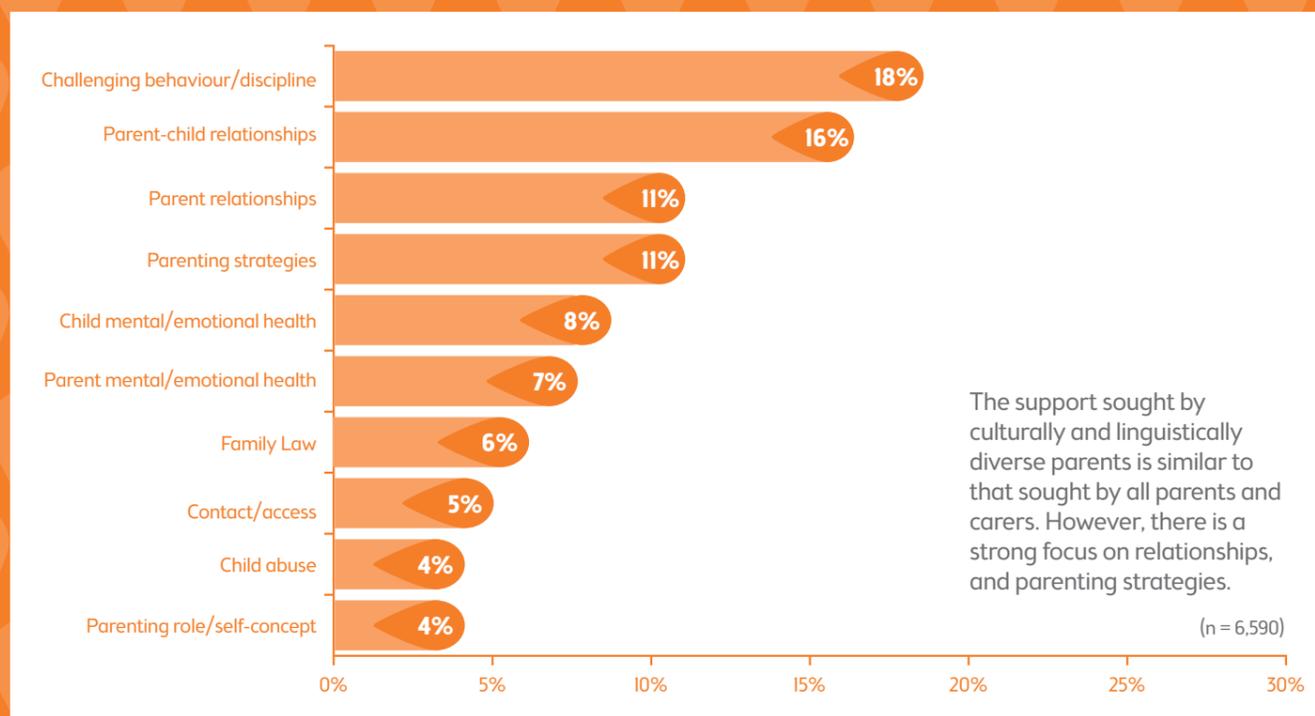
*name changed for privacy

Differences for parent/carer groups

Top 10 concerns of ATSI contacts over 20 years

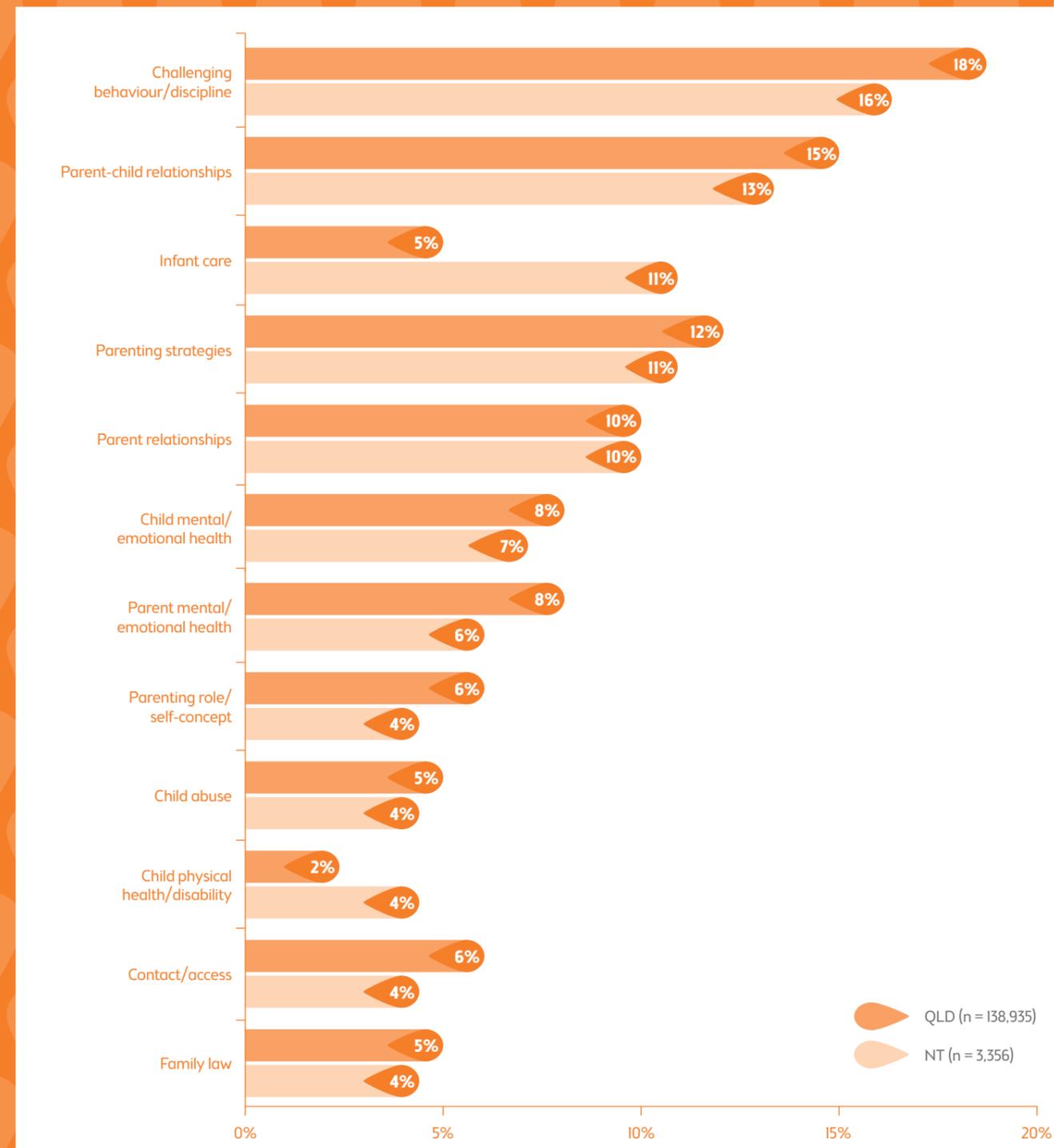


Top 10 concerns of CALD contacts over 20 years



Differences for QLD vs NT parents and carers

Top 10 Concerns—QLD and NT contacts over 20 years

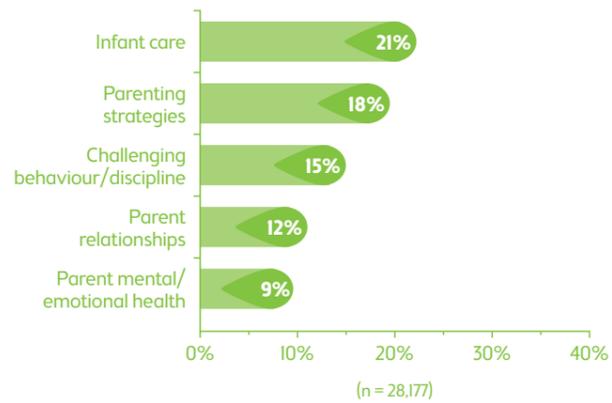


There are strong parallels in the support Northern Territory and Queensland parents and carers seek from Parentline. However, Northern Territory parents and carers are more likely to use Parentline for support with Infant Care or their children's Physical Health or Disability while Queensland parents and carers were more likely to seek support for their own emotional and mental health.

