



Australian Government

**Department of Families,
Housing, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs**

Family Relationship Services Guidelines

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Foreword

Family Relationships Services (FRS) is a national program funded at over \$231¹ million (excluding GST) annually by the Australian Government (Commonwealth) through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and the Attorney-General's Department (AGD).

This significant investment is intended to improve family functioning and safety and support families in transition to minimise the emotional, social and economic costs of disruption to family relationships. FRS providers support individuals, couples and families, including extended family members. This is delivered through a suite of prevention, early intervention, and post-separation services providing information, referral, counselling, education and dispute resolution.

In February 2009, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs announced the new Family Support Program (FSP). The FSP will bring together FaHCSIA's existing family, parenting and children programs, including FRS into one streamlined program.

FSP operates in the context of a number of broader Commonwealth priorities, in particular:

- the social inclusion agenda
- the national framework for protecting Australia's children, *Australia's children: safe and well*
- the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, and
- the National Compact between the Commonwealth and the non-profit sector.

The transition to the FSP will be undertaken in partnership with the family support sector and is expected to be completed in 2011. This is an exciting opportunity for the sector and Commonwealth. We look forward to working together to better support families, nurture children and build strong, resilient communities.

¹ This figure includes funding for Family Law Services, Post Separation Services and Early Intervention Services through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and the Attorney-General's Department (AGD).

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Introduction

The Family Relationship Services Guidelines (Guidelines) form the basis of the business relationship between the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA – also referred to as the Department) and the funding recipient.

The Guidelines outline:

- the aim of Family Relationship Services (FRS)
- eligibility requirements and selection processes
- FaHCSIA's expectations of funding recipients
- what funding recipients can expect from FaHCSIA
- funding arrangements
- reporting requirements
- the Performance Framework
- funding agreement management and program governance arrangements, and
- the Family Support Program service streams that include FRS services, eligible activities and the details of approved services.

The Guidelines should be read in conjunction with the following documents, which together form the program management framework for funding recipients delivering FRS:

- FRS Funding Agreement²
- FRS Administrative Approval Requirements (Approval Requirements) (Appendix A)
- FRSP Online Protocols (Appendix B)
- Operational Framework for Family Relationship Centres (Appendix C), and
- Description and Operational Requirements for Supporting Children after Separation Program (Appendix D).
- Service Description for the National Find and Connect Service (Appendix E).

These documents are also available on the FaHCSIA website at www.fahcsia.gov.au/frsp

FaHCSIA reviews and updates the Guidelines annually, with new versions available in May of each year. FaHCSIA reserves the right to amend the Guidelines at other intervals by whatever means it may determine at its absolute discretion. FaHCSIA will provide reasonable notice of these amendments to all funding recipients that deliver Family Relationship Services. If altering the performance criteria or

² The term 'Funding Agreement' includes 2007-11 and 2008-11, Multi-Schedule Funding Agreements, 2009-11 and 2009-12 Standard Funding Agreements.

requirements, FaHCSIA will provide notice of at least one month prior to the changes coming into effect.

NB: These Guidelines will be amended to meet the requirements of the Family Support Program (FSP).

NB: There are exceptions to the requirements of these Guidelines for the Family Relationship Advice Line, Family Relationships Online and National Find and Connect Service for Forgotten Australians and former child migrants. Providers of these activities are to seek clarification from the Department.

Part A – Information about Family Relationship Services

1 FRS Overview

Family Relationship Services (FRS) is the Commonwealth's major program response to supporting positive family relationships. These services aim to improve the wellbeing of families and children through prevention, early intervention and post-separation services.

These services provide a range of flexible and tailored supports through two complementary Family Support Program (FSP) service streams (Table 2). Family and Parenting Services focus on enabling children, young people, and adults in all their diversity, to develop and sustain safe, supportive and nurturing family relationships. Family Law Services have a focus on helping to minimise the emotional, social and economic costs associated with disruptions to family relationships, including separation and divorce.

1.1 Eligibility

- Applicants must be an incorporated, not-for-profit organisation managed by an elected board, committee or equivalent, which is drawn from the community.
- Applications for Family Relationship Centres are accepted from for-profit agencies.
- Applications for the Family Relationship Advice Line are accepted from government, for-profit and not-for-profit organisations.
- Applications for the National Find and Connect Service are accepted from for-profit and not-for-profit organisations.
- Government agencies may participate in a consortium provided they are not the lead member and do not receive FRS funds as a result of their participation.
- From time to time where there is no acceptable not-for-profit agency, the Commonwealth may approach another government agency to supply a service.

1.2 Selection

- FaHCSIA conducts competitive selection processes to identify preferred FRS applicants and recommend them to the decision-maker³.
- FaHCSIA may also conduct open competitive selection processes to reselect services where funding recipients have ceased operation.
- Advertisements for new funds are placed on the FaHCSIA website www.fahcsia.gov.au/frsp; where relevant the Attorney-General's Department (AGD) website www.ag.gov.au ; in the local press in areas of identified need and in the national press.

³ From time to time the decision-maker may direct additional or supplementary funding to pre-selected services. For example to service an area in emergency conditions (i.e. a bushfire) a FRS funding recipient may be asked to apply for time limited, short term funding. In addition, direct sourcing or selective processes may be undertaken in particular circumstances.

- During selection processes details of advertised services and guidance on how to apply is subject to probity requirements. Information is made available in Application Guidelines and through a Question and Answer process.
- Applicants must comply or demonstrate the capacity to comply with the FRS Administrative Approval Requirements (Appendix A) within a reasonable timeframe agreed with the Department.
- Applicants can apply as a single organisation⁴ or a consortium, however only one application can be submitted for each advertised service in a particular location.

1.3 Consortia and Subcontracting

- FaHCSIA provides funding to single agencies.
- Where two or more organisations seek funding as a consortium, a member organisation must be appointed as a lead member⁵.
- The lead member must submit the application.
- The application should identify all members of the consortium and include a memorandum of understanding, signed by the proposed Consortium members, showing:
 - their agreement to enter into a consortium arrangement
 - the nature of the legal relationship between parties
 - how the arrangements between the members will be managed and overseen by the lead member.
- If a consortium is successful FaHCSIA will only enter into a Funding Agreement with the lead member.
- Under the Funding Agreement, funding recipients can only subcontract services with the prior permission of FaHCSIA, and must remain responsible for the provision and quality of all services that they subcontract. Note: All consortium members are to be listed in funding agreements as ‘Sub-contractors’ along with information on the service / service type they will deliver.

1.4 Funding

- An applicant becomes a funding recipient when it enters into a Funding Agreement with the Commonwealth.
- Most Funding Agreements for FRS have an activity period of 2 or more years.
- Funding Agreements can be renewed but only when the funding recipient demonstrates compliance with the requirements of the documents that form the program management framework (see Introduction Page 6) and renewal has been agreed by the decision-maker.

⁴ Single organisations are able to enter into subcontracting arrangements with other organisations

⁵ The lead member is the legal entity that, if successful, enters into an Agreement with the Commonwealth and who is authorised to negotiate and act on behalf of, and to bind each member of the consortium.

1.5 Reporting and Assessment

- Funding recipients are required to collect and transfer data to FaHCSIA within 28 days of service provision using FRSP Online or another compatible approved software application (excludes National Find and Connect Service).
- Funding recipients must provide reports as required and in accordance with Item E of the Funding Agreement and participate in self-assessments, external assessments and evaluations as required.
- National Find and Connect services are required to collect and transfer data to FaHCSIA within six months.

2 Service Delivery Components of the Program

2.1 Program/Sub-program

FRS is funded at over \$231 million annually by the Commonwealth through FaHCSIA and the AGD. Funding is provided to more than 100 community organisations, operating through more than 650 locations nationally, to provide support for individuals, couples and families, including extended family members.

The National Find and Connect Service is funded at over \$20 million over four years to deliver an Australia wide coordinated records and family tracing and support service for Forgotten Australians and former child migrants.

The National Find and Connect Service will also provide workforce development activities beneficial to the needs of Forgotten Australians and former child migrants.

3 Responsibilities, Accountabilities and the Way we Work with the Sector

3.1 Departmental Responsibilities and Accountabilities

Both departments are committed to working in partnership with the sector through its:

- industry representative body;
- Senior Executive Forums; and
- Consultative forums and cross sector working groups.

FaHCSIA has responsibility for:

- continuing to improve the partnership between the Commonwealth and the sector based on a relationship of mutual respect and accountability;
- improving Commonwealth and non-government understanding of each others' environment, roles, requirements and responsibilities;
- working with the sector to better measure intervention effectiveness and outcomes;
- supporting further development of an integrated service system and coordination of initiatives across government;

- providing opportunities for sector input on policy and program development issues;
- working with the sector to reduce red tape;
- increasing the quality and quantity of data available to the sector;
- assisting the sector to respond to key concerns such as workforce issues; and
- working with the sector to enhance its standing in the community and independence.

FaHCSIA administers FRS through the Family Support Program and has policy responsibility for the Family and Parenting Services stream, including the National Find and Connect Service.

AGD has policy responsibility for the Family Law Services stream.

FaHCSIA's State and Territory Network (Network) is responsible for the day-to-day management of FRS and is the first point of contact for any FRS-related queries.

3.2 Funding Recipient Responsibilities and Accountabilities

Funding recipients are responsible for providing quality services that are effective, efficient and appropriately targeted to the needs of families. Specifically, funding recipients must comply with:

- the Family Relationship Services Guidelines;
- the FRS Performance Framework (see 4.2 Performance Framework);
- the Funding Agreement;
- the Approval Requirements (Appendix A) which requires a Statement of Compliance which is recorded in the Annual Service report (annual sign off on compliance by the funding recipient's Board) and independent assessment every three (3) years);
- FRSP Online Protocols (Appendix B);
- the Operational Framework for Family Relationship Centres (Appendix C);
- the Description and Operational Requirements for Supporting Children after Separation Program (Appendix D);
- the Service Description for National Find and Connect Service for Forgotten Australians and former child migrants (Appendix E); and
- State and Commonwealth legislative requirements including all relevant requirements under the Family Law Act 1975 and Marriage Act 1961.

Funding Recipients must:

- deliver funded services to the defined catchment area through the specific locations and to identified target groups;
- provide outreach sites and services where applicable;
- meet the objectives of each funded FRS;
- work with other agencies and services (see 7.3 Program Links with Other Agencies and Services) within local catchment areas to:

- design and deliver services that respond to the needs of local families;
- maintain awareness of best-practice service delivery;
- establish community networks to facilitate tailored, coordinated service delivery, and
- assist in warm referrals between key agencies.
- promote funded services across the catchment area;
- provide reports as required (see Item E in the Funding Agreement);
- register and maintain service and outlet details on FRSP Online and Family Relationships Online (excluding National Find and Connect Service);
- collect and transfer data to FaHCSIA within 28 days of service provision (excluding National Find and Connect Service);
- participate in evaluation activities, as required, to support high-quality services and best practice;
- participate in partnership events with FaHCSIA and AGD as specified, and
- participate in consultations and working groups to develop and maintain relationships with key internal and external stakeholders.

3.2.1 Legislative Requirements

FRSP operates under:

- the Marriage Act 1961 (Marriage Act), and
- the Family Law Act 1975 (Family Law Act)

Where funding recipients only deliver education through MFR and/or FREST the funding recipient must be approved as an organisation conducting marriage education programs under Section 9C of the *Marriage Act 1961*. The provision of marriage education services can be approved by the Minister of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs under the *Marriage Act 1961*.

The delivery of family counselling and family dispute resolution services is linked to the *Family Law Act 1975*.

In the conduct of family dispute resolution (including TDRS through the Family Relationship Advice Line), funding recipients shall ensure that family dispute resolution practitioners comply with the requirements of the *Family Law Act 1975* and its *Regulations*.

From 1 July 2009 all family dispute resolution practitioners issuing section 60I certificates will need to meet the final Accreditation Rules. These rules are based on competency based qualifications (Vocational Graduate Diploma in Family Dispute Resolution) that have been developed for the family relationships sector. Final Accreditation Rules have been prescribed in the *Family Law (Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners) Regulations 2008*.

There are currently no accreditation rules for family counsellors. Family counsellors must be authorised by an approved or designated organisation funded under the

Family Relationship Services Program⁶ in order to deliver family counselling under the *Family Law Act 1975*. This ensures that the counsellors are covered by the provisions in the *Family Law Act 1975* relating to confidentiality and inadmissibility of communications made during family counselling.

From 1 July 2009, organisations funded under the FRS to provide family counselling or family dispute resolution will no longer be approved, as the transitional arrangements set out in the *Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Act 2006* cease on 30 June 2009.

3.2.2 Fees Policy

Funding recipients are able to charge fees in association with funded services except where excluded by policy. For example fees may not be charged for the following services:

- Family Relationship Services for Humanitarian Entrants;
- Family Relationship Services for Families in Special Circumstances (including FSDRT);
- Rural and Regional Family Support Services;
- Family Relationship Services for Carers;
- Mensline;
- FRC information and referral, public family relationship seminars and/or group sessions and individual help;
- FRC joint family dispute resolution for up to three (3) hours per couple, or six (6) hours where interpreters are needed;
- Family Relationship Advice Line information, referral and individual help;
- joint family dispute resolution for Child Support Agency change of assessment customers for up to three hours⁷ per couple or up to six hours free per couple if an interpreter is required;
- Kids in Focus – Family Drug Support services;
- National Find and Connect Service for Forgotten Australians and former child migrants; and
- non-attendance of services that are free of charge.

Where fees are charged, funding recipients must:

- publicly display their fees policy;
- inform clients of their fees policy; and
- not refuse a service or refer clients to other organisations on the basis of a family's inability to pay fees.

⁶ The Family Relationship Services Program is referred to here to reflect what is currently written in the legislation.

⁷ Clients that require less than three hours to resolve their issues are not required to attend the full three hours. For clients that require more than three hours, the funding recipient must determine how best to meet clients' needs. If fees are charged, funding recipients must comply with the fees provisions contained in the FRS Standard Funding Agreement.

4 Performance Management and Evaluation

4.1 Performance Measurement

A funding recipient's performance is measured against the Funding Agreement requirements, which include an annual Service Assessment (see 4.6 Service Assessments), an annual Service Report and input into FRSP Online (see 4.4 FRSP Online).

From July 2010 and the commencement of the implementation of the Performance Framework (see 4.2 FRS Performance Framework); reviews of a funding recipient's performance will include the outcomes it achieved for clients.

4.2 FRS Performance Framework

The FRS Performance Framework (Framework) has been developed in partnership with the Joint Sector-Government Working Group on Quality and Performance Measurement and the FRS sector. The Framework (see Table 4) asks four key questions about service delivery:

1. how much did we do (outputs)
2. how well did we do it (processes)
3. did we make a difference in the short term (immediate outcomes), and
4. did we make a difference in the longer term (intermediate outcomes)?

Much of the data required under the Framework is collected through FRSP Online, particularly in relation to the first three questions. Collection of new data including for National Find and Connect Service where required will be phased in and some of the data collection may be done by occasional surveys or service specific data management systems.

Data collected under the Framework is required for reporting and FRS program management purposes. This data complements research and evaluation activities, and sits along side other quality assurance mechanisms such as:

- competitive selection processes
- FRS Administrative Approval Requirements compliance processes, and
- service assessments (see section 4.5 Quality Assurance and Risk Management) against client targets and compliance with the Funding Agreement which will increasingly focus on achievement of longer term outcomes following full implementation of the Framework.

As the Framework is implemented it is intended that data will be available for use at the national and Funding Recipient level.

The Framework's program logic shows the relationship and linkages between the FRS outcomes, processes and outputs. The best practical performance indicators, data sources and counting rules point towards achievement of these. Performance indicators have been mapped as either 'Key' or 'Other' to specific FRS services.

For example, the FRS program's achievements in helping parents improve the way they work together to parent their children (improved parenting arrangements) is indicated by the percentage of clients making parenting arrangements and the percentage of clients reporting that the parenting arrangements are workable. Importantly, Funding Recipients will not need to report against all performance indicators for individual clients of specific FRS services.

The Commonwealth will continue to work with the sector including National Find and Connect Services to develop the best approach to collect and report longer-term outcome data. The pilot testing of the forms developed for the collection of client outcome information and data on co-ordinated service delivery will provide information that will be used to inform the data collection methodology.

While the staged implementation of the Framework will commence in July 2010, some aspects of the Framework will need to be phased in over time. The Department is preparing the FRS Performance Framework Implementation Guide to help providers through the process.

For the implementation of the Family Support Program (FSP) from July 2011, we will need to have in place the performance framework that will capture all FSP components, meaning we need to include performance indicators for other programs under the FSP. The FRS indicators will remain but will become a part of the whole of FSP Framework.

Table 4: Family Relationship Services Performance Framework

Program objective: Improved family functioning

| Program logic | Performance indicator | Data source | Counting rule | FREST | MFR | SFVS | AMFT | RSTFSCF | FRESHE | FRSC | KIDS IN FOCUS | MENSLINE | Couns | FRC | FDR | RFDR | POP | CCS | PSCP | SCASP | FRAL | TDRS | RRFSS | NFC | |
|--|---|--|---|----------------|-----|------|------|---------|--------|------|---------------|----------|-------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|------|-------|------|------|-------|-----|---|
| <i>Intermediate outcomes: did we make a difference in the longer term?</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Improved family functioning | % clients with improved family functioning including child wellbeing | Service provider survey | # clients better able to cope or deal with the issues they received support with as a % of followed up clients who answered the question | K ¹ | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | - |
| <i>Immediate outcomes: did we make a difference in the short term?</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Reduced harmful behaviour | % clients with reduced harmful behaviour | FRSP Online Client Feedback Form | # clients reporting there is less conflict in the family and/or members of the family are safer as a % of all clients providing feedback to the questions | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | - | K | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Improved family relationships | % clients with improved relationships (parents/partners/children/communities) | FRSP Online Client Feedback Form, Mensline and FRAL statistical reports | # clients reporting improved relationship with partner/ex partner and/or with children as a % of all clients providing feedback to the questions | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | O | K | O | O | O | K | O | K | K | O | O | K | - | - |
| Improved knowledge and/or skills | % clients reporting improved knowledge and/or skills related to their presenting need | FRSP Online Client Feedback Form, Mensline and FRAL statistical reports | # clients reporting that they can apply a new skill and/or knowledge to their relationship and/or situation as a % of all clients providing feedback to the question | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | O | O | K | O | O | O | K | O | K | - | - |
| Improved parenting arrangements | % clients making parenting arrangements | FRSP Online Client Activity Outcome Form | # clients who made full or partial agreement as a % registered clients with presenting issues 'parenting' or 'post separation parenting' or 'step parenting' | O | - | - | K | - | - | - | - | - | O | K | K | K | K | - | O | - | - | K | - | - | |
| | % clients reporting parenting arrangements are workable | FRSP Online Client Feedback Form | # clients reporting parenting arrangements workable as a % of all clients providing feedback to the questions | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Satisfaction with assistance received | % clients satisfied that the support service they received was relevant to their circumstances and needs | FRSP Online Client Feedback Form, Mensline and FRAL statistical reports, NFC statistical reports | # clients reporting they would recommend a service to others as a % of all registered clients providing feedback | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K |
| Improved access to the wider service system | % clients satisfied that they received adequate information and/or referrals | FRSP Online Client Feedback Form, Mensline and FRAL statistical reports, NFC statistical reports | # clients satisfied that they received adequate information and/or referral as a % of registered clients providing feedback to the question | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | K | O | O | K |
| More effective resolution of complex family separation issues | Extent of linkages between services and (1) the courts, (2) legal assistance providers and (3) other family law system services to the benefit of clients | Not currently collected - suggest reports from services (and their partner agencies) in relation to the working with (1) the courts, (2) legal assistance providers and (3) other family law system services | Suggest proportion of positive comments within and across reports | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | K | - | - | K | - | - | - | O | - | - | - | |
| <i>Processes: how well did we do it?</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Inclusive practices | % clients from priority groups | FRSP Online, Mensline and FRAL statistical report, NFC statistical reports | # Indigenous, CALD, vulnerable, child, male and low income clients as a % of all clients (for services reporting in FRSP Online, refers to registered clients) # Elderly, terminally ill as a percentage of all clients for Find and Connect Service | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K |
| | % clients from priority groups satisfied with the appropriateness of the service for their background/needs | FRSP Online Client Feedback Form, Mensline and FRAL statistical reports, NFC statistical reports | # clients reporting that they were treated with respect as a % of clients from priority groups providing feedback | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K |
| Integrated service delivery/coordination | % referrals taken up | FRSP Online Referral Out Details and Notification Form, Mensline, FRAL statistical reports | Suggest # clients reporting referrals to other FSP service taken up during course of intervention as a % of all registered relevant clients | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | - |
| | % partner agencies reporting satisfaction with the contribution of the funding recipient to integrated service delivery/coordination | Departmental survey | # organisations whose partner agencies reporting satisfaction with the contribution of the funding recipient to integrated service as a % of total partner agencies providing feedback to the question | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K | K |

The Framework also:

- responds to the increased Commonwealth focus on measuring the longer-term benefits of service delivery and reducing red tape, and
- complements ongoing research and evaluation activities to provide funding recipients and the Commonwealth with data on the benefits of FRS services for Australian families.

4.3 Performance Recognition and Improvement

FaHCSIA will negotiate Performance Improvement Plans with those funding recipients whose Service Assessments identify underperformance issues. As there may be a range of reasons for underperformance, Performance Improvement Plans will be agreed between the funding recipient and the Network. Monitoring will occur in the context of ongoing contract management activities.

Performance Improvement Plans will:

- identify performance indicators that are not being met by the funding recipient;
- require the funding recipient to develop strategies in consultation with the department to improve its performance (such strategies could include additional training for staff or seeking the assistance of other funding recipients); and
- identify a date (no more than six months from the development of the plan) when the funding recipient's performance will be reviewed.

On review, if there has been no or limited improvement in the funding recipient's performance, FaHCSIA will, at its discretion, consider extending or refining the Performance Improvement Plan or terminating the Funding Agreement.

4.4 FRSP Online

FRSP Online is the FaHCSIA developed system for the FRS Program. FRSP Online consists of a web-based portal for data entry and a secure database for storage of the data.

Most performance information (e.g. client characteristics and service usage) is collected by funding recipients and entered directly into the web-based portal for FRSP Online. Alternatively information may be transferred through another approved software application (third party system) directly into the FRSP Online Database. If a third party system is used it is the funding recipient's responsibility to ensure the system can be adapted to FRSP Online development requirements within a reasonable timeframe agreed to by the Department.

Data is to be collected and reported in compliance with the FRSP Online Protocols (Appendix B).

The FRSP Online reporting portal enables:

- the Department to monitor funding recipient performance, and
- funding recipients to interrogate their own data and compare it against national benchmarks.

FRSP Online training is available from the FRSP Online Support Centre (see 7.7 Information Technology Support).

Funding recipients may also be required to collect additional data items through FRSP Online.

4.5 Quality Assurance and Risk Management

Applicants for funding under FRS must comply with the Approval Requirements (Appendix A). These are a set of 15 standards including governance, data provision, training, confidentiality and safety. Compliance against these standards is initially externally assessed and reviewed every three (3) years by an independent FaHCSIA approved body. Ongoing self-assessment against the Approval Requirements is recorded in an annual service report which is confirmed by the funding recipient's Board. This process helps to provide families and staff with assurance that quality services are being delivered by a proficient organisation.

