

# Care of children: What to expect at the Family Court



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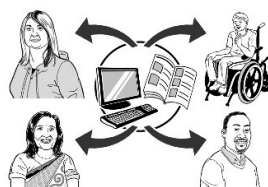
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## What this Easy Read is about



This Easy Read document has been written by the Ministry of Justice.



This Easy Read document has information about what you need to know if you are going through the **Family Court**.



The **Family Court** is a court that assists New Zealanders with family issues.



There are 58 Family Courts throughout New Zealand.



You can find more Easy Read information about the care of children and the Family Court on this **website**:

**[www.justice.govt.nz/care-of-children/resources](http://www.justice.govt.nz/care-of-children/resources)**

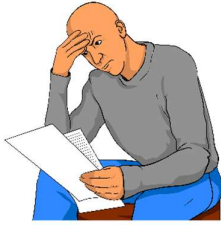


This is a long Easy Read document.

Some things you can do to make reading it easier are:

- read it a few pages at a time
- set aside some quiet time to look at it
- have someone read it with you to support you to understand it.

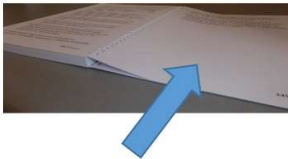




While this document has been written in Easy Read there is still a lot of complex information.



It is a good idea to get further advice.



On **pages 26 to 38** you can find information about places where you can get advice and support.



If you or someone you know does not feel safe right now you can:

- phone the police on **111**
- contact **Are You OK** on:

**phone: 0800 456 450**

**website: [www.areyouok.org.nz](http://www.areyouok.org.nz)**



**Are You OK** is an information service that can help you if you:

- are being hurt by someone
- see someone being hurt
- want to stop hurting someone.

You can also find more information on the Ministry of Justice **website**:

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





There are lots of phone numbers in this Easy Read document.



If you find it hard to use the phone the **New Zealand Relay** service is for people who:

- are Deaf / hard of hearing
- are deafblind
- are speech impaired / find it hard to talk.



You can find out more about the New Zealand Relay service at:

**[www.nzrelay.co.nz](http://www.nzrelay.co.nz)**



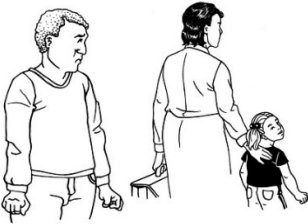
# About the Family Court



People sometimes go to the Family Court because of a change in family situation.



A change in family situation could mean:



- people decide to no longer live together
- it is best for the child / children to live with someone that is not their parents
- a disagreement about how to raise the child / children.



Going to the Family Court can be stressful / hard.



Talking to your lawyer or a **Kaiārahi / Family Court Navigator** can help.



**Kaiārahi / Family Court Navigators** can:

- give you information about how the Family Court works
- support you when dealing with the Family Court
- tell you about other services to help you.





You can ask for a Kaiārahi / Family Court Navigator by:

- visiting the Family Court closest to you

- emailing:

**[kaiarahi@justice.govt.nz](mailto:kaiarahi@justice.govt.nz)**

- calling the Ministry of Justice on:

**0800 224 733**



You can also find more about Kaiārahi / Family Court Navigators on this website:

**[www.justice.govt.nz/family/  
kaiarahi-o-te-kooti-a-whanau/](http://www.justice.govt.nz/family/kaiarahi-o-te-kooti-a-whanau/)**

# Things to check before going to the Family Court

## 1. Childcare



**Childcare** is having someone ready to look after your child / children while you are at the Family Court.



The Family Court does **not** have childcare services.



You will need to have a family member / friend / babysitter look after your child / children while you are at court.

## 2. Interpreter



An **interpreter** is someone who can tell you what is being said in the language that you use.



For example

- te reo Māori
- New Zealand Sign Language.



If you need an interpreter you will need to let the staff who work at the Family Court know.

The court staff can help you have an interpreter.

### 3. Support person



A **support person** is someone who can go with you to the Family Court.



A support person may be someone like a family member or friend.



You need to tell the court staff that you want to take a support person into the courtroom.



The court staff will ask the judge if that is okay.

## 4. Making things accessible



**Accessible** means things like:

- making it easy for everyone to get into / move around the court buildings
- hearing assisted technology such as a hearing loop for people who wear hearing aids
- different seating spaces such as spaces for wheelchairs.

Let the court staff know what you need to make court accessible for you.



## 5. Security officers

Security officers are at court to keep everyone safe.



If you feel unsafe about going to court talk to:

- your lawyer
- court staff so they can get a security officer ready.