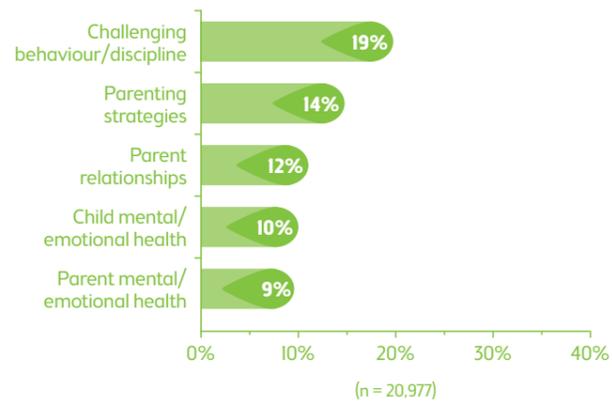
Differences for child age groups

Top 5 concerns by age of child over 20 years

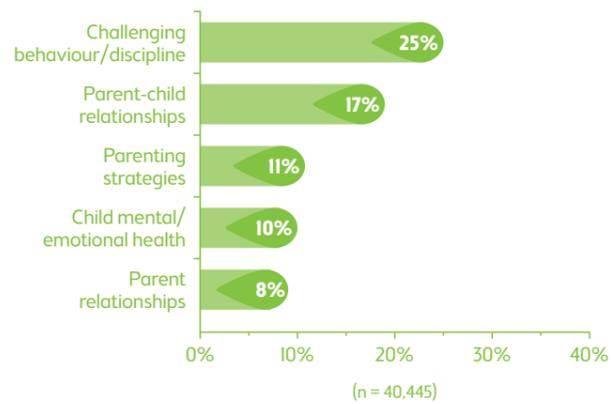
Aged 0–4 Years



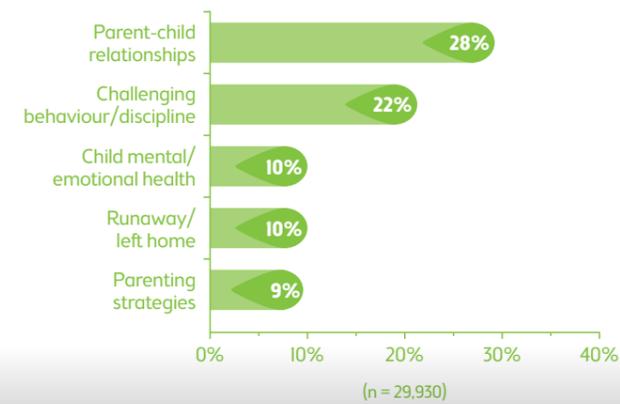
Aged 5–8 Years



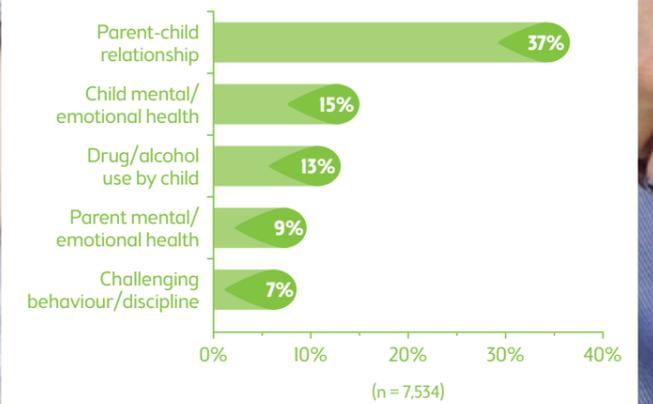
Aged 9–14 Years



Aged 15–18 Years



Aged 18+ Years



Professional counsellors

Parentline counsellors are fully qualified professionals who have a minimum of an undergraduate degree (social work, counselling, psychology) and at least one year of counselling experience when beginning at Parentline.