4.6 Service Assessments

Under the terms of the Funding Agreement, FRS funding recipients are required to participate in, and achieve, satisfactory Service Assessments. Service Assessments are conducted by the FaHCSIA Network. These assessments are generally conducted between 15 February and 15 May of each year. Service Assessments incorporate an annual desk assessment of funding recipient's compliance against their obligations under the Funding Agreement and a review of previous risk assessments, performance issues and unresolved complaints.

4.7 Site Visits

Site visits are conducted in addition to desk assessments:

- for all funding recipients delivering a new service (one site visit at the main outlet for each service in their first year of operation);
- at a minimum of at least once during the term of the Funding Agreement;
- if issues raised in the Service Assessment indicate the need for additional site visits; and
- as required to address performance and/or compliance issues at the outlet level.

Site visits provide an opportunity for funding recipients and Network staff (where appropriate National Office staff) to discuss any issues related to compliance with these Guidelines and/or other funding requirements.

Network staff will meet with the funding recipient's senior management and/or outlet staff during this process. Visits may be conducted at a funding recipient's head office or at an outlet.

4.8 Financial Accountability

FaHCSIA is obliged to comply with the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*⁸ to ensure the efficient, effective and ethical use of Commonwealth resources. FaHCSIA requires funding recipients to provide annual audited financial statements in accordance with the Funding Agreement and ensure funding is only used for the purposes for which it was provided. As FRS is a Discretionary Grant Program, the above obligations sit alongside the Commonwealth Grant Guidelines⁹.

The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) undertakes independent financial statement audits of all Commonwealth entities in accordance with recognised professional standards. Performance Assessments of selected Commonwealth public sector activities include financial reporting, administration, control and accountability.

In consideration of the Commonwealth's substantial financial investment, ANAO has an interest in the management and administration of the FRS.

4.9 Evaluation and Research

FaHCSIA periodically undertakes or commissions program evaluations and reviews to ensure FRS are high quality, effective, efficient and appropriately targeted to the needs of families. With the development of the new Performance Framework, there may also be a need to conduct or commission occasional surveys with providers and/or clients to allow data collection against performance indicators.

FaHCSIA will notify funding recipients of:

- the intention to conduct an evaluation/ data collection ;
- the focus of the evaluation/ data collection;
- who is conducting the evaluation/ data collection;
- the time period in which it is to be conducted;
- where appropriate, the involvement sought from the funding recipient ; and
- any special strategies, or other information relevant to the collection of data

FRS funding recipients are required to cooperate with external evaluators and researchers commissioned by the Commonwealth to undertake research and evaluation of family law reforms and associated services. Funding recipients may also undertake additional research activities. These optional activities may include local research projects, with or without the assistance of research partners.

5 Privacy and Confidentiality

The *Privacy Act 1988* (Cwlth) governs the manner in which personal information is handled by government agencies and private sector organisations.

The privacy and confidentiality requirements of funding recipients are described in the Funding Agreement, and in the Approval Requirements (Appendix A).

⁸ <http://www.finance.gov.au/financial-framework/fma-legislation/index.html>

⁹ Effective of 1 July 2009 available at <http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/index.html>

5.1 Freedom of Information

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cwlth) (FOI Act) gives the public the right to access information in the possession of government agencies with certain limited exceptions. Information collected or held by FaHCSIA may be made available on request, unless exempted under the relevant provision of the FOI Act or under specific legislation that provides for the confidentiality of that information.

Any application for access to documents under the FOI Act must be made by letter or statement, or (where available) by completing a form.

5.2 Security of Information

Funding recipients are required to store records in a secure place and dispose of them in an appropriate manner. Further information surrounding information security can be found in the Funding Agreement Terms and Conditions.

6 Complaints

Under the Approval Requirements (Appendix A), funding recipients are required to have procedures in place for the management of complaints in a positive, timely, fair and predictable way (Standard 11).

Any member of the public who is dissatisfied with the service provided by a FaHCSIA funding recipient is entitled to make a complaint. In the first instance clients should be encouraged to raise their complaints directly with the funding recipient.

If the matter cannot be resolved through the funding recipient's internal complaints process the complaint should be directed to the FaHCSIA National Office Complaints Team:

Phone: 1800 634 035

Fax: (02) 6133 8442

Email: complaints@fahesia.gov.au

Post: FaHCSIA Complaints, PO Box 7576, Canberra Business Centre, 2610

Part B –Information about the Family and Parenting Services (FPS) and Family Law Services (FLS) Streams

7 Program Management and Service Delivery Details

7.1 Participants/Clients/Recipients

7.1.1 Client Groups

Family Relationship Services (FRS) provides services for:

- intact and separated families, including extended family members;
- individuals, including children and young people;
- couples; and
- significant others who have caring or other relationship responsibilities.

FRS are directed to all families at all stages of the relationship cycle:

- prior to and during relationship formation;
- during relationships;
- through parenting;
- through separation and divorce;
- grand-parenting;
- throughout retirement; and
- past childhood experiences.

Some approved services under FRS target specific population groups or geographic areas with significant barriers to access, including:

- children (0-12 year olds);
- young people (12-18 year olds);
- families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- Indigenous families;
- Rural and regional families;
- vulnerable families (families who have multiple presenting needs that may be inter-generational);
- families experiencing family violence;
- mental health issues;
- families affected by alcohol and other drugs;
- humanitarian entrants;
- carers;

- families impacted by special circumstances (for example, drought);
- men; and
- Forgotten Australians and former child migrants.

7.1.2 Flexible and Tailored Service Delivery

Clients may present with high and complex needs (such as mental health, drug and alcohol issues, family violence) and require access to more than one Family Relationship service. Funding recipients are expected to use a tailored and coordinated approach within their suite of services (or in co-operation with other organisations in the broader service system) to be responsive to individual client needs.

Services may be delivered in a variety of ways depending on the needs of the client group, for example:

- face-to-face services;
- web or telephone-based support;
- individual, couple or family sessions;
- group work;
- outreach;
- walk in services; and
- home visits.

Funding recipients are best placed to identify which delivery methods best meet the needs of families within the funded catchment areas.

7.1.3 Access

7.1.3.1 Universal Access to Services

All community members residing in catchment areas defined in the Funding Agreement schedule should have equal access to FRS. In doing so, funding recipients are expected to meet the diverse needs of their community and ensure all groups can access culturally and socially appropriate services. While funding recipients are expected to primarily service families within their catchment, families may elect to use an out of area service for many reasons. Consequently, clients from outside the funded catchment area can also access any FRS.

Specialist services such as Find and Connect are directed to specific client groups that includes Forgotten Australians and former child migrants.

While funding recipients may charge fees, clients must not be refused service or referred to other organisations on the basis of incapacity to pay fees.

7.1.3.2 Service Delivery to Under 18 Year Olds

Parental permission should routinely be sought before a person under 18 years of age accesses an FRS service, however this may not be appropriate in all circumstances.

Common law:

- A person under 18 has the legal capacity to consent to receiving FRS services provided the child or young person has sufficient intelligence and maturity to understand the nature of the service and any consequences in participating.

Statute law:

- In some jurisdictions there are relevant laws that override the common law. These apply where the service is considered to be, or may involve, medical treatment (which may include the receipt of services from a registered psychologist). In these jurisdictions service providers should ensure that treatment they provide to under 18 year olds does not breach the relevant law.

It is advisable that funding recipients develop and implement policies addressing service provision to children and young people under the age of 18 years. These policies should address:

- confidentiality and privacy provisions for service users under 18 years old and release of information forms
- funding recipient obligations to:
 - inform clients about duty of care responsibilities and mandatory child protection reporting requirements
 - ask under 18 year old service users if they agree to their parent(s) or guardian(s) being informed about the services being delivered.
- use of support persons for under 18 year olds during service provision as the preferred option and support person waivers where applicable.

If a child or young person participates in a service without parental consent they may be recorded as unregistered clients.

7.2 Funding¹⁰

Most FRS funding is for an activity period of two (2) or more years. Network staff negotiate Funding Agreements in consultation with preferred applicants based on the outcomes of selection processes. The client targets and catchment areas are based on needs analyses conducted by FaHCSIA every five (5) years. Minor adjustments to these in the intermediate period may be negotiated with the relevant Network officer who will liaise with FaHCSIA National Office to ensure a consistent approach is taken across the services while also meeting local needs. Location or catchment areas designated within the Funding Agreement must not change without FaHCSIA's prior written agreement.

FaHCSIA will facilitate flexible funding in circumstances where funding recipients who deliver FRS:

- have met annual client target numbers for an individual service within a specified catchment area, and
- wish to reallocate all or part of the remaining funds to another FPS or FLS they are funded to deliver in the same location¹¹ under the same Funding Agreement..

Example:

A funding recipient funded to deliver Men and Family Relationship Services (MFR) in Geelong has met its annual client targets in the Funding Agreement Schedule. This provider is also funded under this Funding Agreement through FRS to deliver Children's Contact Services (CCS) in Geelong. The demand experienced by the organisation for CCS is higher than MFR in Geelong so the funding recipient reallocates the remaining MFR funds to delivering CCS in this location.

¹⁰ For pre-selection information please see the FRS Overview at Part 1, Page 7.

¹¹ Written approval must be sought to reallocate funds to services which are not in the same location, or if you wish to use FRC funding on another service as per the Funding Agreement.

Funding recipients cannot reallocate funds:

- to a service not funded through FRS;
- to a service not won in a selection process;
- if annual client targets have not been met for the service they wish to transfer funds from;
- if the proposed transfer between services is not in the same location and under the same Funding Agreement;
- across funding locations without written Network agreement; and
- from the National Find and Connect Service to any other service.

Example:

A funding recipient who delivers Family Relationship Education and Skills Training (FREEST) through FRS in Port Adelaide has met its annual client targets in the Funding Agreement Schedule. This provider also operates its own self-funded Counselling service in Port Adelaide, and is funded through FRS to deliver Parenting Orders Program (POP) in Murray Bridge and Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) in Port Pirie. The organisation is trying to get the Counselling Service in Port Adelaide up and running and would like to reallocate all of the remaining FREEST funds to help promote the Counselling service. While the service is in the same location, the funding recipient cannot reallocate the remaining FREEST funds as the Counselling Service is not funded through FRS. The funding recipient can however contact the FaHCSIA South Australia Network Office to seek agreement to split the remaining FREEST funds to support POP and FDR delivery as demand for these services is higher than FREEST. If the Network Office agrees in writing the funding recipient can transfer the remaining funding across funding locations as proposed.

Funding recipients must also provide FaHCSIA at least thirty (30) days notice if intending to cease operation. At the end of the term of the Funding Agreement, or if the Funding Agreement is terminated, a final audited financial statement is required. Any funding that has not been used on the activity specified in the Funding Agreement must be returned to the Commonwealth.

Funding recipients must not change the location or catchment areas designated in the Funding Agreement without the Department's prior written agreement.

Following a further review by the Department of the requirements for reporting on assets the following applies unless otherwise specified. "It is the decision of the organisation to determine what assets it needs/acquires in order to meet the funding agreement deliverables". You do not need to seek departmental permission to acquire the assets necessary to meet the funding agreement deliverables.

7.3 Program Links with Other Agencies and Services

Funding recipients should work collaboratively with other agencies and services to provide support tailored to meet individual client needs.

Funding recipients are expected to develop internal and external relationships to improve practice and facilitate appropriate referrals. Links with external agencies and services should include:

- other not-for-profit national and local organisations;
- for-profit organisations and services;
- peak bodies;
- health (including mental health) services;
- child protection authorities and agencies;
- Family Law Courts and family law professionals, including Legal Aid Commissions, Community Legal Centres and Women's Legal Services;
- specialised services, for example assisting:
 - men
 - women
 - children
 - youth
 - indigenous people
 - culturally and linguistically diverse populations
 - people with disability and carers
 - families affected by alcohol and other drugs
 - disadvantaged and at-risk families
 - Forgotten Australians and former child migrants
 - other client groups with special needs;
- funding recipients of the third FSP service stream (Community and Family Partnerships);
- Child Support Agency;
- Centrelink;
- Family Pathways Networks; and
- other Commonwealth, State and Territory Government Departments.

7.4 Eligible Activities

FRS provides all families, both intact and separated, with assistance through the following outputs included in the Performance Framework (see 4.2 Performance Framework) and the Funding Agreement:

- Information;
- Referral;
- education and skills training;
- counselling;

- dispute resolution;
- change over and supervised contact;
- support;
- community development activities/access strategies;
- outreach;
- coordination; and
- records and family tracing.

While FaHCSIA believes providers are best placed to decide the appropriate mix of activities for each intervention, not all FRS are funded to provide all approved outputs; Table 7 refers.

Table 7: Outputs.

| Project Outputs | Family and Parenting Services (Note: some <i>Couns</i> services are jointly funded by FaHCSIA and Attorney-General's Department) | | | | | | | | | | | Family Law Services | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|-------|------|--------|-----|------|--------|------|----------|----|---|---------------------|-------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|------|-------|------|-----|
| | RRFSS | FREST | AMFT | FRSFSC | MFR | SFVS | FRESHE | FRSC | Mensline | KI | F | NFC | Couns | FRC | FDR | RFDR | POP | CCS | PSCP | SCaSP | FRAL | FRO |
| Information and Referral | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Education and Skills Training | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - | ✓ |
| Counselling | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | - | - |
| Dispute Resolution | -- | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Family Dispute Resolution | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - | - | - | - | ✓ | - |
| Change-over and supervised contact | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | ✓ | - | - | - | - |
| Support | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Community Development/ Access Strategies | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - | - | - | - | ✓ | - | - | - | - | ✓ | ✓ |
| Outreach | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | ✓ | - | - |
| Community Capacity Building | ✓ | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | ✓ | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

7.5 Approved FRS Services:

7.5.1 Family and Parenting Services – Prevention and Early Intervention

7.5.1.1 Family Relationship Education and Skills Training (FREST)

Family Relationship Education and Skills Training assists all families at the earliest intervention point to increase awareness of relationship issues and develop the required skills to:

- foster positive and stable relationships between partners, specific family members or their family as a whole;
- positively manage change and transitions across the relationship cycle;
- improve parenting abilities, participation, and links with other support people or groups;
- increase resilience to relationship stress or breakdown; as well as
- effectively resolve conflict.

Groups or courses may be designed for broad audiences or tailored to meet the needs of stepfamilies, carers, men, new parents, children or other client groups as required.

7.5.1.2 Adolescent Mediation and Family Therapy (AMFT)

Adolescent Mediation and Family Therapy delivers services directly to adolescents and their families who are experiencing varying levels of conflict and complex issues. AMFT aims to prevent family breakdown and youth homelessness by working directly with young people (aged 10 to 21) and their families or caregivers to resolve conflict and improve relationships. This is done through mediation and/or family therapy.

7.5.1.3 Counselling (COUN)

Counselling is delivered under both the FPS and FLS streams in recognition of the fact that there is often no clear distinction between FPS and FLS counselling work. Counselling under FPS delivers general counselling to family members with intact relationships.

Counselling helps individuals, couples and families to:

- establish and maintain positive family relationships
- manage transitions across the relationship cycle
- prevent, or increase resilience to, relationship stress or breakdown
- raise awareness of relationship issues
- resolve parenting issues, and
- create understanding of the care, welfare and development needs of children

Counselling may be directly delivered through therapeutic intervention with individuals (including young people and children), in couple or family sessions, or via group work.

From 2010-11, established counselling services in selected locations with high youth populations and levels of disadvantage will have a dedicated youth and family relationships counselling position. This will assist mainstream counselling services to address the needs of young people and improve family functioning. Young people in these locations will have greater access to counsellors to help them deal with issues such as family breakdown, problems at school, unemployment and substance abuse.

7.5.1.4 Men and Family Relationships (MFR)

Men and Family Relationships deliver services to men and their families to help them improve and better manage their relationships. Intervention occurs across the prevention, separation and post separation continuum, especially at times of relationship change. MFR helps to raise men's awareness of family relationship issues, and increase their skills and participation.

7.5.1.5 Mensline Australia (Mensline)

Mensline provides national, professional, anonymous and confidential short-term counselling over the telephone 24-hours-a-day, every day of the year for the cost of a local call (higher for mobiles). The service provides early intervention and post-separation assistance to men and their families who wish to discuss a relationship issue of concern.

7.5.1.6 Specialised Family Violence Services (SFVS)

Specialised Family Violence Services use a whole-of-family approach to support those affected by family violence (including children who experience or witness family violence). SFVS also helps those who use violent behaviour to change. SFVS considers the individual needs of each family member and provides assistance and referral to complementary services as appropriate.

7.5.1.7 Families in Special Circumstances (FRSFSC) currently including FSDRT

FRSFSC provides a 'whole of family' approach, including a greater emphasis on school aged children and youth to help deal with crisis situations in a way that maintains dignity and encourages self-reliance. This can include individual and family counselling, home visits and outreach. This service also brings communities together through local activities and social support.

From time to time additional funds may be allocated to organisations to help families in response to climatic events, the most common of which has been drought, but may include other events such as bushfires and cyclones.

7.5.1.8 Family Relationship Services for Carers (FRSC)

FRSC is a targeted service which allows parents and other family members to access early intervention services. Family counselling, mediation, information, referral and support are provided to assist families who are experiencing issues or conflict as they consider future arrangements for a family member with disability.

Priority is given to families:

- experiencing conflict or at risk of breakdown;
- who have a member with severe disability (no likelihood of competitive employment and requiring constant personal care and attention); and
- considering future financial planning.

7.5.1.9 Humanitarian Entrants (FRSHE)

FRSHE conduct intensive and culturally appropriate work directly with individuals and families that have entered Australia under the Humanitarian Entry Program. This service offers a range of prevention and early intervention family relationship services to respond to pressures that undermine family stability and help consumers of this service to settle into a new life in Australia.

7.5.1.10 Kids in Focus – Family Drug Support (KIF)

Kids in Focus aims to improve outcomes for children in families with substance misuse problems by providing integrated, long term and intensive support to vulnerable families and children at risk.

Supporting families with substance problems means supporting parents to parent more effectively and overcome their substance misuse as well as supporting children by normalising their lives. Successful support to these families is integrated, long term and intensive and the structure of the refocused Kids in Focus reflects this need.

To achieve these goals, Kids in Focus will focus on supporting families with alcohol and other drug problems by:

- providing intensive support services to families, including parents / carers and children dealing with substance using parents in the community;
- providing support for parents to parent more effectively and overcome their substance misuse;
- supporting children by normalising their lives (school, sport, and other regular routines) and building resilience;
- providing targeted counselling and intervention through the child protection system where necessary; and
- supporting other FSP services to identify and support children at risk.

7.5.1.11 Rural and Regional Family Support Services (RRFSS)

The objective of Rural and Regional Family Support Services is to better support farmers, their families and rural communities in preparing for future challenges, rather than waiting until they are in crisis to offer assistance.

To achieve this objective Rural and Regional Family Support Services aims to:

- Provide “a whole of family approach” counselling service to assist families adapt to changing economic and social circumstances and manage the pressures of rural life and maintain positive family relationships.
- Provide education and skills training to assist families to increase their awareness of relationship issues and develop the required skills to positively manage change and transitions across the relationship cycle.

- Support a coordinated social support network to meet the counselling and other social needs of farming families and rural communities.
- Work with communities to bring them together through local activities and support networks.
- Build knowledge on how to achieve better links between Commonwealth and State based drought support service providers.

7.5.1.12 National Find and Connect Service (NFC)

The National Find and Connect Service will provide an Australia-wide coordinated family tracing and support service for Forgotten Australians and former child migrants to trace their personal and family histories and reunite with family members where possible.

Components of the National Find and Connect Service include:

- a national website and single online access point to help care leavers find records held by past care providers and government agencies;
- a national 1800 telephone number for care leavers to call if they want to speak with trained staff to help them locate their personal records;
- a national network of specialised search and support services to help care leavers locate and access personal records and, where possible, reunite with family members. Care leavers will also be connected with counsellors and other support services where required;
- new counselling support services specifically for care leavers, from appropriately trained and skilled providers, to provide support for care leavers as they trace their families; and
- Workforce development on matters relating to Forgotten Australians and former child migrants.

7.5.2 Family Law Services – Information and Post-separation

7.5.2.1 Family Relationship Centres (FRC)

Family Relationship Centres enable families throughout Australia to access information about family relationships at all stages – forming new relationships, overcoming relationship difficulties or dealing with separation. Centres can also refer families to other services that help people deal with a wide range of family issues.

Centres assist separating parents to focus on their children's needs and to agree on workable parenting arrangements¹² outside of the court system through providing

¹² Clients of the Child Support Agency (CSA) who have applied for a change of assessment are known as CSA change of assessment clients and must be recorded by the service on FRSP Online as being referred from 'CSA – change of assessment'.

information, support, referral and family dispute resolution services.¹³ If appropriate, accredited family dispute resolution practitioners are able to issue a certificate before a parenting matter proceeds to court.

7.5.2.2 *Counselling (COUN)*

Counselling (COUN) is delivered under both the FPS and FLS strategies. Counselling under the Family Law Act 1975 assists individuals and couples (including children) with issues related to marriage, separation and divorce, and the care of children. Organisations funded and approved or designated to deliver counselling under the Family Law Act 1975 must authorise individual counsellors to provide family counselling and ensure that the counsellors comply with their obligations under the Act.

Counselling helps individuals, couples and families to:

- establish and maintain positive family relationships;
- manage transitions across the relationship cycle;
- prevent, or increase resilience to, relationship stress or breakdown;
- resolve conflict through mediation or family therapy;
- raise awareness of relationship issues;
- resolve parenting issues; and
- create understanding of the care, welfare and development needs of children.

Counselling may be directly delivered through therapeutic intervention with individuals (including young people and children), in couple or family sessions, or via group work.

7.5.2.3 *Supporting Children after Separation Program (SCaSP)*

SCaSP services aim to support the wellbeing of children (under 18) from separated or separating families and who are experiencing issues around family relationships. The program assists children to address relationship issues arising from separation and provides opportunities for them to participate in decisions that impact on them.

SCaSP services provide a range of age appropriate interventions including individual counselling or group work for children; or child inclusive feedback to parents.

7.5.2.4 *Post Separation Cooperative Parenting (PSCP)*

Post Separation Cooperative Parenting aims to assist highly conflicted separated parents in regional areas to manage their conflict in their child's best interests. It helps separated parents understand the effect of entrenched conflict on children and that their children need them to be supportive of their relationship with the other parent. It also helps parents develop strategies to deal more constructively with each other.

¹³ Separating couples who wish to make an application to the court for a parenting order are required to first attempt family dispute resolution unless an exemption applies such as child abuse and /or family violence.

Short educational workshops designed to evoke strong emotional reactions in parents and to shift them from entrenched conflict to a greater awareness of children's needs are integral to the program. Additional supports such as counselling are provided to help parents act on the insights they gain through the workshops. Parents may attend voluntarily or they may be ordered by a court to attend Post Separation Cooperative Parenting by itself or in conjunction with a Children's Contact Service or other program.

7.5.2.5 Family Dispute Resolution (FDR), including Regional Family Dispute Resolution (RFDR)

FDR services assist families to reach agreements and to resolve their disputes related to family law issues including both child and property related matters outside of the court system. If appropriate, accredited family dispute resolution practitioners are able to issue a certificate before a parenting matter proceeds to court.

