



Family law—services and support

The Australian Government funds a range of free or low-cost services that can help Australian families undergoing family separation and dealing with parenting and property issues. This includes services to help you look after your own or someone else's wellbeing. There is also a range of legal and family relationship services that can help resolve family relationship and family law matters for a fee.

INFORMATION AND ADVICE ABOUT FAMILY SEPARATION

- The **Family Relationships Online** website familyrelationships.gov.au has useful information about family relationship issues. This includes information about where to find services to help with relationship issues, including helping parents agree on arrangements for children after separation.
- The **Family Relationship Advice Line** is a national telephone service that provides information and referrals to relevant family relationship or legal services. Anyone can call the advice line – including family members or friends. Free and simple legal advice is also available through the **Family Relationship Advice Line Legal Advice Service**. You can contact the Family Relationship Advice Line on **1800 050 321** from 8am to 8pm Mondays to Fridays, and 10am to 4pm on Saturdays (except national public holidays).

The website of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (FCFCOA) at fcfcoa.gov.au/fl contains information to help people going through separation or who have family law matters before the courts.

Visit the FCFCOA enquiries hub for frequently asked questions or to submit an enquiry to the FCFCOA: fcfcoa.gov.au/enquiries-hub. If your matter is urgent or requires time critical intervention you can contact the FCFCOA by calling **1300 352 000**. Visit fcfcoa.gov.au/contact-us for more options to contact the FCFCOA.

For residents of Western Australia, visit the website of the Family Court of Western Australia at familycourt.wa.gov.au. Contact the Family Court of Western Australia by calling (08) 9224 8222 (8am to 5pm Monday to Friday) or visit familycourt.wa.gov.au/misc/contactus.aspx.

HELP TO RESOLVE YOUR OWN ARRANGEMENTS

Where it is safe to do so, separating couples are encouraged to resolve family law issues themselves or with the assistance of family relationship and legal assistance providers, without going to court.

- **Family Relationship Centres (FRCs)** provide free or low-cost assistance for families, including information, relationship advice and dispute resolution services to help establish parenting arrangements and property settlements. Visit familyrelationships.gov.au/talk-someone/centres for more information.
- **Family Dispute Resolution (FDR)** is a specialist mediation process conducted by an independent, accredited practitioner or practitioners to help members of families resolve family law disputes. FDR may be provided by a government-funded service with no or low costs to clients, or by a private practitioner that sets fees for services. Visit familyrelationships.gov.au/separation/family-mediation-dispute-resolution for more information.
- **amica** is a low-cost online service for couples whose separation is relatively amicable, and the parties are able to resolve their family law disputes with minimal assistance. amica uses artificial intelligence technology to suggest a split of property assets, and can assist parents to develop a parenting plan for their children. Further information about this service and whether it is suitable for your needs is available from the website amica.gov.au.



OTHER FAMILY RELATIONSHIP SERVICES

- **Family law counselling**—helps couples and families manage relationship issues arising from relationship changes, separation and divorce, through counselling, therapeutic intervention, support, information and referral. Visit familyrelationships.gov.au/counselling for more information.
- **Children's Contact Centres**—help children of separated parents establish and maintain a relationship with their other parent and family members through supervised visits or changeover services.
- **Parenting Orders and Post Separation Cooperative Parenting Programs**—helps separating families to manage disputes about parenting arrangements and increase cooperation and communication, using child focused and child-inclusive interventions with the support of a case worker. Post Separation Cooperative Parenting helps separated parents by providing access to education and support, where conflict is affecting their relationships with their children.
- **Supporting Children After Separation Program**—helps children deal with issues arising from the breakdown in their parents' relationship, and lets children participate in decisions that affect them.

To locate any of these services, you can contact the Family Relationship Advice Line on **1800 050 321** or visit the Family Relationships Online website familyrelationships.gov.au/find-local-help.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND LEGAL SERVICES

A lawyer can help you understand your legal rights and responsibilities. They can also explain how the law applies to your case. A lawyer may also be able to help you reach a parenting or property agreement without going to court.

- The **Family Law Section of the Law Council of Australia** can help you find a family lawyer. Their website: familylawsection.org.au/need-legal-assistance.html, has a list of family law legal services and organisations that provide legal assistance for a fee. The website includes links on how to find legal practitioners near you.
- **Legal Aid Commissions** are independent statutory bodies established under state and territory legislation that provide legal information, education, dispute resolution, advice and representation on family and relationship matters. Legal information is usually available to all people from their websites. Free or low-cost legal advice and representation may be provided to eligible people, usually those experiencing disadvantage. Legal Aid Commissions determine eligibility for their legal services and the extent of help they can provide in each case, based on guidelines that they have established. You can find the closest Legal Aid Commission to you through the National Legal Aid website: nationallegalaids.org/contact.
- **Community Legal Centres (CLCs)** are independent, not-for-profit, community-based organisations that provide free legal advice, casework, information and a range of community development services to their local or special interest communities. CLCs determine the extent of help they will provide in individual cases. They may also be able to help with making an application for legal aid, if appropriate. To locate your nearest CLC, call **(02) 9160 9500** or visit clcs.org.au/legal-help.
- **Women's Legal Services** are CLCs operating in each state and territory that provide advice, information, casework and legal education to women, particularly on family law. To find Women's Legal Services in your area, visit the Women's Legal Services Australia website: wlsa.org.au/members.
- The **Defence and Veterans Legal Service** provides independent, free and confidential legal information and advice across Australia to current and former Defence Force personnel. This includes guided referrals to relevant agencies, as well as general legal advice and preliminary legal support about a range of issues that can be experienced by people who have served. Call this service on **1800 33 1800** or visit defenceveteranslegalservice.org.au.