Additional training at Parentline supports core counselling skills and the provision of phone or online counselling.

Specially trained Parentline counsellors have also been offering phone-based Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) support since 2002. Triple P promotes a flexible, practical way to develop skills, strategies and confidence to handle any parenting situation. Between 2002 and 2015, counsellors provided Triple P based support on 14,328 occasions.

All Parentline counsellors are also Kids Helpline counsellors with a wealth of exposure to the issues facing young people. Knowledge gained through these services provides counsellors with a unique understanding of issues facing both parents and their children.

The human side of it

“The Counsellor I spoke to listened very well—didn’t interrupt. She was calm but she had personality. She reassured me that what I already knew was OK—I needed that reassurance. She gave that to me in a professional way with the human side of it.”

Parentline caller

First contact vs ongoing and occasional support

Parents and carers have direct access to counsellors and can choose to speak with either a male or female counsellor. They can also call back and speak with the same counsellor to work through issues.

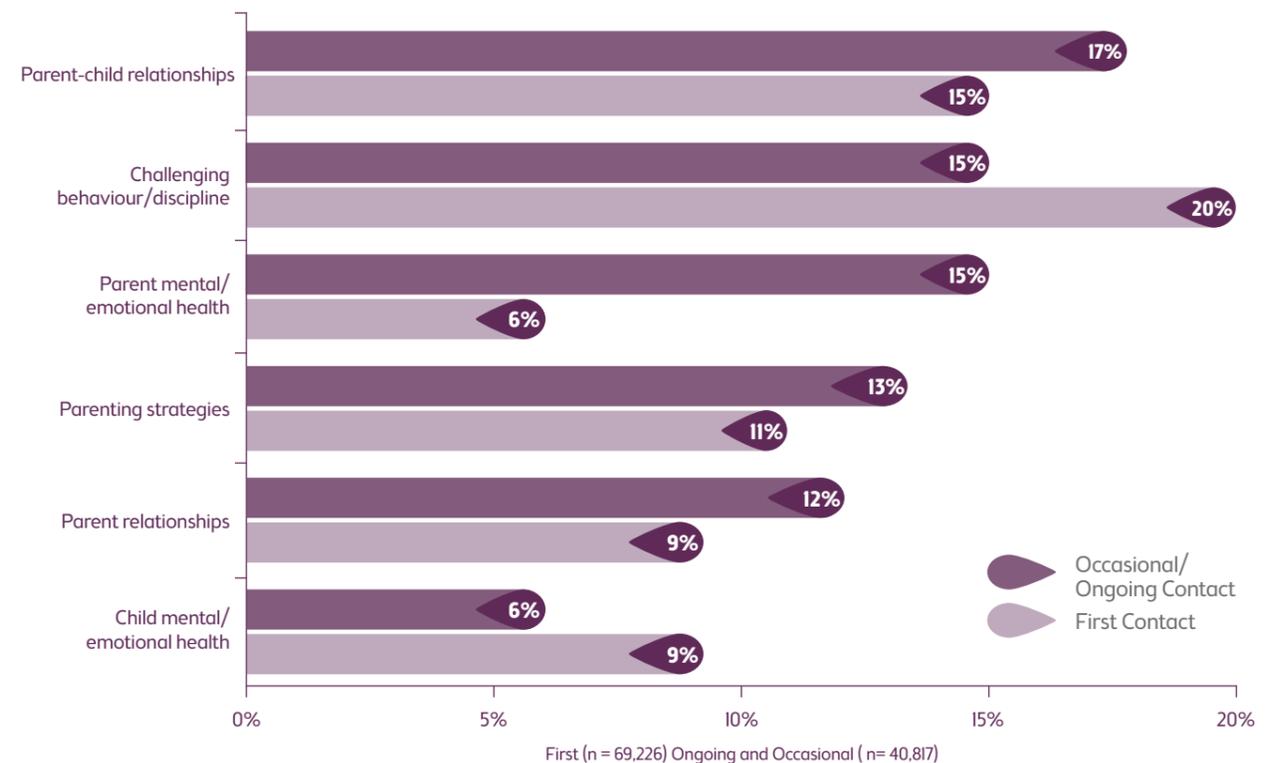
63% were first time contacts

37% were receiving occasional or ongoing support

Occasional or ongoing callers were proportionally much more likely than first time callers to be seeking support for their own mental and emotional health. First time callers were more likely to be seeking support for managing challenging behaviour or the mental and emotional health of their child.



First contacts (n=69,226) vs ongoing and occasional (n=40,817) over 20 years



Working with others

Counsellors have access to an extensive database of support services for parents and children that enables them to quickly identify relevant services within the contact's local community.

Services include:

- child health
- family counselling
- emergency services (including Duty of Care actions e.g. Queensland Police Service)
- clinical services for behaviour management
- child care
- parent support groups.

Over 20 years counsellors were able to assist 53% of Parentline clients without referring them to another agency. Twenty-eight percent of counselling sessions resulted in the client being referred to another service for ongoing support.

A further 15% of Parentline clients were referred to their doctor, counsellor, mental health worker or other non-specific referral. In 3% of sessions, counsellors were unable to provide a referral because no appropriate service was available or the client finished the session before a referral was recommended.

Police referrals

Parentline works with the Queensland Police Service to support vulnerable parents and carers in the community to get the support they need 365 days a year.