FDR services provide early resolution of parenting arrangements post separation, ensuring the safety of parties where violence is disclosed, and that agreements are in the best interest of the children involved. Regional FDR services may include counselling and community development activities as part of meeting the needs of separated families in their community.¹⁴

7.5.2.6 Parenting Orders Program (POP)

The Parenting Orders Program helps separating families who are in high conflict to work out parenting arrangements in a manner which encourages consideration of what is in a child's best interests in establishing or maintaining relationships while at the same time ensuring the safety of all parties. It helps parents understand the effect their conflict is having on their children and to develop strategies to more constructively develop and manage parenting arrangements.¹⁵

The Parenting Orders Program uses a variety of child-focused and child inclusive interventions and works where possible with all members of the family. Family members, including children, can receive a range of services such as counselling, mediation and group work education.

7.5.2.7 Children's Contact Services (CCS)

Children's Contact Services enable children of separated parents to have safe contact with the parent that they do not live with in circumstances where parents are unable to manage their own contact arrangements.¹⁶ Where parents are not able to meet without conflict, children's contact services provide a safe, neutral venue for the transfer of children between separated parents. Where there is a perceived or actual risk to the child, they provide supervised contact between a child and their parent or

¹⁴ Separating couples who wish to make application to the court for a parenting order are required to first attempt family dispute resolution unless an exemption such as child abuse and /or family violence applies.

¹⁵ The Courts may require parents to attend this program if they are having difficulties in complying with parenting orders so as to avoid a breach of parenting orders in the future.

¹⁶ Services are not intended for cases where the primary issues are the responsibility of state governments under child protection legislation, which may involve the staged return to a family of a child who has been in substitute care.

other family member. Parents may be ordered to attend a CCS by a court to facilitate changeover or have supervised visits with their children. One of the key goals of children's contact services is to assist families to move, where possible, to self-management of contact arrangements, both in terms of changeover and unsupervised contact.

Children's Contact Services must ensure that the children's best interests are kept at the centre of the contact process. Services should only accept cases after careful assessment and where they consider that their facilities and resources allow them to deliver services that are safe and appropriate for all parties.

7.5.2.8 *Family Relationship Advice Line (FRAL) - 1800 050 321*

The Family Relationship Advice Line is a national telephone service established to assist families affected by relationship or separation issues. The Advice Line is for anyone who is affected by family relationship or separation issues and difficulties, including parents, grandparents, children, young people, step-parents or friends.

The Family Relationship Advice Line provides:

- information about services to help maintain healthy relationships;
- advice on family separation issues;
- guidance on developing workable parenting arrangements after family separation
- advice about the impact of conflict on children;
- telephone based family dispute resolution for people who need assistance resolving disputes over parenting arrangements;
- referral to Family Relationship Centres and other dispute resolution services;
- information about the family law system; and
- referral to a range of other services to help with family relationship and separation issues.

The Advice Line complements the information and services offered by the Family Relationship Centres. It ensures that people who are not able to attend a Centre can receive assistance and is available from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday, and 10am to 4pm on Saturday (local time), except on national public holidays.

Family Relationship Centres and other family dispute resolution services can refer clients directly to the Telephone Dispute Resolution Service following an assessment that the client is suitable for family dispute resolution via the telephone medium.

7.5.2.9 *Family Relationships Online - www.familyrelationships.gov.au*

Family Relationships Online is a website that provides all families (whether together or separated) with access to information about family relationship issues, ranging from building better relationships to dispute resolution.

It also allows families to find out about a range of services that can assist them to manage relationship issues, including agreeing on appropriate arrangements for children after parents separate.

If you require further information you can contact the Family Relationships Online Help Desk (FROHelp@fahcsia.gov.au or phone: 1800 654 724).

7.6 Information Technology

Data must be recorded in compliance with the Approval Requirements (Appendix A) and must be supplied to FaHCSIA within 28 days of service provision.

Funding recipients must comply with FRSP Online Protocols (Appendix B). If a funding recipient elects to use an approved third party system to transfer data to FaHCSIA it is their responsibility to ensure the system can be adapted to FRSP Online development requirements within a reasonable timeframe as agreed to by FaHCSIA and the funding recipient.

Prior to the approval of a third party system or should the third party system not adapt in the agreed timeframe to FRSP Online development, funding recipients must revert to use of the FRSP Online web-based portal to meet the 28 day requirement for the supply of data to FaHCSIA.

FaHCSIA requires funding recipients to have the following minimum system access requirements:

- **Operating System** : Windows XP
- **Processor** : Minimum 1.6 GHz Pentium 4 or equivalent processor
- **RAM** : Minimum 256 Megabytes (preferably higher)
- **Minimum Hard Drive Size** : 4 Gigabyte
- **Additional Software**: Microsoft Office 2000 (or newer), Internet Explorer 7 (or newer). Up-to-date Firewall & Anti Virus software are highly recommended.
- **Monitor**: Recommended - 17 inch screen or larger with a resolution of 1024x768 or higher.
- **Internet Connection**: A broadband internet connection of at least 256kbps downstream and upstream is recommended. This recommendation is for a single user. Internet connections shared among multiple users may need to be faster to avoid congestion. Note: The FRSP Online helpdesk does not provide support for any network related issues.

FRSP Online has not been tested with alternative operating systems or internet browsers. While you may access FRSP Online with alternative software if you wish, support and troubleshooting may be limited to the software listed above.

Funding covers costs directly related to activities such as operational costs, for example printing, photocopying, computer software, maintenance and repairs of office equipment (see 7.2 Funding).

The requirements outlined above do not apply to the National Find and Connect Service.

7.7 Information Technology Support

FaHCSIA provides a helpdesk for FRSP Online users. The FRSP Online Support Centre can be contacted via email at FRSPOnline@Fahcsia.gov.au

The FRSP Online Support Centre is staffed Monday to Friday (excluding national and ACT public holidays) from 9 am to 5 pm (Eastern Standard Time).

FaHCSIA also provides a helpdesk for Family Relationships Online users. The FRO Help Desk can be contacted via email at FROHelp@fahcsia.gov.au or by telephone on 1800 654 724. The FRO Help Desk is staffed Monday to Friday (excluding national public holidays) from 8.00am to 10.00pm (AEST) and Saturday 10.00am to 6.00pm (AEST).

8 Contact information

Funding recipients should contact the FaHCSIA Network office in their State or Territory. The FaHCSIA switchboard 1300 653 227 can transfer you to the relevant Network office.

FaHCSIA Network Offices

Australian Capital Territory
PO Box 172, Queanbeyan NSW 2620

South Australia
PO Box 9820 Adelaide SA 5001

New South Wales
PO Box 9820, Sydney NSW 2001

Tasmania
GPO Box 9820 Hobart 7001

Northern Territory
GPO Box 9820 Darwin NT 0801

Victoria
PO Box 9820 Melbourne VIC 3001

North Queensland
PO Box 2018 Townsville QLD 4810

Western Australia
GPO Box 9820 Perth WA 6848

Queensland
GPO Box 9820 Brisbane Qld 4001

The National Find and Connect Service is administered by the FaHCSIA National Office.

FaHCSIA National Office

Mail: Box 7576, Canberra Mail Centre, ACT, 2610

Fax: (02) 6212 9248

Email: programservices.frsp@fahcsia.gov.au

Website: www.fahcsia.gov.au/frsp



Australian Government

**Department of Families, Housing,
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**

FAMILY RELATIONSHIP SERVICES PROGRAM (FRSP)

APPROVAL REQUIREMENTS

January 2011

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1. Leadership and Governance

Standard 1: Values and ethical framework

The organisation has a clear ethical framework which is reflected in a statement of values and purpose, a code of ethics/conduct and other documents. The ethical framework includes a non-discriminatory/equitable approach to service provision. There is a code of ethics/conduct that clearly sets out expectations of appropriate conduct by staff, management and volunteers.

The Statement of Values and Purpose is supportive of the aims of the Family Relationship Services Program (FRSP).

Management and staff have the opportunity to contribute to the development and ongoing review of the Statement of Values and Purpose and code of ethics/conduct. Management and staff are aware of the organisation's values, purpose and code of ethics/conduct, and it is communicated to consumers and other stakeholders.

ATTRIBUTES

1. The statement of values and purpose:
 - reflects the organisation's position in the community;
 - is consistent with the aims of the FRSP.
2. The service has a clear ethical framework which is reflected in the statement of values and purpose, a code of ethics/conduct and other documents

The ethical framework includes a commitment to a non-discriminatory and equitable approach to service provision.

The code of ethics/conduct (and other documents) clearly sets out expectations of appropriate conduct by staff, volunteers and Board/committee members in relation to:

- having a positive and respectful approach to clients and other staff, including behaviour that excludes harassment or abuse;
 - confidentiality/privacy;
 - conflicts of interest;
 - responsible use of resources/facilities; and
 - sets out procedures for the management of professional misconduct.
3. Management and staff contribute to the development and ongoing review of the organisation's values, purpose and code of ethics/conduct.
 4. Staff and management are aware of the organisation's values, purpose and code of ethics/conduct and these are communicated to consumers and other stakeholders.

Standard 2: Governance

The organisation has clear and effective arrangements for internal control and transparent decision making which are appropriate to its scale and scope of operations.

The organisation's financial systems support effective management and accountability. There are appropriate systems in place to identify and manage financial and non-financial risks.

ATTRIBUTES

1. Evidence of clear and effective arrangements for internal control and transparent decision making, which include:
 - regular, minuted, well attended Board/committee meetings;
 - Board/management committee with a sufficient range of expertise and access to appropriate induction and training;
 - Board/management committee understands and controls how the organisation conducts its business; and
 - clear delineation between the roles to be filled by the governing body and the person(s) delegated responsibility for management of the organisation.

2. The organisation's financial systems support effective management and accountability. Appropriate systems are in place to identify and manage financial and non-financial risks, and include:
 - Board/management committee receives an annual budget, regular reports on financial status against the budget, and staffing arrangements;
 - there are established procedures for minimising risks of fraud or mismanagement of funds;
 - the organisation holds appropriate insurance such as workers' compensation, directors, public and professional liability, volunteers, property and contents; and
 - information systems allow timely and accurate extraction of data in suitable formats for statutory and regulatory reporting.

2. Strategy, policy and planning

Standard 3: Planning

The development and delivery of family relationship services occur in a planned rather than reactive way and are integrated with the organisation's work.

ATTRIBUTES

1. The existence of clear documented strategic directions that cover all aspects of the organisation's work, including FRSP related services.
2. The existence and use of operational plans which provide detail about the delivery of FRSP services, including regular reporting against them.
3. Evidence of broad stakeholder input and participation in FRSP planning processes.
4. Evidence that organisational planning for FRSP takes account of FRSP strategic directions or priorities established from time to time by the Department, such as the needs of children and the issues of violence and diversity.

3. Information and analysis

Standard 4: Management of data

Family relationship services enter core and optional data in FRSP Online that is accurate, comprehensive and timely and observe the FRSP Online protocols.

FRSP Online is not applicable for the national Find and Connect service.

ATTRIBUTES

1. Written procedures exist for the management of data to be entered into FRSP Online and the observance of the FRSP Online protocols or where appropriate for the management of National Find and Connect data.

The procedures address:

- who is responsible for entering what data;
- when data is required to be entered;
- how compliance with FRSP Online protocols is achieved;
- how the entry of data is internally validated from time to time.

2. All relevant staff are aware of and understand the procedures for the management of data and the FRSP Online protocols.

4. People

Standard 5: Entry of practitioners

To appoint a person as a family relationship services or national Find and Connect practitioner, an organisation is required to:

1. ensure that a person –
 - holds an appropriate degree, diploma or other qualification; and
 - demonstrates a level of competence appropriate to the commencement of the role in an assessment by the organisation; or
2. ensure that, in exceptional circumstances, an appointment of a person without an appropriate degree, diploma or other qualification is justified on the grounds that:
 - the person demonstrates a level of competence appropriate to the commencement of the role in an assessment by the organisation; or
 - the appointee is:
 - i. required to work in a rural/remote area or with a target group where the availability of tertiary qualified staff is highly limited; or
 - ii. a person (whether currently a practitioner or not) who has worked as a practitioner for not less than twelve months within the last three years in a family relationship services role similar to that subject to the appointment.

ATTRIBUTES

1. Evidence that an organisation has checked appointees' qualifications in terms of an appropriate degree, diploma or other qualification, consisting of a course of:
 - at least three years with an orientation to behavioural or social sciences, education or other relevant degree; or
 - post graduate study of at least one year in an area of direct relevance to the specialised role to be undertaken.
2. Evidence of competencies formulated by the organisation for use in recruitment to practitioner roles.
3. A record of appointments made where the appointee is not tertiary qualified and the grounds on which such appointment was made.
4. For National Find and Connect understanding of the historical policies and approaches to out-of-home care and the affect that these policies have on Forgotten Australians, former child migrants and their families in their daily lives.

Standard 6: Supervision of practitioners

Practitioners working in family relationship services receive regular professional supervision to address practice issues. The supervision is:

- provided by a suitably qualified and experienced supervisor;
- conducted individually or in a supervisor-facilitated group, or where practitioners are suitably experienced, in a peer group; and
- based on individual needs for supervision in accordance with the attributes below.

ATTRIBUTES

1. Evidence of the organisation satisfying itself as to the qualifications and experience of supervisors being used.
2. Record of supervision sessions for all practitioners showing at least:
 - a baseline of 26 hours of supervision per year for full time practitioners covered by this standard; and
 - pro rata hours of supervision on a monthly basis for people working part time in these roles.
3. Evidence that the organisation assesses individual practitioner needs for supervision over and above the baseline requirement, having regard to the experience of the practitioner and the nature of the role.

Standard 7: Training and development

All family relationship services practitioners have access to training and development opportunities, externally delivered where appropriate, related directly to their professional development needs and the organisational plan.

Other service staff have access to appropriate training.

ATTRIBUTES

1. A planned approach to training is evident in each organisation including evidence of an assessment and prioritising of staff training needs and stated intentions for how priorities will be addressed.
2. A planned approach is evident to ensuring the training and development of volunteers (if applicable).
3. A record of training events attended by staff is maintained.

Standard 8: Staff appraisal

Family relationship services have designed and implemented a system for appraisal of the performance of individual staff within the context of organisational, FRSP and National Find and Connect goals.

ATTRIBUTES

1. Documentation of a system jointly implemented by a staff person and appraiser/s for review of performance over an agreed period of time, which includes steps for:
 - setting performance goals;
 - ongoing supervision for people other than those receiving professional supervision;
 - an assessment of achievements against agreed goals;
 - establishing a plan for how any improvements can be achieved; and
 - setting performance goals for the next period of review.
2. The system of appraisal should provide details of how a review outcome may be moderated within the organisation where an individual and his or her appraiser/s do not agree on the appraisal.
3. Evidence that the system is implemented.

Standard 9: Safety of staff

Family relationship services including national Find and Connect take active measures to maximise the safety of staff.

ATTRIBUTES

1. An assessment of risks to staff safety is carried out and reviewed regularly.
2. Procedures are in place to manage risks which are identified.
3. Evidence that the organisation understands and meets its work place health and safety obligations.

5. Client focus

Standard 10: Accessibility of services

Family relationship services including national Find and Connect work to ensure their sensitivity and accessibility to any people who face a real or perceived barrier to receiving assistance whether on the basis of:

- race, creed, language or ethnic background;
- gender;
- disability;
- age;
- locality;
- socio-economic disadvantage;
- sexual preference;
- or any other unjustifiable basis¹.

Family relationship services operate in, or plan over time to operate in, buildings and/or services which are accessible to people with disabilities.

ATTRIBUTES

1. Documented evidence of the key characteristics of the actual and potential client group, based on expressed need and demographic features of the organisation's catchment area.
2. Having identified the characteristics of the community, the organisation has used a planned/evidence based approach to prioritising and addressing access barriers.
3. Evidence of progress in implementing strategies for overcoming barriers.
4. The organisation has developed a fees policy that addresses access for people on low incomes.

¹ Assessment of this standard will take into account the size and resources available to the organisation and program, its length of operation and the characteristics of the area served.

Standard 11: Managing client feedback and complaints

Family relationship services including National Find and Connect offer opportunities to all clients to voluntarily provide feedback on their experiences with a service provided by an organisation and manage complaints from clients in a positive, timely, fair and predictable way.

ATTRIBUTES

1. The organisation has procedures for the management of complaints which:
 - welcome complaints and inform clients about how to complain;
 - ensure timely resolution of complaints;
 - provide feedback to clients on complaints;
 - distinguish between simple complaints and those of a more serious nature;
 - ensure that where complaints about staff/volunteers/Board members occur, principles of natural justice are utilised in the assessment process, except where complaints relate to criminal matters. In these circumstances, all such complaints are referred to police and not assessed by the organisation; and
 - ensure that issues arising from complaints and outcomes are reported to management and are used to improve service delivery.

2. Procedures are documented for the management of client feedback that:
 - require all clients to be offered the opportunity to provide feedback with anonymity and in ways which are appropriate to them, on their experience as clients including their view on whether a client benefit was obtained;
 - are adjusted as appropriate to encourage people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to participate;
 - ensure that client feedback is obtained in a variety of ways; and
 - indicate how service delivery may be altered in response to client feedback.

3. Evidence of staff awareness of procedures for managing client feedback and complaints.

Standard 12: Client confidentiality and privacy

Family relationship services including National Find and Connect ensure that their interactions with clients are held under conditions of privacy², and that clients understand:

- the type and purpose of client information that is maintained and used in services and in FRSP Online where applicable;
- the circumstances under which the confidentiality of client data may not be maintained.

Client records stored in, or accessible through, family relationship services are maintained in secure conditions.

Subject to considerations about legal and privacy issues and the safety of other people, clients have the opportunity to view records or access copies of records relating to themselves. Where copies of records sought unavoidably relate to another client, services require the written approval of that client for the release of that information.

ATTRIBUTES

1. Procedures for the management of client interaction and data include provision for how the security of data will be achieved and maintained, with a focus on ensuring that:
 - all records containing identifying client information, such as videos, files, lists of attendance etc. are locked away when not in use or when the service is closed;
 - a system of authorisations is in place to cover access to individual files, the movement of files outside the immediate service outlet and disposal of files;
 - clients provide consent for disclosure of personal (identifying) information and the circumstances where this is overridden are specified;
 - clients are aware of the type and purpose of data that will be collected, to whom it is released and when consent is overridden;
 - steps necessary to enable a client to have access to their personal file, including assessment of any safety issues;
 - FRSP Online protocols are met.
2. Private rooms are available for interacting with clients.

² As consistent with Commonwealth Privacy legislation

Standard 13: Client safety

Family relationship services are committed to the safety of people who seek their assistance and manage and assess issues of violence and safety in a planned and effective way.

Police checks are conducted for all staff and volunteers who have contact with vulnerable persons, for example children and young people, people with intellectual disabilities.

Subject to any relevant legal obligations, services immediately report to an appropriate agency or person a reasonable suspicion of a current threat or actual harm in the form of:

- serious harm to the life or body of a person (noting the person's sense of danger and fear);
- the commission of a serious crime against a person;
- child abuse and neglect.

Services recognise and immediately assess and take appropriate preventative action regarding other situations of danger and physical harm involving clients, such as suicide threats, threats of serious self harm and actual self mutilation. Organisations take active measures to manage the occurrence or perception of professional misconduct by staff.

ATTRIBUTES

Procedures are in place which ensure that police checks are conducted for all new staff and volunteers who have contact with children and young people and other vulnerable clients. The police check is conducted in the state/s where an applicant has an employment history.

1. Procedures are in place for responding to all situations where there are concerns about violence and safety. The procedures cover circumstances where violence involving clients occurs or is threatened on the premises or is alleged to have occurred or has been threatened elsewhere.

The procedures include:

- detailed guidance on what matters should be reported, who is to be consulted in a decision to report and how and when such matters should be reported;
 - practices for assessing the presence of violence in relationships;
 - practices for recognising indicators/evidence of child abuse and neglect;
2. Management of arrival/departure times of clients as necessary.
 3. Evidence of staff awareness of the procedures.
 4. Evidence that staff have gained access to training relevant to child abuse and neglect, domestic violence and suicide prevention.

6. Processes, products and services

Standard 14: Service design

Family relationship services including National Find and Connect are designed around the needs of clients and, in the interests of improving client benefits and outcomes, have the capacity to adjust service processes and procedures.

The needs of each client are individually assessed so that appropriate assistance can be provided by the service itself, in collaboration with other services or through referral. Where the service is provided by the organisation, staff have the competence to provide the service.

The organisation works to achieve continuous improvement in service delivery and professional practice.

ATTRIBUTES

1. A description of core service processes is maintained covering the full range of service types including individual client services and education programs. Depending on the nature of the FRSP service provided, core service processes might include:
 - intake;
 - assessment of need;
 - waiting list management;
 - referral;
 - case closure;
 - documentation of programs (for example education) or client assistance provided;
 - work with other organisations; and
 - monitoring and evaluation including community and client feedback.
2. The needs of each client are individually assessed so that appropriate assistance can be provided by the service itself, in collaboration with other services or through referral. Where the service is provided by the organisation itself, staff have the competence to provide the service.
3. Procedures are in place for assessing the extent to which service delivery occurs in accordance with the core processes described.
4. The organisation has in place methods/processes to achieve continuous improvement in service delivery and professional practice. This includes:
 - procedures for “listening” to ideas from staff and members of management bodies, for considering client feedback and ideas from other organisations;
 - evidence that questions about service design are part of planning processes; and
 - the organisation uses a range of approaches to evaluate and inform service and practice improvement.
5. The organisation uses evidence based and peer based information to inform service development and professional practice.

7. Organisational performance

Standard 15: Assessing performance

Family relationship services use a range of performance indicators as part of their internal ongoing monitoring and as a means of helping to inform evaluations as they occur.

ATTRIBUTES

1. Reports on performance data are tabled in meetings of management bodies and used for management purposes.
2. Information about performance trends are shared with organisational staff.
3. Evidence that performance data is considered in planning processes.

Family Support Program

FRSP Online PROTOCOLS

Effective December 2009

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1 Overview

1.1 Introduction

The Australian Government has funded the Family Support Program (FSP) since the early 1960s. The program is currently administered by the FSP Strategic and Operational Branches within the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

The Program's current aims are to:

- Enable children, young people and adults in all their diversity to develop and sustain safe, supportive and nurturing family relationships and
- Minimise the emotional, social and economic costs associated with disruption to family relationships.

The Attorney-General's Department (AGD) is the primary business partner of FaHCSIA for the FSP. It contributes significant funding to assist families through Post-Separation Services.

FaHCSIA and AGD require service providers to collect information on client characteristics and service usage as specified in the Standard Funding Agreement. To facilitate this requirement the FRSP Online application was developed to capture client activity data and is used to generate reports to Government and FSP Service Providers to assist in better managing and planning for FSP services.

The FRSP Online application is a secure, web-based application accessed through the Internet. The system is only accessible with User Names and Passwords administered by FaHCSIA, authorised by FRSP Online Service Provider Administrators and service provider executives. Access to the information stored on the FaHCSIA network is restricted to the nominated administrators of the database and staff of the FRSP Online Support and Development Teams.

1.2 Objectives of this Document

This document sets out to detail the protocols when using the FRSP Online application.

