

## How do I prepare for Family Dispute Resolution?

- 1. Make a list...**of all the issues you would like to raise in the joint session. These must be relevant to the needs of your children.
- 2. Get informed...**about your legal rights and responsibilities. Be aware of other options and the range of outcomes that are reasonable in your particular situation.
- 3. Accept support...**from family, friends and professionals. Separation is a very difficult time. It is important that you have someone you can talk to, or just spend time with, as you work through the changes that will occur. Counselling may help you to move forward to a better space for mediation.
- 4. Treat your former partner with respect...**even though you may be feeling lonely and confused, hurt or angry. It is important that you give each other the space that you each need and that you communicate respectfully in front of the children.
- 5. Co-operation leads to better outcomes...**if you adopt a co-operative (even business-like) approach to the issues of concern to you, you will get faster and better results.

## What are the benefits?

- Your children are at less risk of being harmed by ongoing and unresolved conflict.
- Greatly reduced financial and emotional costs, and saving time compared with going to court.
- You make your own decisions about your life, and the lives of your children, rather than having a judge decide.
- You can improve your future relationship as co-parents and learn new skills in communication and co-operation.
- All information provided and discussed between family dispute resolution practitioners and clients is private and confidential as far as the law goes.
- It's FREE! You are entitled to an individual intake session, a group information session, and up to three hours mediation without any charge.

## HELPING FAMILIES BUILD BETTER RELATIONSHIPS



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*When couples separate, they still need to communicate effectively for their children's future.*

*To assist families to do this, a Family Dispute Resolution process has been developed to help people genuinely resolve their dispute with a minimum of fuss and expense.*

## When should I use Family Dispute Resolution?

When parents separate they need to make decisions that affect themselves and their children.

At the Family Relationship Centre, an impartial and trained Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner can assist separating parents to negotiate these decisions.

These decisions may be about:-

- Practical issues, such as who moves out of the family home, and when.
- Children's issues, such as day-to-day living arrangements, time spent with each parent, and longer term issues such as schooling, health and ongoing financial support.
- Personal issues, such as how to tell the children, family and friends about separation.
- Property issues that impact upon the children



## What is the process?

### Step 1—INTAKE

A family dispute resolution practitioner has a confidential conversation with each party, to determine whether FDR is likely to be helpful and appropriate in the circumstances (family violence and safety issues are taken into consideration).

### Step 2—GROUP SESSION

If FDR is assessed as appropriate each party attends a different group session to learn about making the most of FDR, and how to keep the children's best interests as the focus.

### (Optional) Step 3—CHILD INFORMED SESSION

This step is optional if assessed as appropriate during the Intake process (step 1). The Child consultant then meets with the child / children in a developmentally appropriate setting.

### Step 4—FDR SESSION

The parties come together with the Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner and explore each others needs and interests, and those of their children. Together the parties select the most suitable solutions.

With the help of the practitioner, the parties draft a written agreement. This agreement will not be legally binding. The practitioner can discuss how the agreement can be made legally enforceable.

## Family Dispute Resolution ...

**Is...**an opportunity for you to speak with an impartial and specially trained family dispute resolution practitioner.

The practitioner can assist both parties to negotiate joint decisions about parenting issues, despite strong emotions and past communication difficulties.

**Is ...**likely to be successful if both parties remain reasonable in their claims.

**Is not...**always suitable for couples if one or both have continuing, overwhelming emotions about the separation. The Practitioner can support you to access other services that will assist with these issues before you continue with family dispute resolution.

**Is not...**a process where a judgement will be made about who is right or wrong, who is being unreasonable, or who is the better parent. The Family Dispute Resolution practitioner will remain impartial, child and future focussed throughout the whole process.

