

Family Dispute Resolution - Mediation

LifeWorks offers Family Dispute Resolution as a means of resolving relationship disputes involving either children or financial issues or both.

What is Family Dispute Resolution?

Family Dispute Resolution is a way of resolving conflict and settling disputes without costly legal action. Dispute Resolution Practitioners (Mediators) work in a neutral, non-judgemental way to help you resolve disputes.

LifeWorks also provides mediation for other disputes such as work place conflict.

How Family Dispute Resolution works

Family Dispute Resolution is a co-operative dispute resolution process involving several distinct stages.

Children and Family Dispute Resolution

LifeWorks has trained child consultants who are able to spend time with children and provide feedback from these interviews to parents as part of the mediation process.

Initial contact

You can contact LifeWorks during office hours to find out about the services we offer, to discuss your specific situation with one of our mediators or to make an appointment for a personal interview.

Intake interview

One of our mediators will meet with you separately and then your former partner, or other party, before a Family Dispute Resolution session can be booked.

During this interview, the mediator will:

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Listen to your side of the story and help clarify your concerns and possible solutions. Help you to decide whether mediation will be helpful for you and, specifically, explore any matters such as violence, abuse, drug or alcohol use, which could make mediation unsafe, unfair or unsuitable. Give you information on the Family Dispute Resolution process and help you to adequately prepare for mediation. Suggest appropriate referrals for legal advice, counselling, income support or other sources of assistance such as Child Support Agency or Centrelink.

First Family Dispute Resolution session

At the first session:

The mediator/s will explain the process.

You will each have the opportunity to outline your own view of the dispute without any interruptions.

The mediator/s will help you break down the dispute into manageable issues, develop an agreed agenda and a plan of action for how you will go about tackling each of the issues.

When financial issues are involved, preparation of a joint financial statement and other data collection is commenced.

Subsequent Family Dispute Resolution sessions

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Sometimes the issues you have identified can all be resolved in one mediation session. However, it is more usual to take two or three sessions, sometimes more, over several weeks or months. The mediator/s will help you communicate directly on each issue, examine a range of possible solutions and work towards an agreement which takes into account everyone's needs and concerns. We usually allow up to two hours for each mediation session. We provide you with a summary of each mediation session, highlighting important points discussed and any agreements reached. This also helps you obtain necessary information and independent professional advice between sessions.

Private sessions

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You may ask to speak individually (and confidentially) with the mediator/s at any stage during the process. The mediator/s may call a private session if the discussions get 'stuck'. We often have a break during a session and you, or the mediator/s, can call a break at any time.

Agreements

Agreements reached in mediation are not legally binding. Generally, they can easily be converted into enforceable Court registered agreements or Consent Orders.

We recommend throughout the mediation process that you obtain independent legal advice.

Mediators and Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners are professionally qualified

LifeWorks' practitioners are required to be qualified in Law, Psychology, Social Work or a Social Science and to have undergone specialist training and supervised experience in mediation. They also have to meet legal requirements covering client confidentiality and professional conduct.

Fees

LifeWorks is a non-profit organisation. While the cost of service is partially subsidised by government funding, fees are charged to cover the remaining costs. The mediator will discuss with you the fee for your particular service, based on LifeWorks' sliding scale. Fees are payable at the beginning of each session.

Locations

City - Level 4, 255 Bourke Street, Melbourne Vic 3000 Ph: (03) 8650 6200

Geelong - 94 Gheringhap Street, Geelong Vic 3122 Ph: (03) 5222 3172

Wyndham - 237-239 Hogans Road, Hoppers Crossing Vic 3029 Ph: (03) 9974 3200