

# Family Advocacy and Support Services

Melbourne and Dandenong Family Law Registries

## This information will help you understand:

- what this service is about
- what help is available
- who is eligible for help under this service
- what steps you will need to follow in using this service.

## About this service

Family Advocacy and Support Services are about providing you with more than just legal help when you arrive at the Family Court of Australia or the Federal Circuit Court of Australia.

If you have experienced, used or are alleged to have used family violence, a **duty lawyer** will help you with your legal problem and a **social worker** can help you work through other issues.

This new integrated service recognises that people coming to the Family Court of Australia or the Federal Circuit Court of Australia have more than just legal needs. Its aim is to help you get your life back on the right track in more ways than one.

## Am I eligible for this service?

This service is for families involved in family law proceedings who are affected by family violence.

You are eligible for support under this service if:

- you or a family member have experienced, used or are alleged to have used family violence in your relationship, and
- you need legal assistance with family law, child protection or family violence intervention orders.

## Help with your legal problem – Duty lawyer service

The duty lawyer can provide you with assistance on a one-off basis. Examples of what the duty lawyer can help you with are:

- legal advice, information and referral in relation to family law, family violence protection orders and child protection matters
- applying for legal aid
- Recovery Orders
- some urgent proceedings.

Examples of what the duty lawyer cannot help you with are:

- ongoing assistance and representation
- issuing subpoenas
- completing complex documents.

The duty lawyer will assess your immediate needs. This means that you may need to wait for assistance if there are other people with more pressing or urgent issues that the duty lawyer must prioritise.

## Help with other issues – Social support service

A social worker can help you engage with the family law process in a way that keeps you and your family safe.

The social worker can also connect you with all the relevant services that you need. These might include, for example:

- accommodation
- financial counselling
- drug and alcohol support services.

## What steps do I need to follow?

When you arrive at the Family Law Registry in Melbourne or Dandenong, you should ask to speak to the Information Referral Officer.

The Information Referral Officer will assess your eligibility for the Family Advocacy and Support Services.

You can also be referred to this service by:

- the Court Registry
- a judge or registrar
- a family consultant
- the Court Network
- the Victoria Family Law Pathways Network
- a Victoria Legal Aid or community legal centre duty lawyer.

## Do you need an interpreter?



Please let us know as soon as possible if you need an interpreter.

If you don't speak or understand English well, you can speak to someone in your own language about this service.



Family  
Advocacy  
and Support  
Services

This service has been established by Victoria Legal Aid with funding from the Australian Government.



Victoria Legal Aid



Australian Government  
Attorney-General's Department

## Victoria Legal Aid Legal Help

For free information about the law and how we can help you:

Tel: 1300 792 387

[www.legalaid.vic.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au)