

## Where will the conference be?

If you live in Darwin it will be held in our Conferencing Suites on the Ground Floor, 9-11 Cavenagh Street. If you live in Alice Springs it will be held at the NT Legal Aid Commission at 77 Hartley Street. However your location will not prevent you from participating in a conference. Where possible we can conduct a conference by telephone and/or video conference.

## How long will a conference take?

A conference can take between 2 – 4 hours. You will need to make arrangements for childcare and parking. If you are taking time off work, you may want to take half a day to give you plenty of time.

Family law conferences are quicker, less formal and less stressful than going to court.

## Applying for legal aid

If you apply for legal aid for assistance with a children's matter, you will be required to attend a conference unless your matter is urgent.

A conference may not be recommended if there is a background of domestic violence, intimidation, child abuse, mental illness or other matters of concern. Please let your solicitor know if you have concerns about taking part in a conference.

## Family Law and the NT Legal Aid Commission

- Have you separated from your partner?
- Arguing over who your children will live with?
- Having hassles seeing your kids?
- Can't decide how to split the property?

The NT Legal Aid Commission can help you with these issues and other family law matters.

Legal Aid employs professional family lawyers and offers quality legal services. The services on offer include:

1. Free family law information and advice by telephone
2. Free family law advice clinics
3. Family law conferences
4. Ongoing legal aid for most family law matters

For free legal information contact the free call Legal Information line on

**1800 019 343**

To make an appointment to see a lawyer contact a Commission office:

Darwin	8999 3000
Palmerston	8999 4750
Katherine	8973 8704
Tennant Creek	8962 4362
Alice Springs	8951 5377

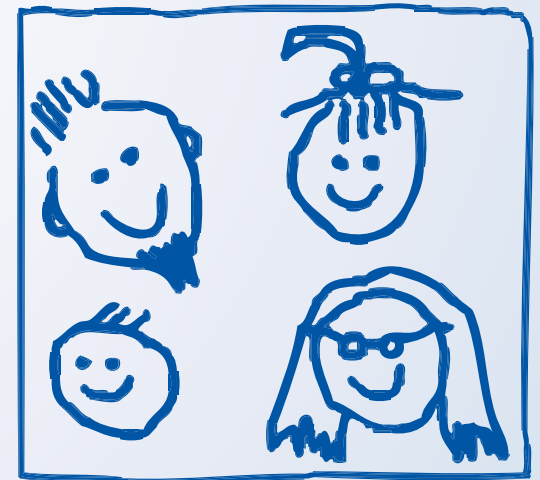
[www.ntlac.nt.gov.au](http://www.ntlac.nt.gov.au)



Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

## Family Law Conferencing

How to reach an agreement over a family law problem without going to court



Confidential Family Dispute Resolution

## What is Family Dispute Resolution?

This is a process such as conciliation and mediation that can help people resolve their differences. It can help you sort out legal issues concerning your children and property. The NT Legal Aid Commission is a registered Family Dispute Resolution provider.

## Is it Compulsory?

From 1 July 2007 if you want to commence proceedings in court for a parenting order (and your matter is not urgent), you will need a certificate from a registered family dispute resolution practitioner. This certificate confirms that a genuine attempt was made at family dispute resolution to reach an agreement.

## What is a family law conference?

It is a form of family dispute resolution which involves a meeting between the people in a family law dispute with the assistance of their lawyers. It aims to help people reach agreement without having to go to court.

## Why should I attend a conference?

A conference is a good way to settle a family law dispute without going to court. It also gives you the opportunity to get independent legal advice and assistance from a family lawyer.

Decisions made at a conference cannot be forced on you. Agreements reached at conferences are a result of your own decision, not that of a court. Conferences are not formal like court proceedings. You can have your say about things concerning each of you. You can talk about matters that you can't usually talk about in court proceedings.

Conferences are also more cost and time efficient than going to court. You can make significant savings on legal costs.

**You can reach an agreement at the conference without the worry of going to court**

## What will happen at the conference?

You and your former partner will be given an equal opportunity to discuss matters of concern to you in a controlled environment. The chairperson will then help you both resolve the issues raised.

The chairperson will also give you advice about the realistic outcomes to expect, if the matter proceeds to court.

## What happens after the conference?

If an agreement is reached between you and your former partner, then this agreement will be put into written form by the lawyers and attached to an Application for Consent Orders to be filed in the Family Court. The lawyers will prepare and check this legal document with you before it is filed at court. You must read this document and check it with your lawyer before you sign it. The orders you ask the court to make will become legally binding.

If you have not been able to reach a full agreement the chairperson will make a report to Legal Aid about the conference. The report will provide recommendations on whether legal aid funding should continue or not. This report will include information on whether a person's proposals are realistic, whether there has been a genuine effort

to resolve the matter and whether legal aid funding should continue to one or both of the parties.

The chairperson will also sign and issue a Certificate by Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner, which will state whether an attempt at family dispute resolution was made. This certificate is required if a party wishes to apply to the court for a decision to be made in their family law matter.

Legal Aid is not required to follow any recommendations made by the chairperson about continuing funding, but will take them into consideration. Legal Aid will consider whether an attempt was made to resolve the dispute during the family dispute resolution process. This may effect whether Legal Aid funding is available for any future court proceedings.

**Fees for Family Law Conferences vary – please speak to Legal Aid Staff or your lawyer for further information**