

## What you need to know when the judge has ordered a report about your child's cultural background

When making decisions, a judge needs to consider each child's cultural identity, including ethnicity, language and religion. To better understand your child's culture, the judge has asked a cultural expert to write a report. One way the report can help is by explaining any cultural differences between the parents or other people who are involved.

### Preparing the report

The judge will ask an expert to write the report.

#### THE ROLE OF THE REPORT WRITER

The report writer's role is to give the judge information so the judge can decide what will be best for your child.

#### DOES THE REPORT WRITER GET TO DECIDE THE CASE?

No, that's the judge's job. The report writer's job is to provide the cultural information the judge needs to decide what is best for the child.

#### WHO DECIDES HOW THE REPORT WILL BE PREPARED?

The report writer will decide how they will investigate the issues and prepare their report.

#### WILL THE REPORT WRITER TALK WITH YOU?

Most report writers will want to meet with each parent or caregiver to find out how you see the issues. The report writer may also want to talk to new partners and other people who may have a significant role in your child's life.

#### HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE FOR THE REPORT TO BE PREPARED?

The court will tell the report writer when they need to finish the report and will monitor the report writer's progress.

### Who pays for the report?

For cases about the care of children, child support or divorce (dissolution of a marriage or civil union) you will probably have to pay some of the costs of preparing the report.

The government will pay one-third of the costs. The court can order you and the other people involved to share the remaining costs.

Costs are decided at the end of your case. At that time you can tell the court if you think you should not have to pay these costs.

The court can excuse you from paying these costs if it thinks it would cause you or your child serious hardship.

### How the report is used

#### WILL THE ADULTS INVOLVED IN THE CASE SEE THE REPORT?

In disputes about the care of children and cases about care and protection, the lawyers for each parent or other party will get a copy of the report. If you or the other parent or caregiver does not have a lawyer, the court will generally advise you about how and where you can read the report. For example, you may need to go to the court to read it.

Sometimes, the court will order the lawyer not to show their client the report or give them a copy. An example is if doing so could put someone at risk. In these cases, the court may appoint a lawyer to explain the report to you.

#### WILL YOUR CHILD SEE THE REPORT?

The judge will decide whether your child sees the report or any part of it.

#### WHAT IF YOU'RE NOT HAPPY ABOUT WHAT'S IN THE REPORT?

Tell your lawyer if you are unhappy with what's in the report or how it was prepared. If you don't have a lawyer, tell the judge.

If you think the report writer has behaved unprofessionally, talk to a Family Court coordinator.

### Need more information?

- contact your nearest Family Court
- visit the Family Justice website [justice.govt.nz/family-justice](http://justice.govt.nz/family-justice)
- contact a family lawyer [familylaw.org.nz](http://familylaw.org.nz)
- contact a Community Law Centre [communitylaw.org.nz](http://communitylaw.org.nz)
- call us on 0800 2 AGREE (0800 224 733)