2 Key Definitions

2.1 Client

A client is any person who receives support or assistance from an FRSP organisation which entails generally 15 minutes or more of a worker's time, either with that client directly or on behalf of that client on a given day. This includes the time taken for the assessment process only if this process leads to other support being offered. The client may either be registered or un-registered with the organisation.

2.1.1 Registered Client

A registered client provides all their demographic information including:

- First Name
- Last Name
- Full Date of Birth
- Gender
- Indigenous Status
- Country of Birth
- Ancestry, if other than Australian
- Year of Arrival (if country of Birth is not Australia)
- Language Spoken
- Proficiency in English
- Marital Status
- Highest Education Level
- Employment status
- Current Earnings
- Suburb (these three items are used to
- State generate the SLA code)
- Postcode
- Date of Registration
- Referral Source
- Family membership
- Main Relationships
- Presenting Need

Registered clients must be used for all case type activities, and all course type activities where there are 20 clients or less attached to the activity.

2.1.2 Un-Registered Client

An un-registered client is a client where the individual details listed above are not collected. An un-registered is generally included as part of a one off group e.g. information session for a course, seminar or community education activity where collecting registered client information would prove problematic for the organisation. For example, a one-day parenting skills seminar at the local school where there are 50 people in attendance and these people will probably not be seen again by the organisation.

2.2 Client Activity

There are three categories of client activity, each with a different purpose as detailed below:

2.2.1 Case

A **Case** is an Activity that involves the participation of one or more clients, all of whom have some kind of relationship to each other, such as a family.

Case Activities are generally created for the following types of services:

- Counselling;
- Dispute Resolution;
- Children's Contact Services;
- Parenting Orders; and
- Adolescent Mediation and Family Therapy.

2.2.2 Course

A **Course** is an Activity that provides group training or learning to clients e.g. a pre-marriage education class.

Course Activities are generally created for the following types of services:

- Education; and
- Skills Training.

2.2.3 Community Development

A **Community Development Activity** is an Activity conducted at the individual or group level that does not fall into the case or course category, e.g. an information stand at an annual show, grief counselling at a school, a radio segment etc.

Community Development Activities are generally created for the following types of services:

- School promotions;
- Annual Show attendance;
- Radio segment;
- Support Group;
- Expo;
- Specific Indigenous or CALD Community liaison; and
- Other services of this kind.

2.3 Client Identifier

The Client Identifier is a predetermined combination of letters from a client's name, together with a letter designating the client's sex. A 'valid Client Identifier' contains only letters from the alphabet and ends in either M or F to indicate the client's sex. This is joined to the client's reported date of birth and then encrypted to create a unique client indicator or *statistical linkage key*. The statistical linkage key allows data about the same client to be combined without the actual name of the client being recorded.

A new Client Identifier will be introduced in the 1st quarter release for 2007/2008. This code is made up of the second and third letters of the first given name and the second, third and fifth of the surname of the client, plus M or F. The new Client Identifier is necessary to help researchers analyse FRSP Online data for consecutive years.

2.4 Organisation

An organisation is a service provider contracted by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Attorney-General's Department to provide Early Intervention Services; Post Separation Services and Family Relationship Centres under the Family Relationship Services Program.

2.5 Referral

For the purpose of the FRSP Online, a referral means a formal referral. *Referral* is used in three ways in this collection.

2.5.1 Client referred to an FSP Organisation

A referral occurs when another organisation contacts your organisation to arrange for a person to receive a service or services, or gives the client your organisation's details or clients may refer themselves directly to an FSP organisation. The Client Registration form is used to record this information.

2.5.2 Client referred by an FSP Organisation to another service whilst still receiving services at the FSP organisation

A referral occurs when an FSP organisation has referred a client to another service and that service has accepted the client for an appointment or an interview was organised. Follow up is conducted by the FSP organisation to determine whether the client took up the referral, or if they did not take up the referral, why not.

2.5.3 When a client is referred by an FSP organisation to obtain another service elsewhere at the conclusion of service with the FSP organisation.

A referral occurs when an FSP organisation has referred a client to another service but does not need to know whether the client kept the appointment, nor whether the appointment led to the client receiving a service.

2.6 Session

A session is each instance a client receives a service under each defined case, course or community development activity. For example, when a client is registered for supervised contact and presents 6 times for the supervised contact, each presentation is counted as a session.

A session is broken up into contact and non-contact time. Contact time is the direct contact with the client and the non-contact time includes all the preparation time for the contact time.

2.7 Support Activity

A support activity is not client focused but service worker focused. A support activity includes:

- Community education;
- Conferences/forums;
- Organisation management;
- Organisation planning;
- Quality strategies, approval requirements;
- Quality strategies, quality improvement etc.;
- Service planning;
- Service Promotion;

- Supervision;
- Travel;
- Training and development; and
- Other.

2.8 *Other Definitions*

Further definitions can be found in the FRSP Online User/Training Guide, a copy of which can be downloaded from the FRSP Online Website.

3 Data Collection

Good data helps both FaHCSIA and AGD better understand the services being provided through its community service network. It also assists both departments to inform Government on the progress of the FSP.

FRSP Online is used to help answer questions like:

- How many people use FSP services?
- Why do people come to FSP?
- What services are provided in response to clients' demands and needs? and
- Where do clients go when they leave FSP service providers and how has their situation changed?

The national data collection system was established so that reliable, nationally consistent information about FSP services would be available to FSP program administrators, service providers, and other interested organisations.

As a data collector, you have a critical role in ensuring the quality of the information collected from FSP clients. This requires that you understand the purpose of the national data collection, the definitions used in each question or data item and how and when to return the data you have collected.

3.1 *How is data collected?*

Data is collected primarily by FSP service providers in the course of assisting clients. Service providers collect data which is then entered into FRSP Online or an approved client management system. The latest versions of the FRSP data collection forms are available from <https://frsponline.facsia.gov.au/FRSPOnline>

3.2 *How will the data collection benefit clients?*

Good data can help to improve the FSP program and the services that are available to people who are in need of relationship services. For example:

- Service providers might be established in a location that is better for clients
- Service providers might be funded to provide new services for clients where it is shown there is a high need; and
- Service providers might identify a need for improving a particular service and make changes to their existing approach.

3.3 How will the data collection benefit your organisation?

The national data collection provides service providers with hard facts to support them in what they do – facts like:

- How many people received a service from the organisation
- Where clients were referred from and what services clients received
- Where clients were referred to and
- What were the clients' outcomes?

With this type of information, service providers will be in a better position to:

- be recognised and acknowledged for the work they do
- lobby for increased funding
- provide solid data in support of funding applications
- demonstrate to funding bodies how many clients are assisted (accountability)
- talk with the media about the problems of relationships issues and other issues
- plan for future development in their organisation and
- evaluate their organisation and make improvements

The data collection is useful for case management. Much of the information discussed with the client as part of case management can be recorded easily in the data collection system.

3.4 How will the data collection benefit government program managers?

Government needs to have good evidence when they make decisions about the future directions of the FSP and about family relationships in general. This data collection will give them the information they need to monitor and evaluate the operation of the FSP in their jurisdictions, and to make decisions about the FSP based on good data.

Additionally, the Government is accountable for the way in which public funds are spent. Continued funding of FSP relies on the ability of funding departments to provide observable and objective measures of program performance. The national data collection will help FaHCSIA show how well the FSP is achieving its aims and where improvements are required.

With information for the data collection, FSP program managers can:

- demonstrate accountability by providing Government Ministers, senior public officials and the public with information about the operation of the FSP
- justify existing funding levels and request for increased public funding and
- provide evidence in discussions about family relationships in the media and other forums

3.5 What is the FSP national data collection?

The Family Support Program Strategic and Operational branches of FaHCSIA, manage the data collection.

3.5.1 The Client Data Collection

The Client Data Collection is the main component of the national data collection. It is intended to collect information on all clients receiving ongoing or substantial support under the FSP. Data collected includes basic socio-demographic information and the services required by and provided to each client. Additionally, information is collected about client circumstances before and after receiving FSP services – such information will allow some assessment of client outcomes.

3.5.2 FRC Survey Collection

The FRC survey is an additional set of data collected for the FRC service type as requested by AGD. It is designed to measure the level of demand for FRC services, and so collects information about the number of people who contact the FRC through either the telephone or walking in; whether they were referred to another service; whether they were provided with resources or asked to attend an information session. This will show demand for FRC services and can be used in debates about resources required to meet the demand for this particular FSP service.

3.5.3 Administrative Data Collection

This collection contains general descriptive information about the service providers funded to provide family relationship services. This includes addresses, contact numbers, services funded, funding amounts, client targets and catchment areas. It is collated from the information contained in the Standard Funding Agreements and information gathered from service providers by the FRSP Online Support Centre.

3.6 *When is the data to be provided to FaHCSIA?*

FSP service providers are to enter data into the FRSP Online application or approved client management system within 28 calendar days of service delivery occurring. This is a 'sliding window' of time and providers should not wait until the completion of longer activities to being entering data regarding those activities. For service providers using approved client management systems, data must be entered into the client management system **and** transferred to FaHCSIA within the 28 day timeframe.

3.7 *What types of reports are produced from the Collection?*

The FRSP Online Reporting Portal (The Portal) provides online access to National and Organisation reports.

3.7.1 Organisation Reports

Service provider executives may approve access to Organisation reports for staff as they see fit. The portal contains a number of reports that include information about the number of clients seen by service type, outlet, client age and gender. The reports also include the number of activities opened and closed, the number of sessions held and the number of clients seen versus the funded client target for the financial year.

3.7.2 National, State and Territory Reports

Performance reports are generated at national, state and territory levels and provided to FaHCSIA and AGD policy areas and the FaHCSIA State/Territory Network. These reports are available by default to all registered users of FRSP Online.

3.7.3 Report Development

FSP stakeholders, including service providers, may identify additional desirable reporting functionality and such requests will be considered for development and publication on the Portal

Reporting developments can be requested by completing and submitting a report development request form to the FRSP Online Support Centre (frsponline@fahcsia.gov.au) or faxing to (02) 6212 9143. If development of the report is feasible and deemed to be of merit to service providers, FaHCSIA or AGD, it will be developed as part of the regular FRSP Online Reporting process.

4 Client Confidentiality

The FRSP Online Support Team has an important responsibility to ensure the confidentiality of individual client data. There are a number of ways in which security is assured and these are listed below.

4.1 *Individual Clients will not be identified in any reports*

The FRSP Online Support Centre has taken the following steps to ensure that individual clients will not be identified from data in the system in any reports:

- Each registered client is given a system generated unique client identification number (Client ID).
- The client identification number is used for reporting purposes.
- The FRSP Online reporting database is a separate database updated in real time with client identifying details removed.
- By law, FaHCSIA cannot release any information that can be used to identify an individual – an unauthorised release of information is punishable under the Public Service Act 1999 and
- The Privacy Act 1988 also ensures that identifiable data from the FRSP Online database cannot be shared with other Government or Non-Government organisations. Any information released to other persons or organisations will contain only statistical information that can not identify individuals. Such information will only be used for statistical purposes and will not be used as a basis for any legal, administrative or other purpose.

4.1.1 **The Statistical Linkage Key (SLK)**

FRSP Online generates a Statistical Linkage Key (SLK) when data is first entered for each client. The SLK facilitates service providers who have other client management systems or otherwise object to the storage of client names by FRSP Online, to have a unique identifier that can be 'read' by the service provider whilst anonymising the data transmitted to FaHCSIA. This functionality is provided on an 'opt-in' basis as some providers use FRSP Online as their sole client management system.

4.2 *Confidentiality – the service provider's role*

It is important that each FSP service provider has internal policies on how it will keep client information confidential. A basic principle of confidentiality is the need to know. Only workers who need to know details about the client in order to do their job will have access to that information.

It is recommended that service providers request all workers who are working with client information to sign a Deed of Confidentiality. A copy of a *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)* compliant deed can be downloaded from the FRSP Online website. If service providers utilise a similar deed during their staff induction process, there is no need to complete an additional one.

4.2.1 Keeping data collection records private and secure

Like all client records, the data forms and access to the FRSP Online system need to be kept private and secure. This means making sure that the forms are:

- kept secure when you are working with them (not lying around in a public space) and
- locked in a filing cabinet or cupboard at the end of each day

It also means that user names and passwords **must not** be shared with other staff within your organisation.

4.3 Clients' rights and informed consent

Clients have a number of important rights in relation to the FSP National Data Collection System. They have the right to:

- be told about the collection, and how information will be used
- decide for themselves whether to give personal information
- be assured that they will get the same service no matter what they decide and
- have their privacy protected when they give personal information, by:
 - Being able to talk in a private space
 - Having their information kept confidential and only used by people who need the information and
 - Having any form containing their personal details kept secure.

4.4 Informed Consent – what is it and why is it necessary?

For the purpose of the National Data Collection System, informed consent is a statement by a client that he or she agrees to have personal information recorded, stored by an organisation and sent to FaHCSIA for analysis. However, it is important that the client has been given appropriate background information about why the information is being recorded, how it will be used and who will have access to the information.

Consent is a requirement of the FSP National Data Collection System. It helps to promote individual client rights and is consistent with the prevailing views about the ethics of data collection.

Although it is lawful for service providers to record personal information without the client's permission, it is good practice to adhere to the Information Privacy Principles specified in the *Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988*. In particular, Principle 2 states that the information provider should be aware of the purpose for which the information is being collected and who will have access to that information.

As a result you should ask the client for his or her agreement to record personal information by requesting them to complete the client registration form (Form 1 – Client Details). When you seek consent it is important to emphasise that:

- the data collection is very important to the service provider and to FSP
- clients are not required to take part in the data collection
- clients will not be discriminated against if they decide not to give their permission.

You need to make clear to the client that there may be times when workers add information to the forms (such as dates of providing services, what services were provided, what happened to the client on exiting the services) without consulting them directly.

You may want to make it clear to the client that their consent will only be obtained once and that this will cover all items when information is added to their record.

If a client does not consent they may be entered into FRSP Online as an unregistered client. The facility to record unregistered clients is primarily for situations in which clients decline consent for their information to be transmitted.

4.5 Gaining informed consent

So that the clients can make an informed decision about whether they will participate in the data collection by telling them:

- the reasons for the collection and how the data will be used
- that the data on their completed form will be available to FaHCSIA and AGD for statistical analysis
- that reports contain only combined information from many clients and will not identify an individual
- that they will not be discriminated against if they do not give their consent

It is very important that you assure people that:

- they will not be identified in any report or publication; and
- their information will only be used for statistical and evaluation purposes. It will not be used for any legal, administrative or other purposes.

Three reasons to give clients about why FaHCSIA and AGD need information:

1. That it will help you (the service provider) to understand more about the client and what they want and need from the service.
2. That their information, in combination with the information from other clients of your organisation, will help you to plan and improve your services.
3. That their information, in combination with information from other clients around Australia, will give the Government the data they need to make good decisions about family relationship services for people who are in need.

5 Security

5.1 Introduction

FaHCSIA has the responsibility to ensure the operational efficiency, privacy, security and confidentiality of the system and client data. The Department's responsibilities are discharged through the Family Support Program Strategic and Operations branches. It takes the security of its data collection seriously. It adheres to privacy and security policy responsibilities.

The privacy policy of FaHCSIA may be viewed at:

<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/overview/Pages/Privacy.aspx>

The FRSP Online security policy which can be downloaded from the FRSP Online website at <https://frsponline.facsia.gov.au>, has been developed with reference to the following:

- The Commonwealth Protective Security Manual (available from the ASA);
- The Defence Signals Directorate ACSI 33 (available from <http://www.dsd.gov.au>; and
- AS 17799 Information Technology – Code of practice for Information Security Management & 7799 Information Security Management – specification for information security systems

All users of FRSP Online, such as Commonwealth officers, service provider staff, contractors and consultants, are responsible for complying with the FRSP Online security requirements. While all users have a responsibility to maintain security some users have been assigned specific security roles.

The following section describes the roles specific to FRSP Online security and the security responsibilities of all users.

5.2 General Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all users to ensure that FRSP Online data is properly secured and controlled and that the FRSP Online Security Policy is adhered to. In particular, all users have the following general responsibilities to uphold:

- **Access Privileges** – Users must only access facilities that they have been authorised to use. No attempts are to be made to bypass or defeat the security systems or to obtain the use of privileges issued to other users (i.e. never use/share another person's User Name). Individuals are personally responsible for any actions performed under their User Name. Should a security breach of this type occur the offending user account(s) will be suspended pending an investigation.
- **Confidentiality of Passwords** – Personal passwords are regarded as sensitive and must be protected from disclosure and compromise (e.g.: never give your password to anyone else).

- **Confidentiality of Information** – Information will only be accessed on a “Need to Know” basis (i.e. only those staff requiring access to do their work) and any use of client data will be consistent with the Information Privacy Principles (Privacy Act, Section 14) and any applicable protective security procedures.
- **Data Transmission Security** – Only approved methods are used to transmit data from authorised client management systems.
- **Inappropriate use** – it is not permitted to use FRSP Online resources for inappropriate purposes such as: to harass, defame, abuse or disclose personal information.
- **Monitor and Review** – the Department reserves the right to monitor and review the use of FRSP Online.
- **Reporting Lapses of Security** – Any known or suspected attempts to obtain unauthorised access to FRSP Online or other attempts to bypass or defeat security must be reported immediately to the FRSP Online Administrator.
- **Security Training** – All users must read and comply with the relevant policies, plans and procedures for the FRSP Online system.

5.3 Failure to Comply with the FRSP Online Security Policy

It is the responsibility of each user to ensure their actions are in accordance with FSP policies. Any act or omission that involves neglecting user responsibilities or misuse of information technology systems, as described in this and all other related documents, will be deemed a violation of this policy.

Users are expected to comply with the Department’s security policies, standards and procedures. Non compliance might take the form of:

- failing to comply with requirements set out in the FSP Approval Requirements with regard to security of data
- the failure of a service provider to ensure that security planning or risk mitigation strategies are in place as set out under the security policy or
- the failure of a manager to ensure that employees they are responsible for are made aware of security policies and supported in complying with the policy.

Non compliance by a service provider can result in disciplinary action. In the most serious cases this can mean termination of the FSP contract and the service provider being de-funded.

The FRSP Online Administrator must be informed of all serious breaches of security in relation to the information in this document.

5.4 Confidentiality

The service provider shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that its employees, members, agents or sub-contractors who are provided with an FRSP Online User Name and password protect the confidentiality of that User Name and Password and the information that is being entered under that password. In the event of a breach, or suspected breach, of this requirement the service provider shall immediately notify the FRSP Online Support Centre via email at FRSPOnline@fahcsia.gov.au, who will suspend that account and pending investigation.

6 Service Provider Roles

6.1 User Roles

A User is a person who physically enters information into the FRSP Online system. The user roles that are available to a service provider are:

6.1.1 Service provider administrator

A **service provider administrator** is able to create/modify **service provider users** and **professionals**, modify organisation and outlet address and contact details, enter/modify registered clients, client activity, support activity and survey data. **Service provider administrators** also serve as a first point of contact for users requiring password resets or account unlocks. An organisation can have one or more service provider administrators. A correctly authorised service provider administrator form needs to be completed and submitted to the FRSP Online Support Centre.

6.1.2 Service provider user

A service provider user role will be able to enter/modify registered clients, client activity, support activity and survey data.

6.2 Professional Role

A Professional is a person who delivers the services to clients, for example a counselor, family dispute practitioner or educator. A Professional does not have access to the FRSP Online program and is also known as a Worker or Practitioner.

Note: A person may be a Professional (worker) and Service Provider Administrator or Service Provider User; staff that deliver services to clients as well as being responsible for data entry would be an example of this.

7 Data and Reporting

7.1 *Entering Data*

Data is to be entered into FRSP Online or other approved client management system, within 28 calendar days of the actual occurrence of an activity or session.

The service provider may apply in writing to the State and Territory Office (STO) for an extension of the 28 day rule regarding lodgment of their FSP client data as outlined in each funded FSP organisations Funding Agreement Schedule. Extensions may be granted for a one off period of up to three weeks, under exceptional circumstances. Each request for an extension will be considered on an individual basis.

7.2 *Transferring Data (Users of 3rd party applications only)*

Service providers using approved client management systems must enter data into the client management system and transfer to FaHCSIA within the 28 day timeframe. This is to ensure the Department has the most current information for the service provider and enables the FRSP Online Support Centre to produce accurate reports.

7.3 *Data Reports*

Data reports on service usage from FRSP Online are available from a secure online portal. Service providers have access to reports for their organisation and a series of National reports. The portal will include (but is not limited to) the following information:

- Clients seen by outlet and/or funded service type.
- Number of Clients seen against funded client targets.
- Number of Registered Clients seen by age and gender
- Number of Unregistered Clients
- Number of Registered ATSI and CALD Clients seen by ARIA location and
- Number of Registered clients seen by referral source.
- Number of Sessions and Hours held
- Activities Opened and Closed

8 Support

The FSP Strategic Branch offers support and training services to users of the FRSP Online application. This service is generally available Monday to Friday (excluding National and ACT public holidays) from 9am to 5pm (Eastern Standard Time).

Any significant disruptions to this availability will be advised on the FRSP Online login page with as much prior notice as possible.

The FRSP Online Support Team co-ordinates incoming queries and requests by email only.
Emails should be sent to FRSPOnline@fahcsia.gov.au

The Support Team will then assess whether response by phone or email is the most expedient.

Completed forms or other printed correspondence can also be faxed to **(02) 6212 9143**

8.1 Service Level Standards

8.1.1 Email

All emails will receive an auto-reply that the email has been received. Emails must include return contact details and some description of the problem or query.

The Support Team will then determine whether an email or phone response is most appropriate and respond as soon as possible. Time sensitive issues such as password resets/account unlocks will be prioritised.

More complex procedural queries may take a 2-3 working days to be addressed.

Where the Support Team anticipates a particular delay in responding to a request or query, the sender will be advised of its progress regularly until resolved.

8.1.2 Administrative Forms

Forms for the creation of Service Provider Administrators as well as creating or modifying Organisation and Outlet details will be actioned within 5 working days.

Forms that are not correctly authorised will not be processed.

Forms requesting creation of Users of Professionals where an active Service Provider Administrator is available at the organisation will also not be processed.

Operational Framework for Family Relationship Centres

Revised June 2009

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OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

PART ONE

ROLE OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIP CENTRES

Family Relationship Centres were established as a result of the 2006 changes to Australia's family law system to provide tailored, professional support for families.

Family Relationship Centres are a critical entry point or gateway to the broader family law and family support service system. They assist:

- couples about to be married to get information and referral to pre-marriage education
- families wanting to improve their relationships to get information and referral to other services that can help strengthen relationships
- families having relationship difficulties to get information and referral to other services that can assist them to work through their issues
- separated parents to resolve disputes and reach agreement on parenting arrangements outside the court system where appropriate, through child-focused information, advice and family dispute resolution, as well as referral to other services
- separated parents whose arrangements have broken down or whose court orders have been breached, to resolve the issue outside the court system where possible and appropriate, through information, advice, referral and family dispute resolution
- grandparents and other extended family members affected by a family separation through information, advice, referral or family dispute resolution services, and
- families to achieve effective resolution of more complex family separation issues through closer linkages with the courts, legal assistance providers and other services within the family law system.

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY FAMILY RELATIONSHIP CENTRES

Information for Families

Family Relationship Centres have information for people who are starting a relationship, wanting to strengthen an existing relationship or having relationship difficulties. Family Relationship Centres hold public information sessions or training seminars on a range of family relationship issues.