## Going into the Family Court



When you go into the court building you may go through a **security check**.



**Security check** means you will go through a **metal detector**.

A **metal detector** is a machine that looks for things that you cannot take into court such as:

- knives
- guns.





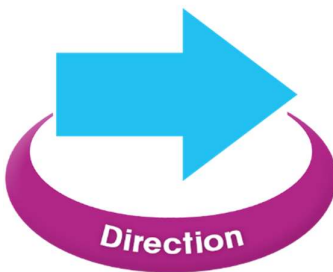
The security officer may also check your:

- bags
- pockets.



The security officer takes away things that you cannot take into court.

They may be given back to you when you leave court.



Once inside the court there are signs on the walls that show you where to go.

If you need help with knowing where to go you can:



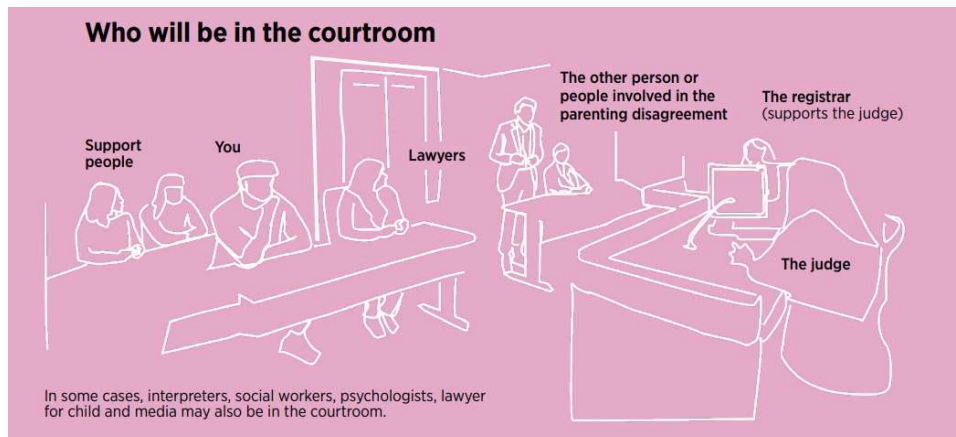
- ask at the front counter
- talk to the court staff.

# Who will be in the courtroom



In the courtroom there will be:

- the judge
- the registrar who supports the judge
- lawyers
- you
- the other people involved in the court case
- support people.





In the courtroom sometimes there will also be:

- **social workers**
- **psychologists**
- a lawyer for the child / children
- media like TV or newspaper.



**Social workers** work with whānau / families to make sure they get the support they need.



**Psychologists** can:

- listen to how people are feeling
- write reports for the Court about what is happening for people.

# What happens in the courtroom



Members of the public cannot come into the courtroom.

Only people who are part of the court **conference** or **hearing** can be inside the courtroom.



A **conference** is like a meeting.

You will likely go to either a:

- **case conference**
- **settlement conference.**





A **case conference** is when:

- everyone involved comes together to meet with the judge
- and**
- lawyers to talk about the next steps that can be taken.



A **settlement conference** is when the judge will help everyone work out the parenting disagreement.



A **hearing** is more **formal**.



In a courtroom **formal** means:

- it is less like a meeting
- it is more like a court case.

When a hearing is formal everyone:

- sits in a certain place
- waits their turn to speak.



At a hearing the judge will look at the **evidence**.





**Evidence** means things like:

- reading **affidavits**
- hearing from **witnesses**.



**Affidavits** are written documents of what people have said.



**Witnesses** are people who have seen some things that may be important to know about.



The judge will let you know when it is your turn to speak.

If you have a lawyer they will speak for you.



If you are giving evidence you will need to speak.

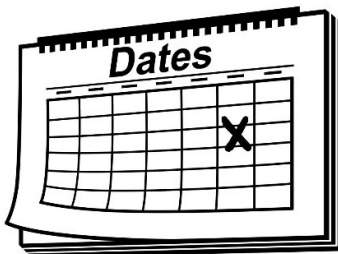
It is important that you understand what is going on.

If you have questions:

- talk to your lawyer
- when it is your turn to speak ask the judge.



When your conference or hearing ends the judge will tell you what will happen next.



This may mean coming to court on another day.

## Getting legal advice



**Legal advice** is when you ask a lawyer for information about the law.

If you are going through a change in family situation it may be helpful to get some legal advice.



You can get legal advice at any time.

If you are not sure where to start you can visit your Community Law Centre.





You can use this **website** to find out where your closest Community Law Centre is:

**[www.communitylaw.org.nz](http://www.communitylaw.org.nz)**

# More places where you can get support



## 1. Family Court

The Family Court has **staff** that can assist people with the forms needed and next steps.



