

Is a family report being prepared for your family law matter?

Everything you need to know about a family report.

What is a family report and how is it used?

The court or an independent children's lawyer (if one has been appointed) may organise a family report during family law proceedings. A family report provides information about you, your children and your family to help the court identify what is in your children's best interests. A family report is one of many documents the court will consider when making decisions about your children.

A family report may include recommendations to the court about:

- parental roles and responsibilities
- how your children will spend time and communicate with their parents, family members and other significant people in their lives
- any safety issues
- support services or interventions that may help the children or adults, like attending a post-separation parenting program, for example.

Who writes the family report?

An accredited professional, such as a social worker or psychologist, will write the family report. This report writer usually has a lot of experience working with children and families. The court considers report writers to be independent experts in child and family matters.

How is the information for a family report collected?

- The report writer will speak to the adults and children.
- The report writer will decide whether they need to see the children and adults together as well as individually.
- The report writer usually sees everyone at their offices and does not usually attend your home.
- The report writer will determine who they need to see and speak to during the course of your scheduled appointment/s.
- The adults and children involved in the court proceedings will also be involved in the family report assessment.
- The report writer may involve other household members and significant others (eg extended family and partners) if they think it is necessary.

The report writer may collect information about:

- your children and their individual needs
- your children's relationships with family members and significant others
- your children's views - if they want to tell the report writer
- your views about what is in your children's best interests
- your family history, including the history of parenting roles and arrangements and the relationships between the adults (past and present)
- what is currently happening in your child's life
- issues relevant to the children's and adults' safety.

If you have any questions about your family report appointment you can ask the independent children's lawyer (if there is one), your lawyer (if you have one) or the report writer.

How to prepare for your appointment with the report writer:

- Think about what is best for your children and why you think it is best for them.
- Tell the children they are going to see someone who is helping you to work out the best way for the children to spend time with people who are important to them.



- The amount of time the appointment takes will vary (depending on the issues and the number of people involved) but you will probably be there for most of the day.
- Whoever is bringing the children needs to bring someone to look after them while the adults are being interviewed.
- Bring food, drinks and some things to keep the children entertained.
- The adults should bring along, or have in mind, a play activity they can do with the children as the report writer may want to observe the children spending time with the adults.

How will the report writer use the information they collect?

The report writer will use the information they collect during this process to write the family report. The information you provide to the report writer cannot be kept confidential. The court can access any information collected by the report writer, even if it is not used in the final family report. If the matter goes to a hearing, the report writer may be required to give evidence at your hearing.

Who will see the family report?

Once the report writer has finished writing the family report, a copy will be given to:

- the court
- the independent children's lawyer (if one has been appointed)
- you or your lawyer (if you have one)
- the person you are in dispute with or their lawyer (if they have one).

No one else will be given or shown a copy of the report.

Who will tell my child about the court's decision?

Usually the parents explain the court's decision to the children. In some instances, the report writer and the independent children's lawyer may explain the outcome to your children when the court has made its final decision.

What if I have concerns about the report or the report writer?

If you have concerns about the report, the process used, or the report writer you can talk to your lawyer (if you have one). If an independent children's lawyer arranged the family report, you can call Legal Aid Queensland's call centre on 1300 65 11 88. If the court arranged the family report, please contact the court registry.

What if I have concerns about my safety?

Sometimes people have concerns about their safety, or their children's safety, around other people who will be involved in the family report. It is important for the report writer to know if you are concerned about your safety or if there are protection orders in place, so steps can be taken to ensure the safety of everyone involved in the report process.

Can you organise an interpreter?

Yes, we can organise for an accredited interpreter to help you. We are committed to making our services accessible to all people who need our services. If you would like information about a family report explained in your language please phone the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 13 14 50 to speak to an interpreter. Ask them to connect you to Legal Aid Queensland. If you have a hearing impairment please call TTY on (07) 3238 3023. These are free services.



How do I make a complaint?

Your feedback — complaints, compliments and suggestions — is welcome and we take it seriously. To make a comment about the service you received from Legal Aid Queensland, you can complete our client feedback form. This form is available at your local Legal Aid office or on our website.

You can also give us feedback by:

writing to us at GPO Box 2449, Brisbane Qld 4001
calling 1300 65 11 88 and talking to our staff
emailing complaints@legalaid.qld.gov.au

Your local Legal Aid Queensland office:

BRISBANE

44 Herschel St, 4000

BUNDABERG

3rd Floor, WIN Tower,
Cnr Quay & Barolin Sts, 4670

CABOOLTURE

Ground Floor, Kingsgate
42 King St, 4510

CAIRNS

Level 2, Cairns Square Complex,
42-52 Abbott St, 4870

INALA

Level 1, Inala Commonwealth
Offices, 20 Wirraway Pde, 4077

IPSWICH

Lvl 7, 117 Brisbane St, 4305

MACKAY

Ground Floor,
17 Brisbane St, 4740

MAROOCHYDORE

Ground Floor, M1 Building
1 Duporth Ave, 4558

MOUNT ISA

6 Miles St, 4825

ROCKHAMPTON

Ground Floor, 35 Fitzroy St, 4700

SOUTHPORT

Level 2, 7 Bay St, 4215

TOOWOOMBA

1st Floor, 154 Hume St, 4350

TOWNSVILLE

3rd Floor, Northtown
280 Flinders St, 4810

WOODRIDGE

1st Floor, Woodridge Place,
Cnr Ewing Rd & Carmody St, 4114

For more information
about our services visit
www.legalaid.qld.gov.au
or phone 1300 65 11 88.

