

Family Violence Courts

Information for victims

What are Family Violence Courts?

Family Violence Courts deal with criminal cases relating to family violence. They were set up because communities were concerned about the increase in family violence cases.

Te Tāhū o te Ture – Ministry of Justice and the judiciary (judges and judicial officers), along with other agencies, work together to resolve family violence cases and help keep families safe.

Role of Family Violence Courts

Family Violence Courts:

- deal with criminal cases relating to family violence
- encourage defendants to take responsibility for their actions and know how their actions affect other people
- promote the safety of victims
- make sure people affected by family violence get the right support and education
- prioritise family violence cases as they move through the court system. Some cases may take longer, especially if the defendant is attending a non-violence programme.

How Family Violence Courts can help you

If you're a victim of family violence, the court will work with you and other agencies to make sure you and your children are safe and that you get the advice and support you need.

COURT VICTIM ADVISORS

Court victim advisors provide a free and confidential service. They'll give you information about:

- how the court works
- your rights
- a victim impact statement
- the victim notification register, if you qualify, and how you can register
- how you can increase your protection and safety
- how to prepare if you have to be a witness.

They'll also:

- put you in touch with community organisations who work with victims of family violence
- keep you updated about your case
- make sure your views are presented in court when appropriate.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

There will be organisations and people in your community who can give you and your children support. Your victim advisor will tell you about these. You can also visit the websites listed on the back of this factsheet.

Community organisations can:

- find somewhere for you and your children to stay if you need to move out of your home
- tell you about the choices you can make, as well as the legal, housing and financial help you can get
- put you in touch with a lawyer.

Government organisations like Work and Income can also help.

PROTECTION ORDERS

If you're affected by family violence, a Protection Order can help keep you and your children safe. For more information about how to apply for a Protection Order:

- ask your victim advisor
- visit the Ministry of Justice website
- talk with a staff member at your local court, or
- ask your lawyer.

If you don't hear from a court victim advisor, please ring Victims Information at 0800 650 654. The court may not have your contact details.

SAFETY SERVICES AND PROGRAMMES

Safety services

When a family violence charge is filed in a criminal court (such as a Family Violence Court), adult victims can ask for free and confidential advice about safety services.

An approved service provider will:

- identify your safety needs and give you immediate safety advice
- help you recognise and deal with risks, and
- help you make a plan to keep safe.

Safety programmes

If you're granted a Protection Order by a Judge, you can attend a free safety programme. This will give you tools and information to help you keep yourself safe if you are faced with further violence. These programmes are available for both adults in a relationship and any children who live or stay with them. For more information:

- contact your nearest Family Court
- visit the Ministry of Justice website
- talk to your lawyer
- call us on 0800 224 733, or
- call the Family Violence Information Line on 0800 456 450.

Staying safe during the court process

Generally, a court victim advisor will contact you after the defendant in your case has made their first appearance in court.

Your participation in the court process is up to you. Many victims want the chance to let the court know their views. Your court victim advisor can help you with this.

However, if the defendant continues to deny the charges, you may be summoned to court by the Police.

You can bring a support person to court with you. If you want them to be with you when you give evidence in court, you'll need to tell the court registrar or court victim advisor.

If you feel unsafe while you're at court, tell the police or court staff.

Working with defendants

Family Violence Courts make sure defendants are held accountable for their actions and are encouraged to take part in programmes that address their issues, like a government-funded family violence programme.

Court process

Family Violence Courts are held at the District Court in locations around the country. Hearings take place at regular times and places, with dedicated people like judges, police prosecutors, victim advisors, court staff and representatives from community organisations to help people through the process.

More information

Family violence – It's not OK

If you're experiencing or witnessing violence, it's OK to ask for help. Call 0800 456 450 or visit

[areyouok.org.nz](https://www.oneyouok.org.nz)

[2shine.org.nz](https://www.2shine.org.nz)

[womensrefuge.org.nz](https://www.womensrefuge.org.nz)

[shakti-international.org/shakti-nz/](https://www.shakti-international.org/shakti-nz/)

The Victims Information website and Victims Information line provide victims and their whānau with information on the court process and support options. Call 0800 650 654 or visit

[victimsinfo.govt.nz](https://www.victimsinfo.govt.nz)

To find out more information about how to stay safe, conditions and applying for a protection order, free safety services and where to get help, visit

[justice.govt.nz/family/family-violence](https://www.justice.govt.nz/family/family-violence)