Helping Families Use Other Services

Family Relationship Centres make available information about other services or assist people by helping to identify their needs, helping them to access relevant information, and helping them identify and access a relevant service (whether at the FRC or by referral to another organisation).

With the consent of the client, the Family Relationship Centres are able to provide client information as part of the referral to the other service.

Help for Separating Families

Family Relationship Centres provide additional services for separating or separated parents and other family members affected by separation. The focus is on assisting parents, through a joint dispute resolution process, to reach agreement on their parenting arrangements, and for those arrangements to be in the best interests of their children.

Helping separating parents to reach parenting agreements in joint sessions is a primary function of the Family Relationship Centres. Where relevant, Centres should help parents to understand the impact on their children and financial costs of using the courts to resolve parenting matters. In cases involving violence or child abuse, family dispute resolution is not compulsory and may only proceed if the practitioner assesses it as appropriate and safe. Parents may wish or need to resolve their difficulties in court. Family Relationship Centres should work closely with the courts, legal service providers and other parts of the family law service system to assist families achieve effective resolution of these more complex family separation issues.

A number of steps should occur before clients can engage in a joint family dispute resolution process. These include:

- Intake and assessment
- Group sessions for separating parents
 - to focus on children's needs
 - to provide advice on developing parenting arrangements that reflect children's needs and
 - getting the best outcome through family dispute resolution.
- Individual interviews to separating or separated parents
 - to help them identify issues and options and understand the family dispute resolution process
 - to consider whether the relationship can be saved
 - consider next steps, including the need for a parenting plan
 - to refer to other services to deal with problems impacting on their relationship or their ability to reach, and
 - to give them advice on parenting after separation and
 - help them focus on the needs of their children.

Family Relationship Centres should help parents to understand the impact on their children and financial costs of using the courts to resolve parenting matters. Individual interviews are available to children and other family members affected by parental separation.

The interview is part of the preparation and intake for a joint session with the other parent. Unless the case is unsuitable for a joint session, the Centre will invite the other parent to attend an individual interview and offer the same level of support and assessment and preparation for a joint session.

Referral options when a joint session is not appropriate

If the Family Relationship Centre considers that a joint session is not appropriate at that time, the Centre should consider what other services may help either instead of or prior to a joint session. (For example, a client may need to be referred to counselling to deal with their level of anger before proceeding to family dispute resolution).

Clients who need counselling or other ongoing individual support should be referred to an alternative service. Where other services are needed, Family Relationship Centres will help the client access them. Where an individual interview is held, the Centres should follow up to see if the referral was successful.

Family Relationship Centres should aim to avoid the need for families to have to recommence a family dispute resolution process and form a new relationship with a different practitioner. In considering whether to proceed to a joint family dispute resolution session, the Family Relationship Centre should make an assessment as to whether family dispute resolution at the Centre is best or whether family dispute resolution at another service (for example one that offers longer or more specialised interventions) would deliver a better outcome for the family.

Joint sessions for separating parents

The aim of joint family dispute resolution is to assist parents to agree on arrangements for the care of their children post-separation. The primary focus of joint family dispute resolution sessions at Family Relationship Centres should be on the needs of the children. Where both children's issues and property are involved, Centres may deal with both issues as part of a family dispute resolution process, subject to staff having appropriate skills in both property and children's matters. Family Relationship Centres will not provide dispute resolution services in matters that involve property issues only, but will refer these to other accredited dispute resolution practitioners.

In some cases, parents may not be in dispute but need assistance in setting out their arrangements in the form of a parenting plan. In other cases family dispute resolution processes will be needed to help resolve conflict and reach a workable agreement on arrangements for the children. Family Relationship Centres should conduct family dispute resolution in a way that best achieves sustainable parenting agreements in sessions with parents.

Family Relationship Centres should ensure separating parents receive support outside of the family dispute resolution sessions so they can focus on resolving parenting issues during sessions. If the parents consent, family dispute resolution could include separate consultation with children, with information from that consultation fed back to the parents. As well as parents, other family members such as children or grandparents may be included in the joint sessions where appropriate and where both parties agree.

The joint sessions can be conducted face-to-face (with both parents in the same room), shuttle (with each parent in a separate room) or using technology such as telephone or video. Sessions may be held at the Family Relationship Centre or in another location.

Family Relationship Centres may conduct the joint sessions using their own staff, sessional practitioners or through an arrangement with another organisation. Once joint sessions have commenced, the Centre should endeavour to continue with that family, (subject to available resources).

Separating parents should be encouraged to seek legal advice throughout the process and, where care arrangements may be changing, to seek advice from the Child Support Agency and Centrelink about possible implications in relation to child support and family benefit entitlements.

Child support and Income support

Family Relationship Centres assist customers of the Child Support Agency (CSA) to achieve workable and appropriate arrangements for the children, through information, advice and referral to services. The Centres also have a particular role in helping parents consider child support payment issues and encouraging them to reach agreement on child support payments. Centre staff are not be expected to be experts in child support or income support – instead they are able to telephone CSA staff to discuss child support implications of arrangements they are considering. Clients may also be able to talk to CSA staff directly in private using Centre telephones. Similarly they are able to talk to Centrelink about Family Tax Benefit implications. With the consent of both parents, a parenting plan developed at the Centre and/or other relevant information can be provided to the CSA so that the parents do not have to provide that information again to CSA.

CLIENT SERVICE DELIVERY PRINCIPLES

Involvement of Children

Family Relationship Centres must focus on the needs of the children and how parents can make decisions that best meet their children's needs.

Client Diversity

Family Relationship Centres must ensure that families, regardless of a real or perceived barrier to receiving assistance, are able to access their services.

Services to Indigenous Clients

Family Relationship Centres should provide flexible and culturally sensitive and accessible service delivery models and practices to Indigenous clients in their area.

Legal Advice and Representation

Family Relationship Centres should encourage clients to seek legal advice, particularly where it helps them to reach agreement. Centres should develop cooperative arrangements with legal service providers in order to ensure clients have access to relevant and timely legal advice to assist them in resolving their dispute.

Fees Policy

Family Relationship Centres must provide free of charge: information and referral, family relationship seminars and/or group sessions, and individual help.

Joint sessions will be provided free of charge for up to three hours per couple, or where interpreters are needed, up to 6 hours shall be provided free of charge in recognition of the fact that more time will be needed in such cases.

Refusal of Service

Family Relationship Centres may refuse to provide services to a client where there are safety concerns, its services are clearly inappropriate to the client, or the client has already received appropriate services at the same or another Family Relationship Centre.

Safety

Family Relationship Centres must have in place a Safety and Security Plan which addresses safety risks across all relevant aspects of service delivery.

Screening and Assessment

As a minimum standard, Family Relationship Centres must adopt the *Framework for Screening, Assessment and Referrals in FRCs and FRAL July 2008*, which is available on Family Relationships Online at www.familyrelationships.gov.au.

Outreach to Regional and Rural Communities

Family Relationship Centres are required to provide outreach services to regional population centres and larger towns within their area.

Additional Service Delivery for Indigenous Clients in Specified Locations

Indigenous outreach services are located with Family Relationship Centres in specified areas of high-need or with significant Indigenous communities to contribute to enhanced Indigenous service delivery across the whole network of Centres, and to ensure that Indigenous clients are serviced effectively

Service Charter and Complaints

Family Relationship Centres must prominently display a common service charter that sets out their commitment to the provision of high quality, timely, safe and ethical services, what clients can expect of the Centre and how to provide feedback on the service received – refer to the Service Charter Template.

STAFFING, TRAINING AND COMPETENCY

Family Relationship Centres must recruit staff with a high level of existing skills relevant to the services provided (see Standards 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the FRSP Approval Requirements - Entry of Practitioners, Supervision of Practitioners, Training and Development, Staff Appraisal and Safety of Staff). ‘Staff’ includes full time, part time and casual workers engaged by the Centre, whether paid or unpaid (volunteer).

Accreditation and registration of family dispute resolution practitioners

An accreditation system for family dispute resolution practitioners has been developed under the *Family Law Act 1975*. This recognises the professionalism of the sector and ensures that suitably qualified and experienced individuals are able to provide family dispute resolution and issue family dispute resolution certificates.

The Attorney-General's Department has established a registration system for family dispute resolution providers – the Family Dispute Resolution Register. All family dispute resolution practitioners except those authorised by a court, need to be included on the Family Dispute Resolution Register in order to be family dispute resolution practitioners under the family law legislation and be able to issue valid family dispute resolution certificates.

See the ‘Accreditation’ and ‘Registration’ pages at www.ag.gov.au/fdrproviders for more information.

FACILITIES

Premises

Family Relationship Centre premises must be accessible to all potential clients. They should be conveniently located (close to public transport routes and parking facilities), visible to the community and provide some service delivery outside normal business hours. Disability access must be provided.

The site and fit-out of premises must create a welcoming atmosphere for diverse family members, including children, while also ensuring appropriate levels of security. The following features are likely to be important to prospective clients:

- a professional, discreet and dignified environment, but not overly formal
- a modern but not clinical setting, and
- homely decor with soft lighting and bright colours and comfortable furnishings.

Family Relationship Centres must be child-friendly and have waiting areas and facilities (eg play area, television, toys) where adult family members can supervise children. Where possible, Centres should have options for child-care arrangements, such as access to nearby short-term child-care facilities.

The premises must have suitable group and individual interview rooms and private waiting areas, particularly with regard to maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of clients. Interview rooms must also be appropriately sound-proofed. Group rooms must be suitable for use by other organisations conducting information sessions or programs on the Centres’ premises.

Security

Family Relationship Centres must not compromise the safety of staff or clients. Appropriate safety requirements include duress alarm systems, multiple exit and entry points, and separate waiting areas. Siting must also consider issues such as external lighting and car parking. The Safety and Security plan must identify risks and remedial measures, which should be monitored and reviewed periodically. The plan must comply with the Standards 9, 12 and 13 of the FRSP Approval Requirements – Safety of Staff, Client Confidentiality and Privacy and Client Safety; as well as safety guidelines for Family Relationship Centres.

Co-location

Co-location can promote an integrated approach to family issues and enable families to access a wide range of services with minimum inconvenience. In the event of

co-location, Centres need to demonstrate impartiality with respect to their referral decisions so that clients are provided with choices about both the co-located service and other services in their area.

Information Technology and Telecommunications

Family Relationship Centres must use available technology in ways that best meet the needs of diverse client groups to complement face-to-face communication or deliver services to clients who would otherwise not be able to access services. Centres may have appropriate self-help facilities including a private area for clients to use:

- a phone available in the Centre that provides a direct link to the Family Relationship Advice Line, the Child Support Agency and Centrelink
- a computer that provides access to Family Relationships Online and relevant websites, and
- a colour printer to print fact sheets and other information.

Family Relationship Centres should consider, where appropriate, the use of telephone or video conferencing links where one or both parents are unable to travel to a Centre. Alternatively clients can be referred to the Telephone Dispute Resolution Service.

Family Relationship Centres must also have appropriate record-keeping systems (see Standard 4 Management of Data of the FRSP Approval Requirements). The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has Information Technology requirements for the FRSP Online data collection system. For further information, please contact: the Family Relationship Online Help Desk (FRSPOnline@FaHCSIA.gov.au or phone: 1300 137 305).

Badging

Badging of Family Relationship Centres has been developed nationally and must be adopted by the Centres as their primary identifying symbol. Trade Mark Protocol and Branding Guidelines for Family Relationship Centres set out the requirements for the use of the Family Relationship Centre brandmark. As stated in the Schedule to the Funding Agreement, Centres must adhere to these branding requirements. The Family Relationship Centre brandmark must not be used for purposes other than those related to the business of the Centres.

The Family Relationship Centre may display the badging of other organisations as a secondary identifying symbol on internal signage. If the Family Relationship Centre has sub-contracted with other entities, the Centre must ensure that all other entities comply with the branding requirements.

NATIONAL NETWORK

Family Relationship Centres should adapt their services to best meet the needs of their local communities as well as operating as a member of a national network of Centres. The national network includes the Family Relationship Advice Line.

National referral arrangements with national agencies have been developed for the network (eg with agencies such as CSA and Centrelink). Centres will be required to comply with national referral arrangements.

Each Family Relationship Centre is expected to contribute to the development of best practice across the network and Centres may develop expertise and innovative practices in specific areas and become centres of excellence within the network.

Family Relationship Advice Line 1800 050 321

The Family Relationship Advice Line (Advice Line) is a national telephone service providing free information, advice and referral and telephone dispute resolution services to assist people affected by family relationship or separation issues. The Advice Line complements the information and services offered by Family Relationship Centres and Family Relationships Online. It provides a nationally accessible service for people who may not have access to a Centre or the internet. For further details on the Advice Line see Guidelines for working with the Family Relationship Advice Line.

Family Relationships Online www.familyrelationships.gov.au

Family Relationships Online provides the public and service providers with a wide range of information resources about issues related to relationships and separation, including selected information from other websites, without needing to separately visit each of those websites.

Family Relationship Centres are expected to:

- use Family Relationships Online as a key referral tool, and
- have their services and outlets registered and updated on the site so that those details are available to the public and to Advice Line staff. Information on how to update information is available from the Family Relationship Online Help Desk (FROHelp@ag.gov.au or phone: 1800 654 724).

PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Family Relationship Centres should ensure that they have the linkages in place with local community groups and services to enable families to receive timely and effective assistance.

Referral of Clients

Referral to any other service should be on the basis of the most appropriate service for the client.

Collaborative Arrangements

Collaborative arrangements with other organisations may optimise services for clients.

Information Provided at the Centre by or about External Services

Family Relationship Centres must ensure that information made available to clients and visitors about services in their local community will be relevant to clients' needs.

OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

PART TWO

GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES RELATING TO REFERRALS FROM THE CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY

Child Support Agency (CSA) customers may consider that they, the children or the other parent have special circumstances that aren't reflected in their child support assessment and can apply to CSA for a Change of Assessment. Where the reason for applying for a Change of Assessment relates to an issue about parenting, the CSA can refer the parents to Family Relationship Advice Line (Advice Line), a Family Relationship Centre (Centre), family dispute resolution or counselling service to assist them in resolving the issues themselves and formulating their own agreement.

1. It is expected that the majority of calls from CSA will come via the Advice Line, but CSA may directly refer in some situations.
2. Incoming calls from the Child Support Agency (either directly or via the Advice Line) received during the Centre's opening hours must be answered within 20 seconds. This can be achieved by:
 - the creation of a special priority telephone number made available only to the Advice Line and CSA
 - setting up specialised telephony systems that can recognise and give priority to calls from the Advice Line and CSA designated numbers, or
 - applying this standard for all incoming calls regardless of source. (Note: a 20 second response standard is a reasonable expectation for all clients.)
3. Calls received from the Advice Line outside usual opening hours must be directed to a voice mail system enabling the Centre to call the client back.
4. Voice mail should only be used during usual opening hours when a Centre is unable to:
 - answer a call from the CSA or Advice Line within 20 seconds due to temporary and unusual circumstances (ie up to one day). The call must be diverted to voice mail after 20 seconds. This will enable the Advice Line to provide client details and call ID, as with calls outside usual opening hours. Centres must keep a record of the number of calls from the Advice Line or CSA diverted to voice mail on this basis, and report this information in their status reporting.
 - meet the 20 second standard for calls from the Advice Line or CSA for a prolonged period (ie more than one day). It must advise FaHCSIA that it is unable to meet the standard.
5. Opening hours: Centres must register these on Family Relationships Online.
6. Referrals from CSA (direct or via the Advice Line) will be recorded by Centres in the FRSP Online database in the 'Referral' data entity (two different relevant options, namely 'Child Support Agency - general referral' and 'Child Support Agency - change of assessment'.)

Contacting the Child Support Agency

Priority contact from a Centre to CSA may be made via a dedicated phone number that will be provided to Centre staff. This number is to be used by Centre staff only from all phones within the Centre. This number is NOT to be provided to the general public or clients. Specific client information may not be discussed unless the client is also present. The phone number available to the general public is 131 272.

GUIDELINES FOR ACCESS TO CENTRELINK

Priority Access into the Centrelink Call Network has been arranged for select roles within the Family Relationship Centres.

These are likely to be people who require urgent assistance from an income support specialist for advice on how parenting arrangements will affect their Centrelink entitlements, where a session cannot continue without the assistance.

The Centrelink Call Network

- Please identify the direct telephone numbers within your centre who require priority access to the Centrelink Call IVR (Integrated Voice Response).
- When you have identified the number(s), please email:
 - Your site
 - A contact name
 - The number ranges (including area codes)
 -  Do not use a central number - this must be a direct number to a specific phone.
 - To CCFRAL@centrelink.gov.au.
 - A confirmation email will be sent to you when the numbers have been registered..
- Once the number has been registered with our telephony section, that telephone becomes 'authorised'.
- When this telephone is used to call the Centrelink Priority Line the system will recognise it as an 'authorised' phone and will put your call through to a menu, where you can select the benefit area required (Employment Services, Family Assistance Office, Disability Support etc.) and be priority answered by an appropriately skilled officer.
- If this number is called from an 'unauthorised' phone, you will hear the engaged tone.

Troubleshooting.

- Are you hearing the engaged tone after calling the Centrelink Priority number?

Ensure that the phone you are calling from is an 'authorised' phone.

This can be done locally, by checking with your site support officer, or by emailing CC.FRAL@centrelink.gov.au.

GUIDELINES ON CLIENT SERVICE DELIVERY

Involvement of Children

Family Relationship Centres should be places where families can bring their children. Family Relationship Centres must focus on the needs of the children and how parents (and other family members) can make decisions that best meet their children's needs. Centres must adopt child-focused practice and, where appropriate, ensure that child-inclusive approaches are used in appropriate circumstances. As contained in Standard 3 Planning of the FRSP Approval Requirements, the Centres' organisational planning must also take into account the needs of children.

Family Relationship Centres should make information resources available for children and, where appropriate, consider conducting information or group sessions for children.

In relation to the parenting advice and family dispute resolution services, the Centres may either:

- include children in these processes, if the family wishes and the Centre has capacity and skills, or
- make arrangements with other services with experience in child-inclusive practice so that families can receive this type of assistance in appropriate cases.

Centres should ensure that training, professional development and supervision for family dispute resolution practitioners engaged by the Centre include child focused practice and that any child-inclusive approaches are conducted by appropriately trained practitioners.

Commonly used descriptions:

- Child focused practice means directing parents' discussions to focus on their children's needs and interests.
- Child inclusive practice means directly interviewing the child/ren and bringing their views into parental discussions.

Client Diversity

Family Relationship Centres must work to ensure sensitivity and accessibility to any people who face a real or perceived barrier to receiving assistance (see Standard 10 Accessibility of Services of the FRSP Approval Requirements), whether on the basis of:

- race, religious background, language or ethnic background
- gender
- disability
- age
- locality
- socio-economic disadvantage, or
- any other unjustifiable basis.

Family Relationship Centres must provide services equally, without bias or prejudice about clients. Family Relationship Centres must service all of the families in their catchment areas, including Indigenous people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

In designing and delivering their services, Centres should take account of the specific needs of these diverse groups and consider:

- how best to engage and communicate with ethno-specific groups in their area
- cooperative arrangements with local services
- means to overcome language and cultural barriers, particularly with regard to service delivery (Standard 10 Accessibility of Services of the FRSP Approval Requirements) and client feedback (Standard 11 Client Feedback of the FRSP Approval Requirements)
- how to make optimum use of interpreters
- within overall standards of service, adaptations to the service design model to accommodate specific cultural needs, for example, about the participation of extended family members
- a workforce diversity strategy (see section on Staffing, Training and Competency)
- a strategy to provide access for clients outside business hours, and
- how best to address client diversity when developing organisational plans (Standard 3 Planning of the FRSP Approval Requirements).

Services to Indigenous Clients

All Centres must provide flexible and culturally sensitive and accessible service delivery models and practices to Indigenous clients in their area, and have in place strategies to achieve this.

Strategies to enable effective delivery of Centre services to Indigenous clients might include:

- providing services at culturally appropriate sites that are welcoming for Indigenous families
- recruiting Indigenous staff in the Centre
- arranging outreach visits to communities in their catchment areas
- forming linkages with Indigenous communities and agencies servicing those communities
- networking with other providers of family services to Indigenous people, and
- providing Indigenous interpreter services where needed.

Telephone and Video Conferencing

Family Relationship Centres may provide telephone conferencing, video conferencing or other remote communication methods where family dispute resolution is appropriate but where physical or other barriers prevent face-to-face sessions. Centres should ensure that staff using these media have the required skills.

Telephone or video conferencing may involve one client sitting with a family dispute resolution practitioner in one Centre, and the other sitting with a family dispute resolution practitioner elsewhere. The Centre at which the client first presents should take responsibility for locating and liaising with a service at the other location and

setting up the session(s). Where the other client is in the catchment area of another Family Relationship Centres, this should be the first option.

A different family dispute resolution service may be used if a Centre is not available or one or both clients want to use a different service at the other location.

Where there is no suitable service available at the other location, it may be satisfactory for one or both clients to be on the other end of the line at their home or community venue, without a family dispute resolution practitioner present. The Centre will need to talk to the clients beforehand about these arrangements, for example, to ensure that the conversation can be private and uninterrupted. The availability of support services should also be discussed.

A telephone dispute resolution service is available through the Family Relationship Advice Line. A practitioner or manager of the FRC can refer clients to this service. For further information on the Telephone Dispute Resolution Service refer to the Guidelines for working with the Family Relationship Advice Line.

Legal Advice and Representation

Family dispute resolution practitioners in Family Relationship Centres have the discretion to allow legal representatives to be present during sessions in appropriate cases. To encourage a non-adversarial approach, lawyers attending family dispute resolution sessions in Family Relationship Centres should first make a commitment not to represent the party in court in relation to the issues in dispute, should the same issues subsequently be filed. Family Relationship Centres also have the discretion to exclude someone where they believe that person's presence would not be conducive to resolution of the matter.

Parents are free to obtain legal advice at any time and Centres should encourage clients to seek legal advice, particularly where it helps them to reach agreement (for example, legal information can help to manage parents' expectations about likely outcomes if they proceed to court).

Centres should develop cooperative arrangements with legal service providers (private practitioners, legal aid commissions and/or community providers, community legal centres and women's legal services) in order to ensure clients have access to relevant and timely legal advice to assist them in resolving their dispute.

Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners in the Centres can access legal advice and information from the Legal Advice Service on the Advice Line. However, the Advice Line is not intended as a line that clients can ring when they just want legal advice. For this reason, if callers only require legal advice and do not wish to discuss relationship issues or parenting issues, they should not be referred to the Advice Line. Rather they should be referred to a legal advice provider such as Legal Aid, a community legal centre or the local law society.

Arrangements may also be made for legal service providers to provide training for Centre staff to recognise when legal advice is necessary.

For further information on when to seek legal advice through the Advice Line see Guidelines for Referrals to Legal Advice by staff in Family Relationship Centres

Fees Policy

Family Relationship Centres must provide all services that fall within the following categories free of charge:

- information and referral
- public family relationship seminars and/or group sessions, and
- individual help.

Where clients need counselling or ongoing individual help they should be referred to another service (whether co-located with the Centre or elsewhere).

