

Discuss conferencing with your lawyer. If the Legal Services Commission thinks that a conference might be helpful, you may be required to take part in a conference.

However, in a small amount of cases, a conference may not be held if it is assessed by our service as inappropriate. Please ensure that you or your lawyer informs the FDR Unit of any child abuse, substance abuse issues or any other matters of concern.

## WHAT DOES IT COST?

If you have a grant of legal assistance, a contribution towards your legal costs is always required. The amount you have to pay depends on your financial situation.

If you own real estate and your legal costs (including costs for a family conference) exceed the statutory charge amount, the Legal Services Commission will register a statutory charge over the property. This means that when the property is sold or refinanced you will be required to repay to the Commission the amount of your legal costs.

If you do not have legal aid, you will have to pay your lawyer's fees to attend the conference.



### Legal Help Line 1300 366 424

Child Support Advice 8111 5576  
or business enquiries, call (08) 8111 5555

**Adelaide**  
(08) 8111 5555

**Port Adelaide**  
(08) 8111 5460

**Elizabeth**  
(08) 8111 5400

**Port Augusta**  
(08) 8686 2200

**Noarlunga**  
(08) 8111 5340

**Whyalla**  
(08) 8620 8500

#### Do you need help calling us?

Translating and Interpreting Service  
131 450

National Relay Service  
TTY users phone 133 677  
Speak and listen users 1300 555 727  
Internet relay users:  
<https://nrschat.nrscall.gov.au/nrs/internetrelay>  
SMS relay 0423 677 767

### Publications

You may also be interested in our other publications: Property Dispute Resolution Conferencing, Family Law and You and De Facto Relationships.

To download or order our publications, visit our website at [www.lsc.sa.gov.au/publications](http://www.lsc.sa.gov.au/publications)

If you need this publication in a different format, please telephone us on (08) 8111 5555 and ask to speak to someone in the Community Legal Education Team. We can talk with you about what you need.

For detailed information about the law see:  
[www.lsc.sa.gov.au](http://www.lsc.sa.gov.au)





## WHAT IS FAMILY LAW CONFERENCING?

The Family Law Act requires that, in most cases, before you make an application to the court for a parenting order, you must attend family dispute resolution. The Commission provides family dispute resolution where the parties may be legally assisted. It can help you to resolve your dispute without going to court.

## WHO CAN ATTEND A CONFERENCE?

Conferencing is arranged by the Legal Services Commission. To be eligible for conferencing, at least one person involved in the dispute must have a current grant of legal assistance.

## DO I NEED A LAWYER?

If you are granted legal assistance to attend a conference, your lawyer will attend the conference with you and their legal costs will be met by the Commission as part of your grant of aid. It is not a requirement that the other party be represented by a lawyer however we recommend that they at least obtain legal advice before they attend the conference.

## WHY SHOULD I ATTEND A CONFERENCE?

Conferences are a good way of settling your dispute without the stress and anxiety of going to court. It is an opportunity for you to have your say and to consider solutions that everyone can agree on.

It can be very expensive if your dispute has to go to court. Conferencing can often end your dispute more quickly and with less cost than court proceedings.



## WHO ATTENDS A CONFERENCE?

You and the other person will take part in the conference, together with your lawyers.

If the court has appointed a lawyer to represent the best interests of your child, this independent children's lawyer will also be present at the conference.

The conference is conducted by a chairperson who is an independent person trained in conferencing and family law.

## TYPES OF CONFERENCES

Conferences can be held prior to any litigation being commenced in a family law court. In some cases where litigation has already commenced, the court may order the parties to the dispute to attend a conference at the Commission if the Commission determines it is appropriate.

## WHAT HAPPENS AT A CONFERENCE?

The chairperson helps the parties to address their concerns and to develop options to resolve the dispute which are relevant and practical to your particular situation.

You can ask your lawyer for advice at any stage.

For conferences held in person, you and the other person are usually in separate rooms. The chairperson will generally move between rooms (called 'shuttle mediation').

Conferences can also be held by telephone or by digital platform where it is appropriate, such as where parties live in regional areas. The FDR Unit will advise you how a Conference will be held.

If a party requires an interpreter we can also arrange this. It may also be possible for the parties to attend a Review Conference at a later stage to trial how an agreement is working and to discuss any other issues.

In appropriate cases the chairperson may issue a certificate for the purposes of the Family Law Act concerning your attendance at the conference.

## SAFETY CONCERNS

It may be possible to still conference a matter when there is family violence, domestic violence intervention orders, drugs, alcohol or mental health issues. The Commission provides secure rooms where the conference is conducted. Any concerns that you may have about your safety when attending a conference should be raised with your lawyer and the Family Dispute Resolution Unit at the Commission as soon as possible.

## HOW DO I ASK FOR A CONFERENCE?

The first step is for you to apply for a grant of legal assistance aid for a conference. To find out how to do this telephone the Legal Help Line 1300 366 424.

If you have already been granted legal aid to go to court you may still request a conference if you think that it may help you to resolve your dispute.

