

Sex workers with children

Being a working parent is not an easy task. Sometimes you feel like you are running a race you can never win – endless rounds of housework, shopping, trips to kindy and school, grabbing a bite to eat on the run.

For sex workers, there are some extra concerns regarding the obligations of work and parenting. This fact sheet discusses common concerns of sex workers with children, including childcare, managing home and work, money and time out.

Day to day issues

Childcare

During the day, there are many good childcare centres available for babies, toddlers and preschoolers, as well as after-school care facilities for older children. Many sex workers opt to work during the day, as it is easier to accommodate the needs of children. You can visit a couple of centres with your children and see how they compare. Many childcare centres offer hot meals, so you know the children are eating well. Smaller children take longer to settle into a new environment, but staff are trained in helping children adapt to their new surroundings. Childcare is also affordable for most parents, thanks to Childcare fee relief and Childcare cash rebate – contact Centrelink for more details.

For night work, the best solution is probably to hire a babysitter to come to your home. Some sitters offer overnight rates, but you may need to leave your child at their place and collect them early in the morning. Finding a good sitter can be difficult – you may need to contact nanny agencies for some decent referrals. Prices vary, but some workers pay about \$40-\$50 for overnight care. There are a small number of night childcare centres around, but these have very limited spaces. Check out the Yellow Pages for details.

A word of warning – relying on the generosity of friends or family (other than your spouse) at the drop of a hat can be problematic. It is better to come to some sort of regular business arrangement, and if a family member can happily accommodate your children, terrific.

Managing home and work

Find ways to cut corners where possible. Preparing and freezing meals in advance can be a real timesaver, and keeping healthy snacks like fruit in the house can be helpful when you have children who always seem to be hungry! You may like to pay someone to do some of the more tedious tasks like ironing, especially when your time with the children is limited. Involve your children in the housework as much as possible, and encourage them to be responsible for their bedrooms and possessions.

Money

Work out a budget and organise direct debits from your bank account for bills. Open a separate account for savings, and remember to put aside some money for family holidays!

Time out for you

Overloaded with responsibilities, many working parents completely forget to take care of themselves. Before long, they feel exhausted, burnt out and dissatisfied. Develop some prevention strategies, like ensuring you get plenty of sleep and eat well. Make sure that you balance your work and leisure time. Spend time relaxing - some workers suggest a weekly massage or soak in a long leisurely bath can do the trick. Ensure you and your children have quality time together without the pressure of always having to hurry.

Other issues

What should I tell my children I do for work?

This is very much up to the individual, and depends on the relationship you have with your child. Whatever the decision, it is one only you can make, and we will be here to support you.

Can my children be taken from me if I am working in the sex industry?

No, unless your child is being harmed in some way. Government agencies and welfare services are only interested in the wellbeing and care of children they suspect to be at risk of emotional or physical abuse or neglect. However, it is important that you keep work completely separate from your children. It is not considered appropriate to expose children to adult sexual activity and/or adult material (pornographic material, sex toys etc.). It is illegal for you to work while your children are on the same premises.

Can my ex-partner get custody of the children if the court knows I am a sex worker?

Every family law case is different, and the Magistrate takes into account many variables. We suggest you contact Legal Aid for legal advice. You may also wish to consider resolving your differences out of court by lodging a parenting agreement

– this can be arranged through mediation. Your best option is to contact the Family Law Court Counselling service who offer free, confidential advice on all issues concerning family law.

Can I still claim the pension if I'm working?

Your ability to claim the pension or part pension depends on your income. It is an offence to claim social security benefits and not declare your income from sex work. You may find yourself with a hefty fine and/or a fraud charge.

If your income from sex work is less than a certain amount, you may be entitled to receive a part or full pension and other benefits including family payments, guardian allowance and childcare fee relief.

If your income exceeds a certain amount, you may not be eligible for the pension (part or full) but you may still be entitled to some family payments and/ or partial childcare assistance.

For more information, contact Centrelink.