With regard to joint sessions:

- up to three hours per couple will be provided free of charge, or
- where interpreters are needed, up to 6 hours shall be provided free of charge in recognition of the fact that more time will be needed in such cases.

(Joint sessions do not include intake and follow-up, but do include the time spent in shuttle mediation, tele-conferencing or private sessions conducted during a family dispute resolution process.) At the end of the three hours, clients may decide to continue at the Centre, subject to a fees policy and the Centre's capacity to provide the service, or accept a referral to an alternative service. Centres should aim to avoid, if possible, the need for families to have to re-commence a family dispute resolution process and form a new relationship with a different practitioner.

After the three free hours of joint sessions, Centres may charge fees on the following conditions:

- fee scales reflect each client's capacity to pay
- fees are waived entirely for clients for whom Family Court fees would not be payable under the Family Law Regulations 1984 (see below), and
- procedures are in place to ensure that people without the capacity to pay are not treated differently from those who can pay fees.

Family Relationship Centres must publicly display their fees policy and must discuss fees prior to arranging sessions where they apply so that clients have a choice about whether to commence the process at the Centre or use another service with a different fees arrangement.

Exemptions for fees will be as set out under the Family Law Regulations. Currently these are situations where:

- the client has been granted legal aid for the parenting issue being dealt with
- the client is the holder of:
 - a health care card
 - a health benefit card
 - a pensioner concession card
 - a Commonwealth seniors health card or

- the holder of any other card issued by Centrelink or the Department of Veterans' Affairs that certifies entitlement to Commonwealth health concessions
- the client is an inmate of a prison or otherwise lawfully detained in a public institution
- the client is a child under the age of 18 years
- the client is in receipt of a youth allowance, or an austudy payment or ABSTUDY benefits, or
- the Centre, having regard to the income, day to day living expenses, liabilities and assets of the person liable to pay the fee, waives payment of the fee because, in his or her opinion, it would cause financial hardship to the person.

Re-opened cases and fees policy

For the purposes of this section, a case is re-opened when clients:

- use the Centre at a later stage over a different issue
- use the Centre at a later stage because an agreement has broken down, or
- experience a breach of a court order made since their previous use of a Centre.

Centres may provide three free hours of joint family dispute resolution for re-opened cases, but the requirement to provide free family dispute resolution is limited.

Altogether, a client can only have three free hours, three times (including two re-opened cases) in any two year period. This provision is designed to encourage clients to return to the Centre (rather than possibly going to court) in situations where new issues have arisen, agreements have broken down or orders have been breached, while also providing some limits on the extent to which Centres are obliged to provide free services to repeat clients. The provision should not be interpreted (or explained to clients) as a general 'entitlement' to nine hours free of charge over two years.

Example:

1. Nick and Sandy first attended family dispute resolution at the Centre in July 2006. At that stage they had only a minor issue about schooling for their 9 year old son, Jack. After one and a half hours in joint sessions, they reach an agreement.

Fees: all free of charge

2. In May 2007, the case is re-opened when Nick and Sandy return to the Centre, prompted by Nick's decision to move interstate, which now requires them to re-negotiate their arrangements for Jack. They spend five hours in joint sessions, and come to a new agreement, which then become consent orders.

Fees: The Centre provides the first three hours free of charge but is able to charge fees for the last two hours.

3. In January 2008, the case is re-opened again when they contact the Centre again as the agreement about holidays has broken down. Sandy is considering enforcing the consent orders. They reach an agreement after four hours.

Fees: The Centre provides the first three hours free of charge but is able to charge fees for the last hour.

4. In April 2008, the new agreement has broken down and Nick and Sandy again want to use the service.

Fees: As this is the fourth occasion within two years, the Centre may charge fees from commencement.

The Centre may also decline to provide further assistance if it believes that such assistance is unlikely to be successful in resolving the dispute.

The Centre should publicly display the Fees Policy template.



FEES POLICY

We will provide all services that fall within the following categories free of charge:

- information and referral
- public family relationship seminars, and
- individual help.

We will also provide up to three hours of joint dispute resolution sessions free of charge or up to six free hours if an interpreter is required (conditions apply). We may charge fees after this depending on your circumstances (see below). Prior to attending the joint dispute resolution sessions we will discuss fees with you and whether you are likely to need more than three hours. If so, you can decide whether to start sessions here, or be referred to another service with a different fees policy.

Fees are charged per activity, per client. You will not have to pay a fee, after the free joint dispute resolution sessions, if:

- you have been granted legal aid for the parenting issue being dealt with at the Centre
- you are the holder of:
 - a health care card
 - a health benefit card
 - a pensioner concession card
 - a Commonwealth seniors health card or
 - the holder of any other card issued by Centrelink or the Department of Veterans' Affairs that certifies entitlement to Commonwealth health concessions
- you are an inmate of a prison or otherwise lawfully detained in a public institution
- you are a child under the age of 18 years
- you are in receipt of a youth allowance, an austudy payment or ABSTUDY benefits, or
- we believe that payment would cause financial hardship to you.



An Australian Government Initiative

Refusal of Service

Centres may refuse services to a client who:

- presents a risk to the safety of staff or other clients
- is clearly acting in bad faith
- in the opinion of the Centre, cannot be assisted by the Centre because its services are clearly inappropriate to the client, or
- has already received appropriate services at the same or another Family Relationship Centre.

The client presents a risk to the safety of staff or other clients

This can include situations of actual physical violence, where a threat is made to staff, highly aggressive behaviour which creates fears for the safety of staff, clients or visitors to the Centre, or clients with conditions that create risk to themselves or others, such as mental health or substance abuse.

The client is clearly acting in bad faith

Bad faith includes and refers to intentional, purposeful behaviour, such as:

- taking unfair advantage over the other party or using duress to get an agreement for the other party (eg threats of violence or suicide to gain a concession)
- acting fraudulently or misusing the service to mislead the other party (for example, setting up a joint session in order to create an opportunity to abduct a child)
- acting maliciously (for example, using the service to humiliate the other party).

To decline a service, an assessment of bad faith needs to be clear cut eg the client has made a disclosure. Where Centre staff may suspect bad faith, but cannot be sure, they should not decline the service but rather should attempt to manage this through normal risk management and clinical practices (eg referral to legal advice and use of separate sessions).

In the opinion of the Centre, the client cannot be assisted by the Centre because its services are clearly inappropriate to the client

This can include a range of situations where clients want to use the Centre but the Centre's services will not be of any assistance to the client. This can include clients whose issues fall outside the scope of the Centre service or whose needs are better met through other specialised services, for example, legal advice, mental health services or long term therapy. The Centre should attempt to refer to appropriate services, but, if the client refuses to accept the referral, the Centre may decline to provide further help to the client.

The client has already received appropriate services at the same or another Family Relationship Centre

This can include repeat users who are unlikely to gain further benefit from the Centre's service, for example, a client has been seen for individual, joint and follow up sessions, but continues to request more and more individual sessions. Centres should ensure they do not create an expectation that they can offer long term therapy and should ensure that staff do not encourage client dependency. Where long term help is needed, the Centres should refer to appropriate services.

Service limits apply across the network of Centres, not just the individual Centre. Therefore, Centres may decline services in situations where clients use different Family Relationship Centres to extend the free service limit. For example, where clients have used up the limit of free joint sessions at another Family Relationship Centre and are trying to 'start again' at your Centre.

As there will not be a common database across all Family Relationship Centres, Centres will need to ask where clients have been previously and will need to gain the client's consent to obtain information from the other Centre.

Suggested procedures

Centres need to develop their own guidelines for refusing services. In some clearly defined situations, the individual staff member may use their own professional judgement in declining a service and simply report their decision to their supervisor. In situations that are less clear cut, the staff members may need to discuss with their supervisor or manager.

The Centre should keep a record of situations where services have been declined, as such situations may give rise to complaints against the Centre.

Screening and Assessment

Family Relationship Centres provide a gateway for families in the community to a range of services they may need. Staff need to be skilled at identifying client needs. As a minimum, Family Relationship Centres must have an approach based on the Framework for Screening, Assessment and Referrals provided on Family Relationships Online at www.familyrelationships.gov.au. Screening and assessment should be seen as a continuous process that responds to clients' changing needs. Screening and assessment practices should always be underpinned by a focus on safety.

When providing information to clients, staff at the Centres must assess obvious non-verbal cues, for example communication difficulties or distress, and determine if other assistance is required.

When conducting individual interviews, assessment must be part of establishing a relationship, considering options, assisting client decision-making, and identifying client needs. Issues to consider include:

- the client's capacity to participate in the services provided by the Centre
- client safety, including risks of self-harm, suicide or violence, and
- any risks of child abuse or neglect, including any legal or ethical reporting requirements.

Key issues need to be re-evaluated as contact is made with other family members and with other services. It is recognised that clients could initially be assessed as not having any safety concerns but this could change during the course of their contact with the Centre for various reasons. Any referrals to other services must be guided by referral and information-sharing protocols and national standards developed for those processes.

Centres must develop strategies for all stages and provide urgent referral to appropriate services when clients present with crisis and emergency issues, for example:

- violence and the threats of violence
- child abduction
- need for urgent accommodation or financial assistance, and
- urgent mental health issues, including threats of self-harm.

Screening and assessment processes must seek to identify specific client needs due to:

- disability
- any cultural or language barriers
- literacy issues
- transport issues, and/or
- child-care issues.

In developing and implementing processes for screening and assessment, Centres should consider consultative arrangements with local groups, including Indigenous and ethno-specific groups in their areas, to advise on the needs of diverse client groups.

Outreach to Regional and Rural Communities

Family Relationship Centres are required to provide outreach services to regional population centres and larger towns within their area, and, wherever possible, to other communities where the Centre has capacity and sufficient demand exists.

Centres must assess local needs and develop flexible service delivery strategies to best address those needs. Outreach strategies may include:

- regular face-to-face visits to selected population centres
- collaborative or sub-contracting arrangements with organisations located in other centres
- the provision of appropriate training and resources to enable organisations or individuals in rural areas to act as agents for the Centre, and
- the use of alternative means of communication, such as telephone, video-conferencing and the Internet, to complement face-to-face services.

Where a Centre is purchasing a service from another organisation, or using another organisation to act as an agent for the Centre, this must be done through a sub-contracting arrangement.

Service Delivery for Indigenous Clients in Specified Locations

To ensure that Indigenous clients are serviced effectively, Indigenous outreach services have been funded in specified locations identified as high-need areas or with significant Indigenous communities. The additional funding enables Centres to engage advisers for Indigenous service delivery.

The advisers assist Indigenous people in each region to access Family Relationship Centres and other services, and to develop the capacity of Family Relationship Centres to provide effective services to Indigenous families. Advisers may be engaged directly by the Centre or by arrangement with another organisation with experience

and credibility in the delivery of services to Indigenous families. Advisers are expected to contribute to the development of effective services to Indigenous families across the whole network of Family Relationship Centres.

The functions of the advisers include:

- helping the Centres to develop innovative and effective approaches to delivering the Family Relationship Centre services to Indigenous families
- conducting community education to Indigenous communities about Family Relationship Centres and services
- liaising with Indigenous communities in their areas and with other agencies servicing those communities (including Indigenous Family Liaison Officers in the Family Court of Australia and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services)
- coordinating arrangements for service delivery (eg arranging visits by Centre staff to communities), and
- providing cultural advice and training to Family Relationship Centres staff.

Indigenous Action Plan

Centres must develop an Indigenous Action Plan that includes strategies and partnerships developed to meet the need of Indigenous clients in the catchment area and report on the additional Indigenous Outreach services provided under the funding agreement.

The Plan must be provided when requested as part of the Annual Service Report described in the Schedule to the Funding Agreement.

GUIDELINES ON SAFETY POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Safety and Security Plan

The safety of all adults and children who visit or work for a Centre is paramount. Centres must have in place a Safety and Security Plan which addresses safety risks across all relevant aspects of service delivery, taking into account the type of services delivered, the client population being targeted and factors relevant to the particular Centre. Primarily, a Safety and Security Plan needs to be used by Centres as a practical tool that provides people working in and accessing Centres with clear instructions and/or information that supports them to respond to a variety of issues that are likely to impact on the safety and security of staff and clients at the Centre or in the provision of outreach services.

The Safety and Security Plan must address safety needs in the following areas:

- physical location
- building specifications
- security systems and protocols
- data collection and IT security
- record keeping and privacy requirements
- confidentiality provisions
- referral and information-sharing protocols
- statutory reporting requirements
- workplace health and safety
- recruitment and induction processes
- codes of conduct
- workplace competencies
- screening, assessment and referral processes
- clinical and operational practices, outreach services
- reporting of critical incidents
- staff supervision
- staff training needs
- risk of or actual self-harm, and
- risk or threats of harm to others.

Safety Guidelines

Centres should adopt the following guidelines.

1. Staff checks: Centres should ensure all staff seeking to work in the Centre:
 - a) complete a personal disclosure statement showing they have not been charged with or convicted of any criminal offences
 - b) undergo police checks which confirm that they are not prohibited under the law of Commonwealth, State or Territory from being employed or engaged in any capacity where they have contact with 'vulnerable persons' (i.e. a child or an individual aged 18 years and above who is or may be unable to take care of themselves or is unable to protect themselves against harm of exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability or any other reason).

- c) must not be engaged as an employee, if a police check states they have a criminal or court record, unless the Centre has conducted and documented a risk assessment on them.
 - d) comply with relevant professional codes of conduct.
2. Policies for staff: Centres should give their staff clear safety policies and procedures in writing and provide staff with adequate support, training and resources to comply with those policies and procedures, including the capacity to respond to a diverse range of safety needs and critical incidents.
 3. Referrals: Referrals must not be made to services that are likely to compromise client safety.
 4. Information display: Centres should display and make available current and accurate information about safety issues.
 5. Client behaviour: All clients (including adults and children) at Centres will be expected to behave appropriately. Any violent, abusive, intimidating or threatening behaviour should be managed in accordance with the Centre's Safety and Security Plan.

Policies and Procedures for staff on safety

1. Training

All staff should receive training in risk assessment appropriate to their role. This includes understanding the risks that may be attached to the type of services delivered, to the client population being targeted, or other relevant factors. Centre staff should also be trained in how to assist clients to develop a safety plan.
2. Family Law Act confidentiality and safety obligations

Family Relationship Centre staff and clients should be informed of confidentiality requirements and the exceptions, including those relating to safety in the *Family Law Act 1975*.
3. Reporting

Consistent with those exceptions, serious or imminent threats, or acts that occur in a Family Relationship Centre that constitute criminal offences, should be reported to the appropriate authorities. Family Relationship Centre staff should report suspected child abuse to the relevant statutory body in accordance with the confidentiality and reporting requirements under the *Family Law Act 1975* and mandatory reporting requirements in the relevant State or Territory.
4. Supervision and debriefing

Centre staff need to be provided with appropriate professional supervision relevant to their role and responsibilities. Staff dealing with high risk and complex cases, need to be supported by supervisors with relevant skills and experience. Where possible staff should be supported in their decision making when dealing with critical incidents or serious matters. Supervisors should be aware of the signs of vicarious trauma. All staff, clients and/or witnesses to a critical incident or serious matters should be offered the opportunity for debriefing and ongoing support if required.

Critical Incidents Protocol

Examples of what may be considered a critical incident include:

- Serious harm to the life or body of a person/s, or making threats to harm
- Acts of self harm, or statements of an intention to commit suicide

- Producing a weapon, or indicating one is in their possession and stating their intention to use it to harm another person/s
- Restraining someone against their will or holding hostage
- Attempting or threatening to abduct someone, or actual abduction from the Centre
- Intimidating, aggressive and/or abusive behaviour
- Creating a disturbance with persistent loud shouting and offensive language
- Refusing to stop offensive behaviour and/or leave after a reasonable request
- Throwing furniture and/or other objects
- Health hazards
- Damaging property and/or breaking windows
- Breach of security or confidentiality resulting from stolen electronic or paper files
- Loitering inappropriately outside a Centre and/or stalking behaviours
- Stating an intention to create a fire or an explosion
- Immediate harm or threat to a child
- Reported breaches of protection orders
- Incidents that could escalate and pose a threat to safety such as:
 - Person exhibiting serious delusional or paranoid behaviours
 - Person exhibiting behaviour consistent with being seriously affected by alcohol or drugs, or
 - Person experiencing a health crisis such as heart attack or seizure.

This list does not identify all possible situations that may pose a threat to safety.

Internal processes for reporting and managing critical incidents

Family Relationship Centres must have in place a safety and security plan that includes internal processes for reporting and managing critical incidents. These processes must be easily accessible and understood by all staff. Centres need to develop internal policies and procedures for managing critical incidents. These internal processes should include strategies for ensuring:

- where possible staff are not required to make decisions alone or without support from supervisors or management (except in an emergency, or in a crisis situation)
- staff are provided with a series of steps to follow and given clear guidance about what procedures need to be implemented and who needs to be advised/notified
- debriefing and safety planning can be immediately provided following a critical incident
- clear guidance is provided on follow-up procedures and what needs to be recorded in writing, and
- any legal or statutory obligations are met.

Centres should develop and establish protective measures and practices that maximise the safety of all that attend or work for the service.

These measures need to be:

- monitored and re-evaluated on an ongoing basis, and
- modified if necessary to address any unanticipated safety needs identified through this process, or as a result of a critical incident.

These measures should, as a minimum:

- meet the safety requirements of the Operational Framework for Family Relationship Centres in all aspects of the design of the service

- include internal policies and procedures for managing critical incidents noted above, and
- meet minimum safety practices.

Safety Risk Assessment

Centres should conduct a Safety Risk Assessment which demonstrates a thorough understanding of safety risks related to all relevant aspects of service delivery. This should consider:

- the type of services delivered
- the client population being targeted, and
- any other factors relevant to the service.

Centres should also develop a business continuity plan to prevent or limit disruption to services following a major incident.

Reporting to the Commonwealth on critical incidents

- 1 Centres are not required to report to the Commonwealth on all the critical incidents listed above.
- 2 An external critical incidents procedure will apply to Centres services when:
 - a Serious circumstances endanger clients, staff or the service, or are likely to attract media attention including:
 - i homicides or serious assaults involving clients or staff of the service (directly associated with service provision)
 - ii serious criminal charges against any staff member
 - iii child abduction from the service's premises
 - iv credible allegations from a client about sexual harassment against a staff member
 - v allegations about child abuse against a staff member.
 - b Property damage rendering a service inoperable
 - c An incident threatening the viability or day to day operations of the service (for example, a picket, a siege, hostage situation, bomb threat, health hazard or a circumstance making it unsafe for staff to attend work)
 - d An incident that raises important public policy issues (for example, those requiring a legislative or program response)
 - e Any other incident likely to attract negative publicity or undermine public confidence in the individual service or service system.
- 3 The external critical incident procedures will be in five phases:
 - a IMMEDIATE: Emergency response by the organisation (or where relevant, the Department) to respond to the incident. For example, contact with police or emergency services, response to immediate staff or client needs (such as medical attention, or practical and emotional support).
 - b URGENT: Advice must be given to FaHCSIA via the following approach.
 - The organisation must contact the FaHCSIA State or Territory Office (STO) immediately after any initial emergency procedures are implemented.
 - The STO will then immediately advise both the National Office of FaHCSIA and AGD.
 - The line area of each Department will advise the Public Affairs Unit and/or Minister, as appropriate.

- AGD in consultation with FaHCSIA will also decide whether the service can continue to operate or whether all or part of the operation should be suspended, pending the outcome of the review.
- c **WITHIN 2-3 DAYS:** Immediate post-incident response and support (for example, critical incident de-briefing of staff, recovery from injury, repair to damage, initiation of interim new security procedures, seeking of protection orders etc). This would normally be undertaken by staff supervisors of a Centre.
- d **WITHIN THREE WEEKS:** A formal review of the incident, involving FaHCSIA (National Office and the STO), AGD and the organisation. The review would identify learning from the incident and recommend future action.
- e **REMEDIAL ACTION:** depending of the outcome of the review, will be taken by the organisation and/or, where relevant, the Departments.

GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH THE FAMILY RELATIONSHIP ADVICE LINE

The Family Relationship Advice Line is a national telephone service providing free information, advice and referral to people affected by family relationship or separation issues. Its telephone number is **1800 050 321**.

The service operates from **8 am to 8 pm Mondays to Fridays** and from **10 am to 4 pm on Saturdays (local time)** except on national public holidays, when it is closed.

A key role for Advice Line staff is to facilitate a shift in thinking so that people see separation as a 'relationship issue' rather than as a 'legal matter'. Crisis counselling is provided to callers who are highly distressed, but callers who require ongoing counselling are referred out.

With the exception of callers who become engaged through the Family Dispute Resolution component, the Advice Line is primarily a "one-off" service. While there will be occasions where a caller may ring back or there is a need to follow up with a caller, the Advice Line is not a case management service. Callers requiring ongoing assistance are referred out to appropriate services.

Advice Line Services

The Advice Line provides:

- information about services to help people maintain healthy relationships
- information about the family law system
- advice on family separation issues
- guidance on developing workable parenting arrangements after family separation
- advice about the impact of conflict on children
- referral to Family Relationship Centres and other dispute resolution services
- telephone dispute resolution where people are assessed as suitable and for whom face to face family dispute resolution service may not be suitable, and
- referral to other services for help with family relationship and separation issues.
- legal advice for managers or Practitioners in a Family Relationship Centre or a Family Dispute Resolution service on issues around Family Dispute Resolution. For example, when to suspend a family dispute resolution session so that parties can obtain independent legal advice.
- information about the legal obligations and requirements of Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners under the Family Law Act
- answers to specific legal queries about the changes to the Family Law System.

Advice Line Organisation

The Advice Line has four core components - information officers, parenting advisers, legal advisers and a telephone dispute resolution service.

Information Officers (IOs)

Calls to the Advice Line are answered by **Information Officers** who provide the caller with appropriate information and referrals to other services (such as FRCs) and/or a parenting or legal adviser.

Parenting Advisers (PAs)

Being qualified social workers, PAs undertake a more in-depth assessment of the caller's needs and can provide individual, specialised advice.

A PA may assess a caller as suitable for either face to face dispute resolution or telephone dispute resolution. If telephone dispute resolution is suitable, the PA will warm transfer the caller to the Telephone Dispute Resolution Service.

Legal Advisers (LAs)

Being qualified legal practitioners, LAs provide legal information and simple legal advice on matters concerning the family law system. Where a caller requires more complex legal advice, Legal Advisers refer callers to an appropriate external legal service.

Telephone Dispute Resolution Service (TDRS)

This component of the Advice Line is available to any **referred** client who needs assistance to identify and explore issues in dispute, develop options, consider alternatives, reconcile conflict, and reach agreement. Dispute resolution sessions will primarily focus on achieving workable parenting arrangements, including child support arrangements.

The TDRS can provide assistance to those who have both property and children's issues in dispute (subject to the practitioner having appropriate skills in both property and children's issues). However, the TDRS does not deal with property disputes alone.

The TDRS may be particularly suitable where parties live in disparate locations within Australia, one party lives overseas, or the telephone medium would be more appropriate given the parties particular needs and issues.

Who can refer clients to TDRS?

A Parenting Adviser from the Family Relationship Advice line may warm transfer clients directly to the TDRS.

