

## Family dispute resolution

Family dispute resolution (FDR), also known as mediation, helps couples who are separating to resolve their family law disputes. For example, it can help parents to agree on living arrangements for children and how to share parenting after separation.

FDR focuses on redressing imbalances of power and safety, and the best interests of children.

## Thinking about children

Understanding and making decisions about children's needs during and after separation can be difficult. Parents can consider arrangements that will work for their children by hearing about their children's experiences of the changes in their family and life.

Before decisions are made in FDR, it can be helpful for children to talk on their own in a safe environment to a child consultant - a person trained to understand their feelings and views. This can also help parents to make decisions in FDR that take into account how their children are feeling.

This process is known as child-inclusive FDR.



## Who we are

Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) is a valued provider of specialist family and relationship services. Our vision is for positive, safe and respectful relationships for couples, families, schools, workplaces and communities.

As a secular, community-based, not-for-profit organisation, our services are for all members of the community, regardless of religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, lifestyle choice, cultural background or economic circumstances. RAV provides services from 12 centres in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. The corporate support team is based in Camberwell.

## Contact us

We provide FDR at the following centres.

### Ballarat

Ph: (03) 5337 9222

### Berwick Family Relationship Centre

Ph: (03) 8768 4111

### Greensborough

Ph: (03) 9431 7777

### Greensborough Family Relationship Centre

Ph: (03) 9404 7800

### Melbourne Family Relationship Centre

Ph: (03) 8625 3666

### General enquiries

Phone 1300 364 277 or visit [www.rav.org.au](http://www.rav.org.au) to find your nearest centre.

Funded by the Australian Government.  
Images for illustrative purposes only.

### Kew

Ph: (03) 9261 8700

### Shepparton

Ph: (03) 5820 7444

### Sunshine

Ph: (03) 8311 9222

### Sunshine Family Relationship Centre

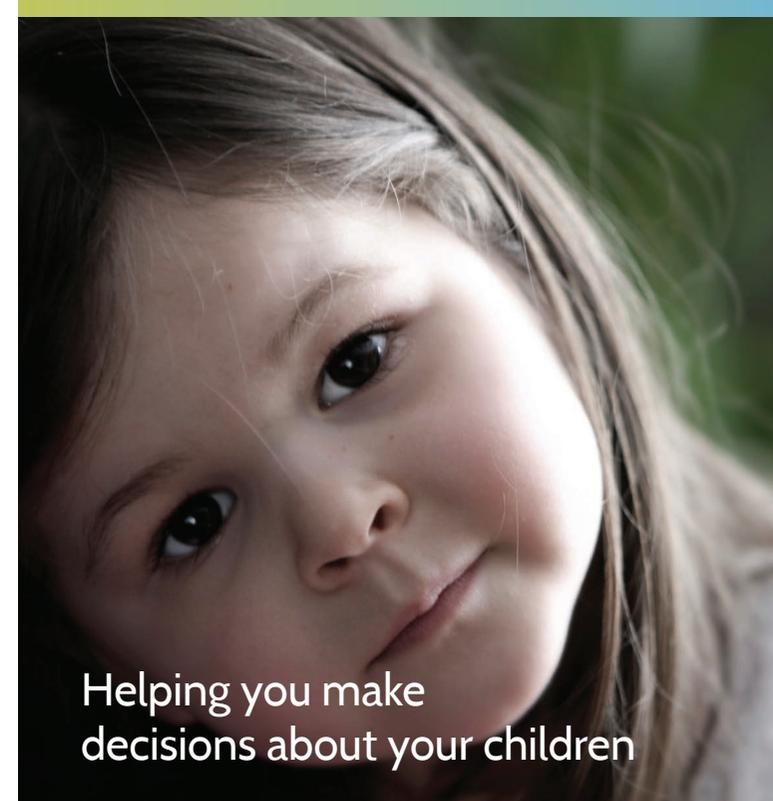
Ph: (03) 9313 0444

### Traralgon

Ph: (03) 5175 9500

# Hearing your child's voice

## in family dispute resolution



Helping you make decisions about your children

Relationships Australia<sup>®</sup>

VICTORIA

## How can child-inclusive FDR help children?

The purpose of child-inclusive FDR is to allow children to explain how things are going for them at the moment and to help parents to make decisions in FDR.

