

Client Information for Telephone Family Dispute Resolution (FDR)

When family dispute resolution (FDR) is conducted over the telephone by an FDR Practitioner (FDRP), the process is similar to a face-to-face service. However, there are some additional, important considerations to take into account.

This guide will assist you prepare for and participate in telephone FDR.

Practical Tips

- Make sure your mobile phone is charged or, alternatively, we can call you on a landline.
- If possible, check the quality of the phone line. Sometimes you may need to change rooms to improve mobile reception.
- Using telephone headphones can block out external distractions and make it easier for your voice to be heard.
- Have pen and paper ready, and water at hand.
- It is important to allow enough time for the appointment, The FDR assessment appointment usually takes between 60 and 90 minutes, and the joint FDR session up to two hours, unless otherwise agreed. If you need to finish earlier, please let the FDRP know at the start of your appointment.

Your Safety

It is not safe to be driving, or appropriate to be working, during the telephone call. The FDRP will not proceed with the appointment in either of these circumstances.

If you are currently experiencing family violence and begin to feel unsafe during a session, you can terminate the call at any time and arrange for another session time. The safety of you and your children takes priority. For information about family violence, and for support, visit www.rav.org.au/familyviolence

If unexpected interruptions occur during the session, please explain this to the FDRP so that they are aware of what is currently happening.

The Telephone Appointment

The FDRP will call you at the scheduled appointment time, on the phone contact number you have provided.

You will be asked to identify yourself, to ensure the FDRP is talking to the intended person. The FDRP will also check where you are for the phone call.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Maintaining the privacy of the information discussed in FDR sessions is a fundamental part of the FDR process. As such, please note the following.

- During your session, you will need to be in a private space where you will not be interrupted or overheard. This can be in a car, if needed, as long as you are not driving.
- No other person can be present or hear the telephone conversation, unless previously discussed with the FDRP and agreed on before the session.
- Research informs us that it is not in the best interests of children to be exposed to issues relating to their parents' separation, so please ensure that children are not present and cannot overhear the phone call.
- As mentioned in the Client Information Sheet you received, the recording of any part of a session is not permitted.
- The FDRP will check that you are aware of these requirements and ask for your consent at the start of the session. They will also check in with you during the session, if they are concerned that others are present or that the session is being recorded.

When We Can't See Each Other

Before commencing joint FDR, the FDRP will discuss and establish ground rules about respectful communication to enable the session to run smoothly and ensure that both parties are able to participate and follow the discussion.

If the ground rules are not being followed, the FDRP may end the joint discussion and continue the session as a 'shuttle' session, i.e. speaking separately in turn with each of you.

As the FDRP cannot see you during the session, it's important to let them know if you are feeling distressed or confused, or need a break. The FDRP will also regularly check in with you. Please ask them to clarify or repeat anything you are not sure of.

Please let the FDRP know if you wish to speak separately with them. The FDRP may also decide to have some separate time with each of you during the process. While waiting, it's important to stay near your phone to be ready to answer a call from the FDRP.

Keeping Track

Throughout the session, the FDRP will take notes of what is being discussed, and will let you know when doing so. You are also welcome to take your own notes during the session, if that is helpful to you.

At the end of the session, the FDRP will verbally summarise their notes and the agreements reached, and check the accuracy of the notes with both parties. There will be a discussion about the next steps and the timing of another FDR session, if it is needed.

The FDRP will scan or photograph any whiteboard notes/other summaries taken, and email them to both parties so that you have a record of the outcomes of the FDR session.