Practitioners or Managers of any Family Dispute Resolution Service, Parenting Orders Program or Family Relationship Centre, funded under the Family Support Program (FSP), may warm transfer clients directly to the TDRS using a separate 1800 number. **As the TDRS is a REFERRAL only service, this phone number is NOT for clients' use.**

Family Law Advice

Practitioners or Managers can contact the Advice Line for assistance from an LA about the legal obligations and requirements of Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners under the Family Law Act and/or on issues around Family Dispute

Resolution. For example, when to suspend a family dispute resolution session so that parties can obtain independent legal advice.

Clients with a **family law** query may be referred to the Advice Line where that client is interested in hearing about non-adversarial options for resolving their problem or would like information about other relevant services such as dispute resolution or property mediation.

If callers require general legal advice and do not wish to discuss relationship or parenting issues, they should **not** be referred to the Advice Line. Instead, they should be referred to a legal advice provider such as Legal Aid, a community legal centre or the local law society.

Not a ‘Counselling Service’

Clients with family separation issues and who also require counselling services may be referred to the Advice Line for assistance with post separation parenting arrangements, discussion about dispute resolution options and referral to personal or relationship counselling services. However, the Advice Line itself does not provide counselling.

Referrals from the Advice Line to Centres

Advice Line staff may warm transfer a caller to a Family Relationship Centre or alternatively provide a Centre’s contact details.

Depending on the caller’s needs, a PA may make a preliminary assessment about whether joint family dispute resolution, group work or other intervention may be appropriate. If the caller wishes, and the Centre is available, the PA may then warm transfer the caller to the Centre. Alternatively, the PA may give the caller a choice to either make their own contact with the Centre, or arrange for the Centre to call.

Consequently, Centres should ensure that their details on Family Relationships Online include up to date information about:

- opening hours
- contact telephone numbers
- physical addresses
- postal address (if different to physical address)
- e-mail address (if available)
- outreach details
- the length of any waiting periods for all locations including outlets and
- any Centre specific information (wheel chair access, interpreters).

These details can be updated using the Resource Manager. (Further information about the Resource Manager is provided under the heading Family Relationships Online).

Priority Access

Priority Access into the Family Relationship Advice Line can be arranged for selected roles in Family Relationship Centres.

When a nominated telephone number is used to call the Advice Line (1800 050 321) the system will recognise it as an 'authorised' phone and will put your call through to the next available Information Officer, even if there are other calls in the queue.

This service is offered for practitioners who require assistance from a Legal Adviser for simple legal advice during a session with clients.

Only **direct** telephone numbers to a specific phone in your centre can be nominated. **Do not nominate a central number.**

To access this offer, send an email to CCFRAL@centrelink.gov.au with the following information:

- Subject: **Priority Access to FRAL**
- Your site name
- A contact name
- The telephone number(s), including area codes

A confirmation email will be sent to you when the number(s) have been registered and authorised.

Troubleshooting.

Are you experiencing delays in being answered by an Information Officer?

Are you hearing the engaged tone after calling the Advice Line - 1800 050 321?

Ensure that the phone you are calling from is an 'authorised' phone.

This can be done locally, by checking with your site support officer who has nominated the number ranges as instructed above, or by emailing:

CCFRAL@centrelink.gov.au.

GUIDELINES FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

Community Engagement

Centres may use a range of avenues to provide information about relevant services and programs in the area as well as to encourage families to use the Centres.

Examples include:

- local radio
- mail-outs
- stalls at community events
- school visits
- presentations to meetings of local organisations, and
- kits or video/DVD-based presentations provided to local organisations.

Each Centre must identify local groups and services that can play a role in supporting family relationships and providing assistance before, during and after separation. These groups and services may comprise both professional and voluntary groups, private practitioners, government agencies and funded and unfunded community organisations, for example:

- men's, women's, children's and grandparents' advocacy and support groups
- Migrant Resource Centres
- ethno-specific community groups and services
- Indigenous services
- religious and charity organisations
- pre-marriage education and relationship education organisations
- family relationship counselling services
- family dispute resolution services
- parenting skills programs
- family violence and child protection services
- Children's Contact Services
- Parenting Orders Program services
- emergency and crisis services, including police
- health services (including GPs, mental health and substance abuse services and support groups)
- schools and other educational bodies
- child-care centres
- financial counselling services
- local government (including Citizen's Advice Bureaus)
- Child Support Agency and Centrelink
- housing services
- legal services including community legal centres, women's legal services, legal aid commissions and private lawyers, and
- courts and statutory bodies.

Cooperative and Collaborative Service Delivery

Centres should develop cooperative arrangements with other agencies in order to optimise the provision of services to clients. These would need to include:

- local arrangements for effective referrals, including follow-up arrangements and formal referral arrangements with key organisations (note: arrangements with key national agencies will be developed nationally for the network of Family Relationship Centres and the Family Relationship Advice Line)
- arrangements for transfer of telephone calls (including three-way conversations to introduce the client to the other service)
- arrangements for obtaining specialised information or advice in the course of parenting advice or family dispute resolution sessions (eg a telephone link to legal information or to advice from CSA or Centrelink), and
- exchange of information relevant to client assessment (with client consent and subject to privacy and other legal constraints), to enable facilitated transfer of the client to another service.

It could also include other collaborative activities such as Centre staff accompanying other services in outreach visits to rural Centres.

To enable families with diverse needs to receive timely help at the one place, Family Relationship Centres must enter into cooperative arrangements with prevention and early intervention services. (See also Standard 3.3 Planning of the FRSP Approval Requirement.)

Centres may arrange for other organisations and individuals to provide information, parenting advice and family dispute resolution services within the Centre, for example:

- the Centre could arrange for information sessions to be run by another agency which specialises in a particular area of work (such as family skills training, children's issues, legal or financial information)
- the Centre could train staff in other organisations to act as local agents who provide information about the Centre's services and assist in setting up appointments
- parenting advice could be provided by a specialist from another agency with skills in child development areas, or
- family dispute resolution could be provided by an external family dispute resolution practitioner (with the Centre underwriting the first three hours).

Where collaborative arrangements involve the purchase of services from another organisation this must be done through a sub-contracting arrangement which ensures that:

- the external service meets the Centre's standards for the specific aspect of service delivered
- where the external organisation already receives Commonwealth funding, there is appropriate attribution of costs, and
- a strategy is developed to avoid conflicts of interest.

Engagement with Other Organisations and Individuals

Family Relationship Centres should engage with local community groups and services to develop innovative and proactive strategies to enable families to receive timely and effective assistance. This includes referral of clients to other services they need and arrangements with other organisations to provide information sessions or programs on Centre premises. Some Centres may be run by a consortium with other organisations and/or sub-contract other organisations to provide part of the Centre's core services.

Any arrangements made with other organisations and individuals must have in place processes to avoid conflicts of interest. The funding recipient remains responsible under the Funding Agreement for the operation of the Centre.

Appropriateness of an organisation for referral of clients

Centres will be making referrals to a wide range of services, tailoring each referral to the needs of each client in order to ensure the best outcome. Referral to any other service should be on the basis of the most appropriate service for the client, not any relationships the Centre has with a particular service.

In some cases, the services to which Centres refer clients will be funded by the Australian, State or Territory, or local government to provide the particular service. Where referrals are made to services that are not government-funded, the Centre needs to satisfy itself that the organisation to which it is referring clients is an appropriate service.

Factors the Centre should consider in deciding whether an organisation is appropriate for referrals include:

- Does the organisation have expertise and experience in providing the relevant service? If the referral is being made for family dispute resolution services, is the organisation or practitioner on the Family Dispute Resolution Register?
- Do staff have experience in providing the relevant service?
- Do staff meet any relevant professional standards that apply to that type of service?
- If staff do not meet relevant standards now, what is the organisation doing to meet the standards? (In cases where new standards are introduced, organisations experienced in providing a particular service may need time to bring their staff into line with the new standards.)
- Has there been positive or negative feedback to the Centre as a result of previous referrals to the organisation?
- Does the organisation receive referrals from other government or non-government agencies? (If so, the Centre may wish to check with those organisations/agencies about whether they have any concerns about the organisation.)
- Does the organisation have professional indemnity insurance for the relevant service?
- Does the organisation have a complaints process made known to clients?
- If there are relevant government or industry standards that govern the particular type of service, does the organisation claim to meet them?
- Would referral to the organisation bring the Centre or the Australian Government into disrepute (eg has it engaged in illegal or unsafe activities or expressed extreme views)?

This list is not intended to be prescriptive. The Centre should use its own judgement in assessing suitability for referral. However, a Centre should be very cautious about referring clients to an organisation that does not come up positively against the majority of these factors.

Collaborative Arrangements for referrals

The same factors would be relevant when considering entering into other collaborative arrangements with other organisations (including sub-contracting arrangements and consortia). In addition, the lead organisation funded to run the Centre will be responsible for ensuring that the sub-contractors meet standards required of Centres under the Funding Agreement and relevant guidelines.

Where the lead organisation engages with another organisation or individual with a specific focus (eg cultural, ethnic, religious or gender-based), the lead organisation must state how it will deliver services to other parts of the community. (In some cases a Centre may decide to enter into collaborative arrangements with an organisation specifically because of the latter's expertise and experience in working with a particular client group, such as Indigenous or culturally and linguistically diverse communities, disabled, children or gender specific services.)

Guidelines on Information Provided at the Centre by or about External Services

Centres will make information available to clients and visitors about a wide range of services in their local community that will be relevant to clients' needs.

In deciding whether to display or provide material about particular services, a Centre would again take into account the above factors (where practical). It should avoid displaying material advertising individual private professionals or firms (such as dispute resolution practitioners or lawyers) but should make available lists of private professionals or firms in the area, developed with the assistance of the relevant professional body or local law society.

Where more than one service of a particular type is available in an area, the Centre should ensure clients are given access to a choice of providers and either:

- invite all appropriate organisations that offer a specific service to provide material about their services, or
- where this is not feasible, provide links to listings of such services (eg listings of nationally recognised accreditation schemes or professional structures).

The Centre must continually review the scope and quality of its information services and should decline to provide information about services where it believes that the service is engaged in illegal or unsafe activities or that the provision of information about that service would bring the Centre or the Australian Government into disrepute.

REFERRAL GUIDELINES FOR FAMILY RELATIONSHIP CENTRES AND THE FAMILY RELATIONSHIP ADVICE LINE

Family Relationship Centres and the Family Relationship Advice Line are front doors to services that can assist families at all stages of their relationships. They help families with relationship issues by providing appropriate information and referral, and also help separating families to achieve workable parenting arrangements (outside the court system) through information, support, referral, advice and provision of dispute resolution services. In doing this they are required to deliver high-quality, timely, safe and ethical services. Effective referral practices are therefore critical to the operations of Centres and the Advice Line.

The following guidelines are provided to assist Centres and the Advice Line to develop the best possible referral practices.

The relationship with the client

Note: 'Client' in this context includes telephone callers

Effective referral starts with the skills and attitudes of staff, including empathy and respect for the client, a non-judgemental attitude and sensitivity to cultural needs.

Staff should acknowledge and address the client's most pressing needs and concerns and explain the reasons why a particular referral has been made. Safety issues need to be identified and addressed and referrals should not compromise client safety.

Staff should avoid a 'processing' attitude in which the referral is seen as merely directing people through an impersonal system. First impressions matter, especially the manner of Information Officers and other first point of contact staff.

Distressed clients

Referral needs to take account the level of distress experienced by the client. For example, it may be necessary to settle distressed clients before referring them on to other services. Information Officers on the Advice Line should always try and transfer distressed callers to a Parenting Adviser.

Client choice

Where more than one service may assist clients, it is appropriate to provide them with information about the range of services available and to let them make up their own minds about which particular service or services they want to use. In doing so, staff may need to provide some guidance on any special conditions for using a service. For example, many services would not be available to low income or special needs clients. It is important to refer clients to the most appropriate service at the right time and avoid a 'merry-go-round' of referrals.

Barriers to other services

Staff in the Centres and the Advice Line need to be aware of possible barriers that a client may experience in using another service and, where feasible and appropriate, work with the client to find ways to overcome these barriers. Barriers may include:

- lack of information about services and what is available
- lack of client capacity or interest in taking up the referral
- waiting lists that are too long to meet the client's needs
- cost
- lack of child care
- cultural or language barriers
- difficulties in contacting clients (eg lack of phone services)
- family ties
- lack of anonymity issues in small communities
- lack of interpreters
- lack of services particularly in rural and regional areas
- lack of transport options particularly for disabled or aged clients.

Family Relationship Centres

Centres are required to engage with a wide range of community groups and services and to build collaborative relationships with these groups and services. Such relationships underpin effective referral practices. Centres need to network with their communities through such activities as conferences, workshops or regular meetings, information sessions and visits to other agencies. It may also be useful to have one worker to act as point of contact with each referral agency.

Common intake and screening processes developed in conjunction with other services can facilitate referrals.

It is also desirable for Centres to establish reference groups to guide them in their local referral practices. Centres should also involve Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the development of referral practices. Connections with specific communities (including elders in the community) will help Centres gain awareness of local community issues. It may be that action research reference groups established by Centres will also be an appropriate forum for discussing referral issues.

Centres need to be conscious about the needs and concerns of other services and attempt to deal with these concerns in their referral practices. For example, other services may be worried about not being able to cope with the volume or type of referrals being made by Centres, or may fear that the Centre will make inappropriate referrals.

It is useful for Centres to develop clear protocols between themselves and other service providers. These could take the form of memoranda of agreement or other forms of formal agreement, which in outline relationships and delineate the roles and responsibilities of collaborating agencies. Agreements should be reviewed periodically and modified as appropriate. When confidential information is shared between coordinating providers, such formal agreements are essential.

Accurate information

Staff in the Centres and Advice line responsible for making referrals must have an accurate knowledge of the services provided by other agencies which are available to meet client needs.

Family Relationships Online is the key resource for this purpose. Family Relationships Online has been developed as a service finder for the whole of the family relationships services sector. The information that can be registered on Family Relationships Online is comprehensive and that information can be updated at any time directly by service providers. Centres should ensure that information about their services is registered on Family Relationships Online and is regularly updated.

The following information can be registered on Family Relationships Online:

- name of the provider
- contact name and telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address/s of the provider
- the title of each service provided
- the service type of each service provided (eg. Children's Contact Service)
- standardised search keywords for each service provided
- target audience for each service
- language/s a service is provided in
- name of outlet through which each service is provided
- physical and postal address of each outlet through which each service is provided
- coverage area(s) for each service or outlet
- opening hours of the outlets through which each service is provided
- directions, transport information, and accessibility to public transport
- how the service may benefit the client
- waiting times
- limitations and barriers (for example, whether conflict checks are undertaken in relation to legal referrals, see separate document on legal referral)
- eligibility criteria
- admission and referral policies and procedures
- costs/fees and acceptable methods of payment
- competence in providing services appropriate to the client's culture, language, sex, sexual orientation, age, and developmental level, including profiles on strengths and specialist areas.

Referral processes

The choice of referral process depends on the client's needs, what arrangements if any have been agreed with the service to which the client is to be referred and the capacity of both the referring organisation and the service to which the client is being referred at any particular point in time.

Referral processes can take many forms. The table below outlines examples of referral processes and the advantage and disadvantages of each. Referral processes can occur in a telephone environment, in face to face settings or in the form of written communication (including e-mail) or a combination of these channels. A referral process selected may combine aspect of each of these processes.

Centres and Parenting and Legal Advisers on the Advice Line are encouraged to use facilitated, warm and/or active referral processes where feasible, especially for clients who are likely to have trouble using other services without assistance.

Feedback and follow up

When a referral is made, it is useful to obtain client feedback about the referral. A follow up call may be needed to ensure the referral was effective. In relation to Centres, it may be possible to set up feedback processes that take the form of a three-way discussion between the Centre, the service to which the client is referred, and the client.

| Possible term | Characteristics | Possible advantages and disadvantages |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Passive referral | The client is given contact information for appropriate service(s) and is left to make her/his own contact at a time that best suits the client. | This process gives responsibility to the client to take action on their own behalf. However, there is a greater likelihood that the referral will not be taken up. |
| Facilitated referral | The client is helped to access the other service, for example, the referring organisation makes an appointment with the other service on the client's behalf, asks the other service to make contact with the client/s or a caller is transferred to the other service. | The other service is made aware of the client, and the client is helped to access that other service. The client may need to wait for a response to the other service. |
| Active referral | The referring organisation, with the client's consent, provides the organisation to which it is referring the client with information that it has collected about the client or with its professional assessment of the client's needs. | The client does not need to repeat all of their story and the agency to which the client is referred has relevant information about the client. However, there is a risk that the information is communicated out of context and therefore misinterpreted by the service which is receiving the referral, especially if not done as a 'warm' referral (see below). |
| Cold referral | The client is transferred to another service, without any immediate communication between the Centre or Advice Line and the other services, for example, by putting the client into a call centre queue. | The other service may be unaware of the nature of the call or of any information or services that have already been provided. The client may be frustrated that they have to re-tell their story or may not communicate their needs in a way that allows the other service to see why the client has been referred. |

| | | |
|---------------|--|---|
| Warm referral | A ‘live’ three way conversation in the presence of the client (whether face to face or by telephone) in which the referring organisation introduces the client, explains what has already been done to assist the client and why the client is being referred. | This provides an open and transparent process in which information can be exchanged between the Centre, the client and the other service. Issues can be clarified immediately. The client does not need to repeat all of their story. The process relies on someone being available at the other service at the time the client is to be referred. |
|---------------|--|---|

Staff skills

Sound skills and practices are critical to effective referral. Centre staff who make referrals must also possess the knowledge and skills needed to support people in accessing other services if required, including negotiating ways to overcome barriers to access to services.

The following checklist may assist staff in Centres and the Advice Line to make effective referrals:

- I understand the client’s situation and perceived needs.
- The client and I have talked about how to prioritise these needs and what options exist to help address them.
- The client is willing and ready to be referred.
- We have discussed what issues might make it difficult for the client to follow through with the referral.
- The agency to which I am referring the individual is registered on Family Relationships Online or I am familiar with the agency, including its eligibility requirements and services.

Some additional points for Centre staff and for Parenting and Legal Advisers on the Advice Line are:

- I have considered whether a facilitated, warm or active referral would be desirable, based on the client’s:
 - ability to negotiate complex social situations
 - ability to provide and receive information
 - ability to tolerate waiting
 - level of ambivalence about seeking help
 - interpersonal style (eg passive or argumentative)

If the referral is a passive or cold referral:

- I have provided sufficient information and ‘coaching’ to help make the referral successful.
- I have made a plan to follow up with the client to see how things went and to determine next steps (where appropriate).

GUIDELINES FOR REFERRALS TO LEGAL ADVICE BY STAFF IN FAMILY RELATIONSHIP CENTRES

The Government wants separating parents to sit down, focus on their children and agree on parenting arrangements rather than going to court. An aim of the Government's family law reforms is to change the culture of family breakdown so that parenting issues after separation are seen primarily as relationship rather than legal issues. However, the Government recognises that legal issues arise in this context.

The Family Relationship Centres are not intended to work alone but as an integral part of a much wider system. As the legal profession and legal services are an important part of that system, the Government expects the new Centres to work collaboratively with them to ensure the best outcomes for clients.

In developing appropriate referral arrangements, Centres are expected to liaise with the local legal profession and legal services and to be aware of issues that affect referrals. For example, there may be resource implications for the legal service receiving referrals, or conflict of interest policies and means and merits tests might apply.

This document is intended to provide guidelines only and staff will use their discretion and professional judgment as to the most appropriate referral pathway for each client. Any referrals to legal advice need to be considered within the context of also providing referrals to other appropriate services.

Legal information versus advice

It is important to emphasise that clients may also need to be provided with legal information whilst at a Centre or referred externally to obtain legal information. Legal information is information of general application such as information about what the law says. When provided with this information some clients may then ask how this information applies specifically to them. Legal advice is information that is specific to a person's individual circumstances, such as an explanation of the legal consequences of pursuing a particular option of course of action. Centre staff should make clients aware that they cannot give legal advice but can encourage the client to seek legal advice by offering the client a referral to a legal service.

The Family Relationship Advice Line is a resource that can also provide legal information and advice to staff of Centres. For further information see the Guidelines for working with the Family Relationship Advice Line.

Set out below are examples of circumstances and issues where it may be appropriate to refer a client for legal advice. These indicators are intended to help staff at Centres identify when a client might need legal advice. These issues may arise at any point during a client's contact with a Centre including before, during or after dispute resolution and as such the guidelines are for general use by all staff. The indicators are not intended to be relied on as an exhaustive list covering all fact scenarios or issues that might arise during a client's contact with a Centre.

Urgent situations

A client may need to be referred for urgent legal advice if they raise the following issues at any point during their contact with a Family Relationship Centre:

Issues relating to child abduction/retention of a child including prevention:

- International (clients should be referred to the Australian Central Authority on 1800 100 480 during business hours).
- Domestic including recovery/location of children (eg where other parent has abducted child or retained the child after contact visit).
- Prevention of child abduction – domestic and international (for international matters clients should be referred to the Australian Central Authority during business hours) *In emergency situations, where there is an imminent risk that the child will be removed from Australia, clients should also be referred to a legal advice provider and/ or the after hours court service for assistance to secure an urgent court order prohibiting removal from Australia. The Australian Federal Police can then include the child's name on the airport watchlist).*
- Legal Advisers on the Advice Line can be contacted for information and advice in relation to both domestic and international child abduction issues.

Where issues of family violence are raised or identified during the screening and assessment process that require legal advice or assistance – primary referral may be to a domestic violence service (or other services provided by the Centre) but staff also need to consider referrals where urgent legal advice/assistance would be appropriate. For example, where it is necessary to secure a family violence order (such as a restraining order or an AVO) or an urgent interim parenting order if the child is at risk of violence etc).

Where issues of child abuse/child protection are raised or identified during the screening and assessment process that require legal advice or assistance – primary referral may be to child protection services but staff also need to consider referrals where legal advice/assistance may be required, for example where the client needs to secure an urgent interim parenting order, a recovery order or family violence order. Urgent legal issues relating to property – including where the other party is disposing of assets, where there is a threat of foreclosure on a mortgage or a demand for payment of a mortgage.

Urgent legal issues relating to spousal maintenance, child support or child maintenance. In considering appropriate referrals, Centres should be aware that more immediate financial assistance may be available for financial problems such as crisis or income support services.

Other referrals to legal advice

In addition to the urgent situations outlined above, clients may need to be referred to legal advice if the following arises:

- Where the client(s) have been assessed as not suitable for dispute resolution by the Family Relationship Centre or other services. Note that clients assessed as not suitable for dispute resolution at a Centre may be suitable for specialist dispute resolution elsewhere or lawyer assisted dispute resolution services (such as conferencing offered by Legal Aid Commissions).