Through the police referral service, Parentline is providing outbound non-crisis calls that support individuals who are experiencing issues such as:

- domestic violence
- mental health concerns
- alcohol and drug misuse
- elder and carers support
- legal assistance
- accommodation assistance.

This takes pressure off frontline Policing. In contrast to the regular Parentline counselling service, Police referrals contacts were:

- much more likely to assist caregivers with the violent behaviour or the drug or alcohol use by a child
- more likely to be to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander families to discuss children aged over 9 years.

What parents and carers had to say about Parentline

Parentline and positive parenting

Parentline is a critical service in promoting the positive parenting of children living in Queensland and the Northern Territory.

The 2013 Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry report stressed the importance of having effective family services in the community to help reduce the incidence of child abuse and promote the quality care of children within families.

Parent capabilities found to be common protective factors that prevent child abuse and neglect include:

- Parenting confidence
- Parenting strategies and skills
- Relationship with child/children
- Understanding of child/children
- Capacity to cope, and
- Ability to care for child/children.

Feedback from 660 parents and carers that used Parentline between 2011-15 showed that the service was very effective or effective in increasing these parent capabilities.

Increasing the parents' capacity to cope

90%

Increasing parenting confidence

85%

Increasing the understanding about children

86%

Developing parenting strategies and skills

83%

Increasing parents' ability to care for their child/ren

84%

Improving the parent-child relationship

64%

Note on data analysis:

Analysis of concerns in this report is based on 18 years of available data (1998-2015). Parentline counsellors record non-identifying information at the end of every telephone session. There are a maximum of 38 different fields where data may be logged, however, only eleven are mandatory. They are: date, time, length of session, state/territory, main concern, problem severity, referral given, type of client—first-time, occasional or ongoing, whether the client had thoughts of suicide, whether the Triple P Parenting Program was involved in the call and whether the counsellor made the call to the client. Ideally, counsellors enter information for each field however; the amount of information recorded can vary due to: anonymity of contacts, sensitivity of information, and the length or nature of the call.

Website data is sourced from Google Analytics.



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