**Staff** are people who work at the Family Court.



Staff include:

- Kaiārahi / Family Court Navigators
- Family Court Co-ordinators
- Front counter staff.





Staff at the Family Court **cannot** give you legal advice.



You can talk to court staff by:

- visiting the Family Court closest to you
- emailing:

**[kaiarahi@justice.govt.nz](mailto:kaiarahi@justice.govt.nz)**

- calling the Ministry of Justice on:

**0800 224 733**



## 2. Citizens Advice Bureau

Citizens Advice Bureau is also sometimes called **CAB**.



CAB can assist you to:

- understand your rights
- fill out forms.



To find out more information about CAB you can:

- go to this website:

**[www.cab.org.nz](http://www.cab.org.nz)**

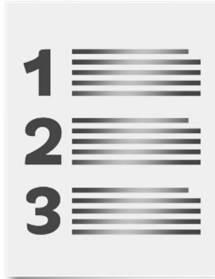


- call this phone number:

**0800 367 222**

### 3. Family Services Directory

The Family Services Directory:

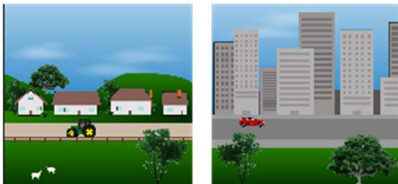


- has a list of support services that can assist whānau / family across Aotearoa New Zealand

- is an information service about all kinds of services such as:



- counselling
- housing / somewhere to live
- help with the cost of living such as food
- disability support
- transport.







To find out more information about Family Services Directory you can:

- visit their website:

**[www.familyservices.govt.nz](http://www.familyservices.govt.nz)**



- call this phone number:

**0800 211 211**



## 4. CCS Disability Action

CCS Disability Action provides information and support to:



- disabled people
- their whānau / family.

To find out more information about CCS Disability Action you can:



- visit this website:

**[www.ccsdisabilityaction.org.nz](http://www.ccsdisabilityaction.org.nz)**

- email:

**[info@ccsDisabilityAction.org.nz](mailto:info@ccsDisabilityAction.org.nz)**



- phone:

**0800 227 200**



## 5. 1737: Need to Talk

At 1737: Need to Talk you can talk to a counsellor by:

- calling: **1737**
- texting: **1737**

1737: Need to Talk is open all day / night.

If the 1737 number does not work from your phone you can call this number:

**0800 1737 1737**

You can find out more about 1737: Need to Talk on this **website**:

**[www.1737.org.nz](http://www.1737.org.nz)**

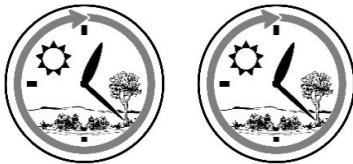


## 6. Lifeline Aotearoa

At Lifeline you can talk to a trained counsellor by:



- calling: **0800 543 354**
- texting: **4357**



Lifeline is open all day / night.



You can find more information about Lifeline on their website:

**[www.lifeline.org.nz](http://www.lifeline.org.nz)**



## 7. Skylight

At Skylight you can talk to a trained counsellor.



You can talk to a counsellor if you are going through a difficult time.



You can phone:

**0800 299 100**



You can find more information about Skylight on their website:

**[www.skylight.org.nz](http://www.skylight.org.nz)**



## 8. 0800 What's Up

0800 What's Up is a counselling service for:



- tamariki / children
- rangatahi / young people.



Children and young people can:

- phone:

**0800 942 8787**

- chat online at:

**[www.whatsup.co.nz](http://www.whatsup.co.nz)**



You can find more information about 0800 What's Up on their **website**:

**[www.whatsup.co.nz](http://www.whatsup.co.nz)**



## 9. Youthline

Youthline is a counselling service for:



- tamariki / children
- rangatahi / young people.



Children and young people can:

- phone: **0800 376 633**
- text: **234**
- chat online:



**[www.youthline.co.nz](http://www.youthline.co.nz)**



You can find more information about Youthline on their website:

**[www.youthline.co.nz](http://www.youthline.co.nz)**

## Where to find more information



The Ministry of Justice has more information about parenting arrangements on their website:

**[www.justice.govt.nz/care-of-children](http://www.justice.govt.nz/care-of-children)**



You can also talk to someone at the Ministry of Justice by calling:

**0800 224 733**





This information has been written by  
Tāhū o te Ture – the Ministry of Justice.



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by the Make it Easy Kia Māmā Mai  
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Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.



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