- Where the client has a question about the meaning of the law, the family law reforms, the application of the law to their particular circumstances or the legal options available to them (where this cannot be addressed by legal information such as that contained in fact sheets).
- Where advice is required in relation to court proceedings currently on foot
- Where the client seeks advice in relation to legal or other documents (court orders, letter from lawyers etc).
- Where the client raises issues relating to property, (including defacto property issues) or wishes to include property in any agreement reached. (Note that, where property and children are both issues in dispute, Centres can include the property in the dispute resolution process, if they have the skills to do so, or they can refer the clients to another dispute resolution service that has that expertise.)
- Where the client raises issues about the legal remedies available to secure sole use/occupancy of the family home.
- Where either party seeks paternity testing.
- Where the client is seeking legal advice on the impact of entering into a parenting plan or requires advice prior to signing a parenting plan. Centres should not assume that every client seeking to make a parenting plan should be referred for legal advice. However, a variety of circumstances exist where it might be considered appropriate to suggest a client get legal advice – for example, prior to signing a parenting plan where existing parenting orders are in place that may be varied by the terms of the parenting plan.
- Where the client requires advice on entering into consent orders in the terms of a parenting plan. In some situations, parents may wish to have some key aspects that they have agreed upon in their parenting plan reflected in a legally enforceable court order. These clients should be referred for legal advice on the drafting and filing of consent orders if appropriate.
- Where the client raises legal issues in relation to child maintenance or spousal maintenance.
- Where the client requires advice on complex child support issues (which have not been addressed after a primary referral to the Child Support Agency including by three-way conversation between the client, Centre Staff and the Child Support Agency). Complex child support issues may include variations, change of assessments, departure applications, drafting court applications etc.
- Where the client raises issues that fall under State/Territory legislation (child is in care etc).
- Where the client raises issues about legal matters outside the family law jurisdiction (for example criminal or civil law proceedings, debt, immigration etc).
- Where dispute resolution has been unsuccessful, or terminated, and the client requires legal advice on their options.

SERVICE CHARTER AND COMPLAINTS

Family Relationship Centres must prominently display a common service charter that sets out their commitment to the provision of high quality, timely, safe and ethical services, what clients can expect of the Centre and how to provide feedback on the service received (including the Centre's complaint procedures).

Family Relationship Centres must have an internal complaints procedure in place and it must be prominently displayed at the Centre at part of this service charter (see Standard 11 Managing Client Feedback and Complaints of the FRSP Approval Requirements).

'Internal complaints procedure' can include the complaint being handled by the organisation running the Centre.

The complaint will be referred to FaHCSIA if the complainant is dissatisfied with the Centre's internal handling of the complaint.

If the Family Relationship Centre has sub-contracted the provision of services on behalf of the Centre, the Centre must ensure that all sub-contractors have appropriate internal procedures for handling complaints and that the service charter (including the complaints policy) is prominently displayed.

SERVICE CHARTER TEMPLATE

Family Relationship Centres are committed to providing you with safe, timely and high quality services.

Centres will help you focus on your children's needs and will help you access services that can strengthen family relationships.

Centres are committed to the following Service Charter:

Information

We will provide up-to-date information about family relationships or help you to find this information.

Accessing other services

We will help you make contact with other services that can best meet your needs and the needs of your children, and will work closely with other services to help you get the support you need.

Help for separating families

If you are experiencing separation we will talk with you to help you focus on your children's needs and decide what to do next. We will also offer joint sessions with the other parent or family members.

If you want the other parent to come in as well, and this is hard for you, we will help to arrange that.

Fees

We will provide information, referral and individual sessions free of charge. We will also provide up to three hours of joint sessions free of charge, but may charge fees after that, depending on your circumstances. We will discuss these fees with you so that you can decide whether to commence sessions here, or use another service with a different fees policy.

Our staff

We are committed to employing the best possible people to help you with your relationships, and to making sure that staff are highly skilled and ethical.

Safety

We are committed to providing a safe environment. If you feel unsafe at any stage, or require special arrangements to assist with your safety or the safety of your children, please advise a staff member.

Privacy

Your privacy is important to us and will be protected. We will only disclose personal information if you give permission to do so or if we are required or authorised by law, for example, to protect someone from harm.

Using our service

We will do all that we can to help you and your children get the most out of our service. If you have trouble using our service for any reason, or if you have special needs, please advise a staff member.

Complaints process

Have you had satisfactory service?

The Centre wants to make sure that it is providing you with the best possible service. If you like the services a Centre has provided, please let the Centre know. If you have any suggestions for changes, the Centre needs to hear those too.

If you want to make a complaint, please contact the Centre concerned and it will try to address your concerns.

If you are not satisfied with how your complaint is handled please contact:

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous
Affairs National Office Complaints Team

Ph: 1800 634 035

Fax: (02) 6204 4587

Email: complaints@FaHCSIA.gov.au

Post: FaHCSIA Complaints, PO Box 7576, Canberra Business Centre, ACT, 2610

Please ask a Centre for a copy of its complaints policy if you would like more information.

Appendix D. Supporting Children after Separation Program - Description and Operational Requirements

Role of the Supporting Children after Separation Program (SCaSP)

The Supporting Children after Separation Program aims to support children, within the context of their family, to manage and enhance their relationships during and after family separation.

Description

SCaSP assists children from separated or separating families who are experiencing issues around family relationships. The services help children and young people deal with issues arising from the breakdown of their parents' relationship and the circumstances in which they find themselves.

SCaSP services provide a range of age appropriate interventions that meet the individual needs of the child as they experience issues related to the breakdown in their parent's relationship, offer opportunities for children to participate in decisions that impact on them in relation to the separation of their parents and have the capacity to respond to emerging issues for children from separated families in the local community.

In order to provide the most effective intervention for a child, the entire family may require family relationship services. While SCaSP is only for children, an important element is the development of links between other services and strong referral pathways within the local service system to ensure family members also receive services. As a result of engaging with a parent when providing a service to a child, SCaSP services may refer parents and/or carers to complementary services that assist them to focus on the interests and needs of their children.

Target Group

The target group is children under 18 years from separated or separating families, who are experiencing issues around their family relationships.

Client centred Service Delivery

SCaSP must promote an organisational culture that is child friendly, safe and welcoming to children and their families. Children must be the centre of service delivery at all times, ensuring that the child's best interests are the primary consideration.

Assisting Children through their family

SCaSP recognises that children may have a range of relationship issues and that children will ideally be seen within the context of their families. Where appropriate, and in the best interests of the child, feedback about the child's perspective and needs may be provided to parents so they are better able to focus on the needs of their children.

Client Activities

SCaSP services provide information and referral, education and courses and family counselling. Family Counselling under the *Family Law Act 1975* includes processes (such as counselling and therapeutic intervention or group work) by which a family counsellor helps persons, including children, who are affected by separation or divorce to deal with personal and interpersonal issues and issues relating to the care of children (Section 10B Definition).

SCaSP services may use a range of interventions to support children. Interventions must be developmentally appropriate and take into consideration the family and the community context of

the child. Services may be delivered at an early stage in the relationship issue eg a group program to assist children to understand the process of separation and how it may affect their family, or for children with more complex needs eg a child who is demonstrating behavioural difficulties due to changes in their family relationships and who could be assisted by individual counselling. Interventions must be provided from a strengths based approach and avoid stigmatising children eg to avoid isolating children from separated families, interventions provided in schools may provide generalised education to children about healthy relationships in intact as well as separated families.

Approaches used to support children may include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Child consultation as part of another intervention (eg family counselling)
- Child inclusive practice component as part of another intervention (eg family dispute resolution)
- Culturally appropriate strategies for Indigenous children such as yarning, culture camps
- Culturally specific groups or events for children
- Groups for teenagers whose parents are separated or separating to assist them to understand and manage the emotional consequences of family breakdown
- Individual counselling
- Intake and assessment
- Provision of information and referral to other services
- School holiday camps or other activities where education and/or support is provided to children experiencing separation from a parent
- Therapeutic interventions for young children using child friendly techniques (for example art, play therapy, drama, story telling)
- Use of resources such as books, computer programs, internet sites
- Work in schools with groups of children that promotes healthy relationships including understanding grief and loss issues around separated families

Services are not intended for cases where the primary issues are the responsibility of state governments under child protection legislation. SCaSP is not designed to deal with the high and complex needs of children such as mental health, family violence, and drug and/or alcohol misuse.

Premises and co-location

SCaSP venues must be tailored to suit the needs of children by being welcoming to children, accessible by children and their parents and where the layout and size of rooms, fittings and access to toilets are suitable for children, ensuring the safety and security of clients and staff

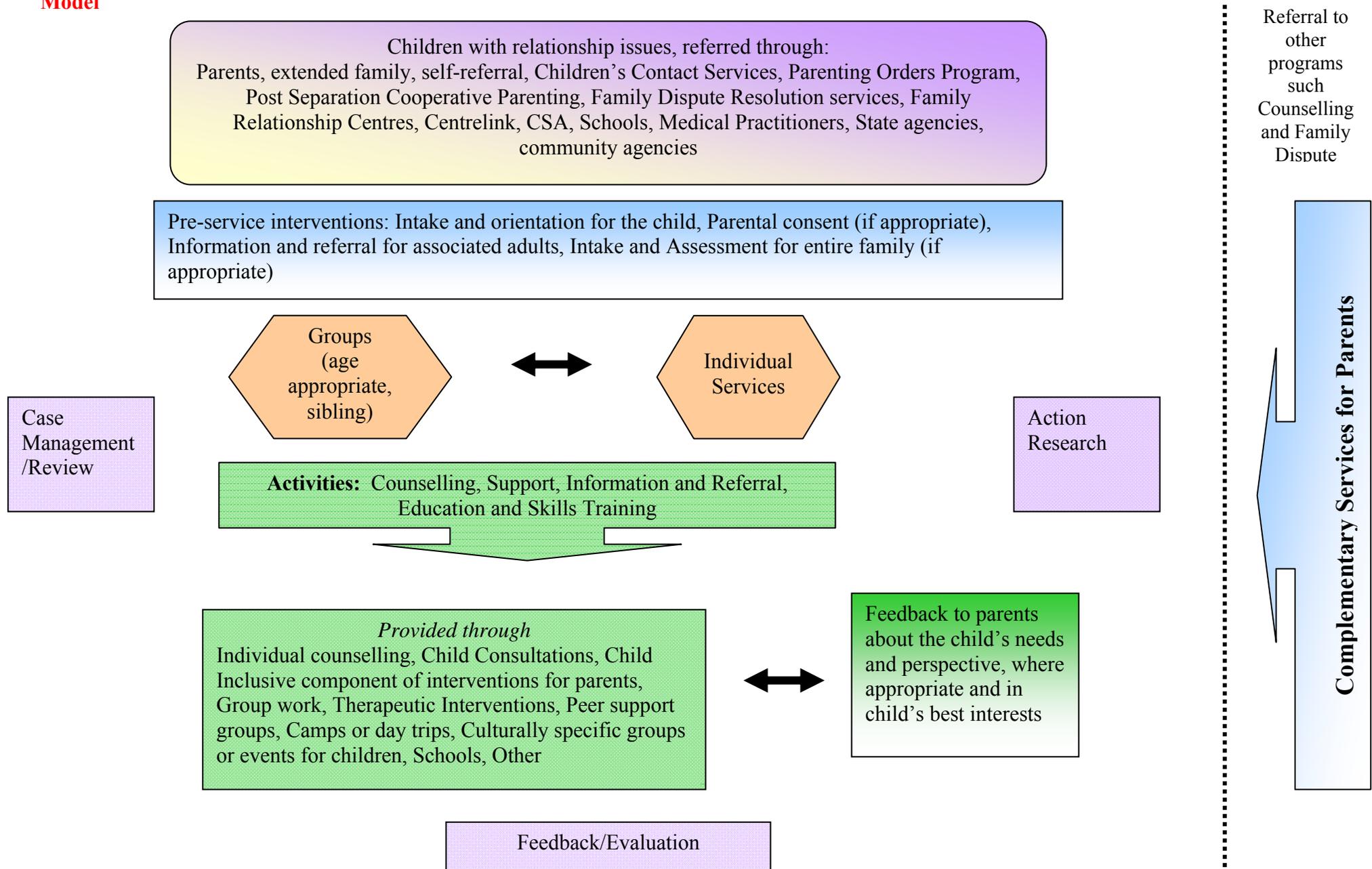
Engagement with other organisations in the community

SCaSP services must have a thorough knowledge of the local community and a strong referral network with other agencies. This includes other FRS services such as Counselling, Family Relationships Centres, Family Dispute Resolution, Parenting Orders Program, Children's Contact Services, Post Separation Cooperative Parenting and Early Intervention services, as well as schools, early childhood services, medical practitioners, other family support and health services and State Government agencies.

Working relationships with other agencies may include the development of a memorandum of understanding or joint guidelines around the program aim, referral protocols, client confidentiality and mandatory reporting requirements.

Supporting Children after Separation Program

Model



National Find and Connect Service for Forgotten Australians and former child migrants - Service Description

Role of the National Find and Connect Service for Forgotten Australians and former child migrants.

The National Find and Connect Service (NFC) will provide an Australia-wide coordinated family tracing and support service for Forgotten Australians¹ and former child migrants to trace their personal and family histories and reunite with family members where possible.

The service is initially targeted to adults accommodated as children in state, agency-based and informal care during the 20th century, recognising that this population of care leavers is ageing, with urgent needs around searching and connecting.

Description

The NFC will provide national and centralised access to records tracing and support services.

The proposed components of the national service include:

- a national website and single online access point to help care leavers find records held by past care providers and government agencies;
- a national 1800 telephone number for care leavers to call if they want to speak with trained staff to help them locate their personal records;
- a national network of specialised search and support services to help care leavers locate and access personal records and, where possible, reunite with family members. Care leavers will also be connected with counsellors and other support services where required;
- new counselling support services specifically for care leavers, from appropriately trained and skilled providers, to provide support for care leavers as they trace their families; and
- national coordination and development in areas relating to care leavers access to personal information.

These inter-related functions of the Find and Connect support services will provide practical assistance and emotional support to care leavers to request records about themselves from various sources, search for records that identify, or contain information about, family members, and re-connect safely with family members, where desired and possible.

¹ The term Forgotten Australians includes people who spent time as children in Australian children's homes, orphanages and others forms of out-of-home care in the last century, including members of the Stolen Generations.

Funding

The Australian Government has provided \$26.5 million over four years to deliver an Australia wide coordinated records and family tracing and support service for Forgotten Australians and former child migrants, including costs of direct service delivery, website design and build and program development and management.

Target Group

The target group Forgotten Australians and former child migrants, that is:

- people who spent a period of time as children in children's homes, orphanages and other forms of out-of-home care in the last century; and
- children who arrived in Australia through historical child migration schemes and who were subsequently placed in homes and orphanages.

Client centred service delivery

The model and services developed for a NFC service are predicated on the principle that services need to be planned to meet the individual needs of clients, and that meeting these needs must take into account additional or ongoing support required for individuals as they search for information or reconnect with family. This includes involvement of care leavers and their families in decision making and planning.

The nature of care leavers' childhood experiences clearly indicates that working with care leavers is a specialist area demanding a model that acknowledges, understands and responds to the lasting impacts of loss and abandonment in childhood.

Client Activities

NFC services provide information and referral, counselling and support for care leavers to access their personal and family histories and to reconnect with family where this is possible.

NFC services are not intended to provide a crisis response for cases where the primary issues are the responsibility of state governments such as health care, including the high and complex needs of people suffering mental health, family violence, and drug and/or alcohol misuse. NFC may refer clients to relevant state government support agencies or engage the client in a crisis response where this is appropriate.

Premises and co-location

Find and Connect support services will be located where they will fill gaps in service provision, be accessible to care leavers for face-to-face support where possible, and be able to access the range of resources required to facilitate searches (state and territory departments, for example).

The location and situation of services for Forgotten Australians will also take into account sensitivities for Forgotten Australians including proximity to or involvement of past care providers or care facilities in the provision of services.

Where services are located in large regional centres, the capacity to locate national Find and Connect support service workers within relevant community-based

organisations can be explored. These workers would liaise with capital city national Find and Connect support services to undertake any physical searches which may be required, eg to check archives.

Find and Connect counselling services may co-locate with other support workers, and also be available across locations through the use of brokerage funds on a sessional basis. Recruitment of a pool of counsellors will necessitate working with professional associations, such as the Australian Association of Social Workers and the Australian Psychological Society.

Specialist Support and Expertise

Given the specialist nature of the services to be provided, a range of induction, learning and development issues need to be considered in relation to staff. A careful recruitment and selection process will be needed to attract staff with the capacity and skills to do this work.

The needs of Forgotten Australians and scope of services to be provided as part of the national Find and Connect service are broad and will each require specialist skills and expertise including:

- suitably qualified staff with behavioural science expertise will be required to respond to the complex emotional support and counselling needs of care leavers;
- suitably qualified staff in Records Management / Records Tracing – expertise in this field is critical to provide effective service provision for care leavers who are searching for their records; and
- high level understanding of historical policies and approaches to out-of-home care in Australia including the affect these practices have on care leavers and their families.

There is a clear need to involve care leavers at a whole-of-program level and at a service delivery level, including in the induction and ongoing learning and development of staff and through partnership with care leavers or care leaver representative groups as user representatives in an advisory role.

Engagement with Government and other organisations in the community

The national Find and Connect service will demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the needs of care leavers including an understanding of instances of systemic abuse and mistreatment of children in out-of-home care and have a sound knowledge of the location, type and management of institutional care facilities across Australia.

The national Find and Connect service will demonstrate a strong referral network with other agencies. This includes other services for Forgotten Australians and former Child Migrants including Link Up services; counselling and support services; medical practitioners, other family support and health services and State Government agencies.

Working relationships with other agencies may include the development of a memorandum of understanding or joint guidelines around the program aim, referral protocols, client confidentiality and mandatory reporting requirements.

Reporting

Funding recipients must provide reports as required and in accordance with Schedule 5 of the Australian Government Terms and Conditions for a Standard Funding Agreement and in accordance with Item E of the Funding Agreement including acquittal of funds and participation in self-assessments, external assessments and evaluations as required.

9 Glossary

Assets: An Asset is defined as any item of personal, real or intangible property which has been created, acquired or leased wholly or partly with the Funding provided by FaHCSIA. The definition of Asset does not include the provision for minor capital or capital upgrade purchases and excludes Intellectual Property Rights and licences provided for in Clause 13 of the Multi Schedule Funding Agreement and Clause 14 of the Standard Funding Agreement.

Catchment: The geographical areas the funding recipient agrees to deliver services within. The catchment areas are described in terms of geographic areas - Statistical Divisions (SD), Statistical Sub Divisions (SSD) or Statistical Local Areas (SLA) as defined by the Australian Geographical Standards Classifications.

Client: A client is an individual, who is entitled to receive, receives or has received support or assistance from a FaHCSIA Funded Service.

Commonwealth: The Commonwealth of Australia.

Community Development/Access Strategies: The process of community engagement with a cross-section of interest groups to help define community needs, assist the development of community capacity, promote social inclusion and the design of services to meet needs. The identification of barriers that impede the access of community groups, and the development of strategies to address these barriers. The design of activities to increase the community's awareness of, access to, and participation in, funded services.

Complaint: Any expression of dissatisfaction (made to a funding recipient or FaHCSIA) regarding services received from a funding recipient.

Consortium: A temporary joint venture by two or more parties created for a specific purpose – e.g. bidding for or carrying out a contract.

Coordination: Working with other service providers and agencies to ensure clients receive support in a coordinated way, supporting the 'no wrong door' policy. This may include case management, linkages to other services as well as assessment and reassessment of the client's need for services.

Discretionary Grant: Discretionary Grants are payments where the Portfolio Minister or paying agency has discretion in determining whether or not a particular applicant receives funding and may or may not impose related conditions.

Evaluation: Analysis and assessment of an activity.

Funding Agreement: The explanation of the legal relationship between the Commonwealth of Australia and the funding recipient which sets out the funding terms and conditions determined by the Department. The form of enforceable Funding Agreements includes deeds, contracts and exchange of letters. In this document the term 'Funding Agreement' includes 2007-11 Multi-Schedule Funding Agreements, 2008-11 Multi-Schedule Funding Agreements and 2009-11 Standard Funding Agreement.

Funding Agreement Schedule: Details the operational requirements of the Funding Agreement for each funding recipient. Some of the information contained in the Agreement Schedule includes: the timeline, services, tasks and milestones that are expected to occur, and the resources (human and financial) allocated to each task.

Funding Recipient: A group or an individual receiving funding to deliver a service on behalf of FaHCSIA. Also referred to as an outlet, service provider or organisation.

Governance: The process, by which the program will be overseen, directed and controlled. It encompasses a range of responsibilities and qualities such as authority, accountability, risk management, stewardship, leadership and quality assurance.

Industry Representative Body: An organisation that represents a group of organisations engaged in similar activities or with a shared interest. As a part of their role, peak bodies act as a conduit to carry information on Commonwealth direction to the community and convey the views of their members to the Commonwealth.

Information and Referral: The identification of community services and available resources to provide community members with the supports necessary to assist them in meeting their identified needs. This includes informing them about benefits of the services and supports, what to expect when accessing these resources and facilitating warm referrals across agencies and organisations.

Lead Member: One of the participating parties in a consortium required to have a controlling or managing function and be responsible for the specified outcome. FaHCSIA will only enter into Funding Agreements with the lead member of consortia.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): A non-contractual document setting out a working arrangement between two or more parties, concentrating on mainly administrative matters.

Objective: A short statement of what the project is intended to achieve.

Outcomes: the impacts of the program on service users. Outcomes are often delayed or longer-term and may be intended or unanticipated. Intended outcomes for FRS are described in 4.2 Performance Framework. Outcomes should be distinguished from outputs.

Outreach: The provision of service through out-posted locations to increase service capacity across the catchment area.

Outlet: A location/facility where the services are delivered from.

Outputs: the products or services that are produced and delivered by a program to achieve the program's outcomes. Examples of FRS outputs include the provision of counselling or education services (see 7.4 Eligible Activities). Outputs should be distinguished from outcomes.

Performance indicators: quantitative or qualitative measures that point towards achievement of outcomes, processes or outputs. Performance indicators should be SMART —specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.

Performance Management: The monitoring of performance information to ensure that individual providers and the program as a whole are achieving agreed targets and standards.

Preferred Applicant: An applicant chosen through a selection process to commence Funding Agreement negotiations. A preferred applicant does not become a funding recipient for relevant services until the negotiation process concludes and a Funding Agreement is signed.

Processes: the means used to produce the outputs designed to bring about the outcomes.

Program logic: a way of describing the relationship and linkages between program outputs, processes and outcomes.

Registered Client: is a person who has received support or assistance from an FRS service that has completed the Client Details Registration Form and given consent for their details to be stored by the FRS agency and entered into FRSP Online.

Risk Management: The culture, processes and structures that are directed towards realising potential opportunities whilst managing adverse effects. Risk management is a key business process and an essential component of sound management and good corporate governance within both public and private sector organisations.

Social Inclusion: is about participation; it is a method for social justice. It is about increasing opportunities for people, especially the most disadvantaged people, to engage in all aspects of community life (<http://www.socialinclusion.sa.gov.au/>). For more information visit www.socialinclusion.gov.au

Stakeholder: Any person, group or organisation that is significantly affected by, or has a significant impact on, the FRS sector or related activities.

Support: is service worker focused. Support activities include community education, conferences, organisational planning and management, promotion, improvement strategies, supervision, training and development.

Target Group: The person, group(s) or organisation(s) FRS are intended to benefit or reach.

Unregistered Client: is a person who receives support or assistance from an FRS service that has not completed the Client Details Registration Form or has not consented for their details to be stored by the FRS agency and entered into FRSP Online.

Vulnerable families: Families who face social and economic disadvantages and present with multiple significant needs impacting on relationships. Examples include mental health, other health issues, disability, child abuse, family violence, isolation, offending behaviours, financial difficulty, significant housing or employment issues, crisis situations or other similar circumstances.