It can be a relief for children to express their views to a person who is separate to any conflict that the family might be experiencing. Children often say they feel relieved and 'lighter' after having the chance to talk to someone who is not their mum or dad.

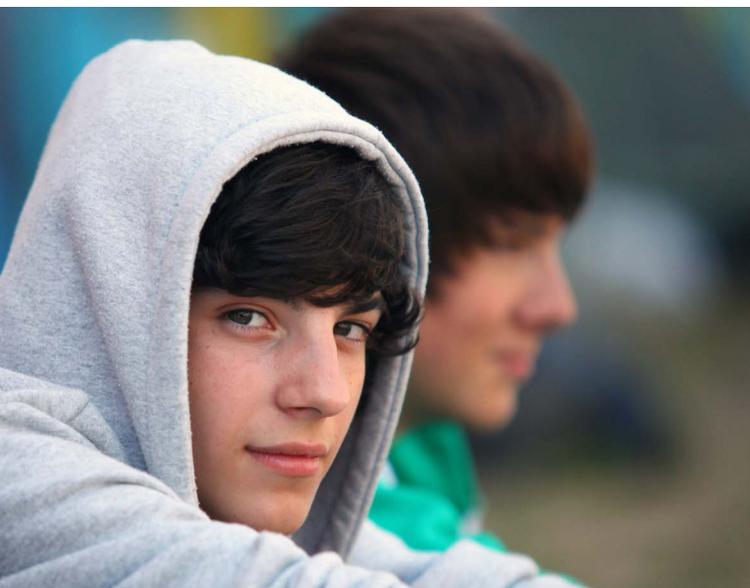
## What happens in child-inclusive FDR?

Children meet with a child consultant and express themselves by talking, drawing, playing, reading, telling stories, or participating in other activities, depending on the child and their age.

Each child in a family is usually seen separately, however siblings may also be seen together.

Sometimes a second session with the child consultant is recommended. It's important to know that these consultations are not the same as child counselling.

**Children are never asked to make decisions – that's their parents' job.**



## Feedback to parents

During a separate FDR session, parents can talk with the child consultant who has spoken to their children in order to learn:

- what the situation is like for their children
- what is going well
- what can support their children in the future.

## How can child-inclusive FDR help parents with their decision making?

If parents understand their children's hopes, worries and needs, they can keep them in mind when making agreements in FDR.

Joint decisions can then more effectively focus on:

- incorporating children's needs into plans for time-sharing and co-parenting
- maintaining important relationships
- ensuring children get to do the things they like to.

## What about infants and very young children?

If a child is unable express their views or participate in child-inclusive FDR, we can provide enhanced child-focused FDR. This involves a trained child consultant who provides information about current research on children's ages and stages of development, and how different parenting arrangements may work for children at these different ages.

## Are the consultations and feedback sessions confidential?

As with the other aspects of FDR, information is kept confidential within the child-inclusive and enhanced child-focused FDR programs, except if we are authorised or required by law, such as to protect someone from harm.

We ask that parents do not discuss any feedback about the child-inclusive FDR session with their children.



## When does child-inclusive FDR take place?

There are opportunities throughout the FDR process to discuss whether to involve children in FDR through a child consultant.

Both parents need to consent to involve children, and an assessment of suitability needs to be made with your practitioner. A final assessment of suitability is made by the child consultant.

## Our staff

All our child consultants are trained and qualified to work with children in divorce and separation. All of our FDR Practitioners are registered with the Attorney-General's Family Dispute Resolution Register.

## Fees

Fees are charged for most Relationships Australia Victoria services. All fees however, are appropriate for the service provided and your financial capacity to pay. Where a fee is charged for FDR, the same fee will also apply for the time spent with the child. Your practitioner will explain all fees in advance.