

# Your Family Support Practitioner



## The role of the Family Support Practitioner

Very Special Kids supports the whole family. When a family joins Very Special Kids, a Family Support Practitioner and a Hospice staff member (where appropriate) will meet with them, usually in the family home.

The purpose of this meeting is to introduce the family to the range of services we offer. This includes counselling, sibling support, trained volunteer support, family activities and access to respite care at Very Special Kids Hospice.

Together they will decide the most appropriate services and level of support to be provided. Once the level of support and services have been identified, the family is linked in with each program and they will be given the option to be allocated a Family Support Practitioner, although there is currently a waitlist for this option in metropolitan Melbourne.

Once a Family Support Practitioner is allocated to a Very Special Kids family, the level of support offered is tailored to the individual family's needs. This support may consist of:

- Listening and providing emotional support and counselling by telephone, Skype or in person
- Assisting families to identify and link in with other support services
- Supporting families to access respite care at Very Special Kids Hospice
- Providing opportunities for families to meet each other
- Linking a family with a trained home volunteer
- Liaising and advocating on behalf of families where appropriate (e.g. case conferences, school meetings) and supporting the family through times of transition
- Making occasional home visits
- Working closely with families if their child is requiring end of life care
- Providing ongoing support following bereavement

## Counselling at Very Special Kids

The Family Support Practitioner specialises in counselling for families who are caring for a child with a life-threatening condition and for bereaved families. Practitioners are experienced in the implementation of a range of psycho-social and psychological interventions and have the ability to work with parents, siblings, the child with the life threatening condition and the whole family unit.

Counselling provides an opportunity to talk about the difficulties families may be experiencing. The Family Support Practitioner is there to listen, to assist families to identify their strengths and resources and to explore strategies for support.

## What families have to say about their Family Support Practitioner

*'You feel they really value what you have to say. Other people will try to fix the problem or give advice but they just give you the space and time to be yourself.'*

*'Our Family Support Practitioner has good ideas of what may be helpful and knows about other places I can get support.'*

*'Our Family Support Practitioner is in tune with what our family needs as the illness changes.'*



### For Further Information:

Please contact the Very Special Kids Support Line on 9804 6253 or visit the website on [www.vsk.org.au](http://www.vsk.org.au) for further information about the Family Support Practitioner service available.