FAMILY VIOLENCE

If you believe there is an immediate risk of harm to you or your family contact the police on Triple Zero (000).

Child protection services are the responsibility of state and territory governments. You can find information to locate your relevant agency at: familyrelationships.gov.au/parenting/childrens-safety.

The following information and services are available to help people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence and abuse.

- The **Family Violence Law Help** website at familyviolencelaw.gov.au provides information about domestic and family violence, relevant laws in Australia (including family law, child protection law and domestic violence protection orders), and where to get help.
- The **Family Advocacy and Support Service (FASS)** provides free assistance to families who have been affected by family violence. You may be eligible for this service if you or a family member has experienced, used, or is alleged to have used, family violence in your relationship and you need legal assistance with a family law, or related child protection or family violence matter. More information on how to access FASS can be found at the Family Violence Law Help website at familyviolencelaw.gov.au/fass.
- **Mensline** is available for men who are seeking assistance because they have experienced violence. Mensline can be contacted at **1300 78 99 78** or mensline.org.au.

Support is also available for those who have been violent to a family member and want help to change their behaviour. The **Men's Referral Service** provides information and counselling to help men who use family violence and would like help with male behavioural and relationship concerns. You can contact the Men's Referral Service on **1300 766 491** or visit ntv.org.au. Mensline is also available for men who are seeking assistance because they want to stop using violence.



HEALTH AND SUPPORT SERVICES

It is common for people going through separation to require professional support to help with the emotional impacts of their situation. Information and support to look after your own or someone else's wellbeing is available if you need it.

- **Lifeline** is a national charity providing all Australians experiencing a personal crisis with access to 24-hour support and suicide prevention services. Call Lifeline on **13 11 14** or visit lifeline.org.au.
- **1800RESPECT** provides confidential information, counselling and support services to people who are experiencing or have experienced sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse. The service is also available to family members and friends of those who have experienced violence. Call **1800 737 732** or visit 1800RESPECT.org.au.
- **Beyond Blue** provides information and support to help everyone in Australia achieve their best possible mental health whatever their age and wherever they live. Call **1300 22 4636** or visit beyondblue.org.au.
- **Mensline** is a national telephone and online support, information and referral service for men with family, relationship, and mental health concerns. Call **1300 78 99 78** or visit mensline.org.au.
- **Qlife** is an anonymous, no-cost LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral for people wanting to talk about sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships. Call **1800 184 527** or visit qlife.org.au.

LEGAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- **Youth Law Australia** provides free and confidential legal advice to young people (aged under 25 years) or advocates for young people (aged under 18 years) about a range of issues, including divorce and separation. Visit yla.org.au/act/topics/at-home-parents-and-family/divorce-who-you-live-with for more information.
- **Kids Helpline** is a free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years. Call **1800 55 1800** or visit kidshelpline.com.au.
- **Headspace** provides information and services to young people (aged 12 to 25 years) going through a tough time, and to their families who want to support them. Services include local centres, online and over-the-phone support. Visit headspace.org.au for more information.
- **Bravehearts** provides specialist child sexual assault and exploitation counselling and support services. Call **1800 272 831** or visit bravehearts.org.au.



LEGAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS)** are community based independent organisations that deliver culturally appropriate legal assistance services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in each state and territory. ATSILS determine who is eligible for their legal services. Further information on ATSILS can be found at natsils.org.au.
- **Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS)** provide culturally sensitive assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim/survivors of family violence and sexual assault. FVPLS work collaboratively with other legal assistance and support services including court support, child protection, and information and referral services. Visit nationalfvpls.org/fvpls-services to find a FVPLS near you.
- The Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia also operates a **Specialist Indigenous List** to offer culturally-appropriate case management processes and support services in matters involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties in 11 locations. Further information is available on the court's website at fcfcoa.gov.au/fl/indigenous-list.
- **13yarn** is a national crisis support line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that provides a confidential, culturally safe space to yarn about your needs, worries or concerns. Call **13 92 76** or visit 13yarn.org.au.

FINANCIAL COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT

Financial counselling is a free service available through community organisations, CLCs and some government agencies. Visit moneysmart.gov.au/managing-debt/financial-counselling for information about accessing these services and for resources to assist those feeling the financial impact of family separation.

The **Disbursement Support Scheme** assists people in need who are not able to receive legal aid assistance or assistance under one of the other legal financial assistance schemes. The scheme provides funding for the costs of disbursements in Commonwealth, non-criminal matters, for items such as court transcripts, expert reports, travel costs, photocopying and witness fees. Legal representation costs are not available under this scheme.

Further information is available on the Attorney-General's Department website: ag.gov.au/legal-system/legal-assistance/commonwealth-legal-financial-assistance/disbursement-support-scheme.

You may address any enquiries about child support to Services Australia. Please visit their website: servicesaustralia.gov.au/contact-child-support?context=64107.