

Plain Language Statement - FDR Evaluation



Dear FDR client,

You are invited to help with developing an evaluation tool for the Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) program you are attending. This would involve completing one survey on 3 separate occasions (before your first session, at the end of your first joint FDR session and 8 weeks later).

FDR services help separated families to resolve issues and disputes and reach agreements about child and property related matters outside the court system. This evaluation tool may help you to reflect on your own progress in relation to resolving concerns around your child and family needs.

We will use this evaluation to help us know if the service is of benefit for families such as yours, and ways it might be improved further. A standard outcome evaluation tool will help FDR services to monitor their outcomes in a consistent way. It will help inform practice and funding decisions, towards better services and outcomes for families and children.

Participation in the evaluation is voluntary and you are not obliged to take part. Your decision about whether you take part or not will not affect your FDR service in any way. You can also withdraw your consent at any time by notifying the service, and if you wish, you may request that surveys already provided by you be removed from the analysis.

Your responses are strictly confidential. The evaluation team will be provided with your client number and surveys responses, and no personal identifying information about you. Only group findings will be reported or presented on by the evaluation team, not responses for any individual or family.

What would this involve for you?

1. Read the Client Information Sheet and sign the Client Consent Form
2. The first survey is completed on arrival at your first face-to-face session. The survey will take around 15-20 minutes to complete. It includes questions about your current parenting arrangements, co-parenting with the other parent/party, and the wellbeing and safety of your family members. Example questions include asking you to rate how strongly you agree/disagree with statements such as:
 - *I have a good understanding of the emotional and developmental needs of the child/ren*
 - *Our child/ren don't hesitate to talk about the other parent in front of me*
 - *I respect the other parent as a person*
 - *If there are safety concerns for me or my child/ren, then the current arrangement/agreement takes those into account adequately*
3. The second survey is completed at the end of the first joint FDR (mediation) session or when you finish with the service, whichever comes first. This survey is completed on a paper form and will also take around 15-20 minutes to complete. This survey includes similar questions to the first, as well as questions around ways you may have benefitted and your satisfaction with the service experience. Examples include:
 - *I gained more understanding of my responsibilities and those of the other parent*
 - *The child/ren's needs were adequately considered in the process*
4. The third survey is completed approximately 2 months after your first joint FDR session or when you finished with the service (whichever came first). A service staff member (**not your FDR practitioner**) will contact you by phone to complete this survey. This survey is very similar to the second survey, and also asks about what services you are currently accessing. It will take around 15-20 minutes to complete this survey.

5. Your FDR Practitioner will also be asked to provide information about the services you have received, for example, sessions attended or any referrals made for specific needs, and any outcomes they noted such as agreement on parenting arrangements.

If you need support

If you are upset or distressed by any of the questions or while completing this survey, please discuss this with a program staff member as soon as possible, so they can provide you with support. Your practitioner will also be made aware of any of your responses which may indicate risk and will discuss these with you to offer support.

We also encourage you to speak with your GP or health practitioner. If you need support out of work hours, please contact Lifeline for support on 13 11 14 or if you have any concerns for your safety or the children's safety, please contact the Family Violence hotline on 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732).

There are limits to confidentiality for your practitioner under their Duty of Care, so that if they have immediate concerns about your or your child's safety, as well as discussing this with you, they may need to discuss this with another service, such as a Child protection service, to ensure your/their safety.

The project and who we are

The Centre for Family Research and Evaluation (a partnership between Drummond Street Services and Deakin University) has been funded by the Department of Social Services (DSS) to work with them, the Attorney General's Department (AGD) and the Victorian Partnership of Family Relationship Centres (PVFRC), to develop a robust, evidence-based tool to measure the impact and effectiveness of Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) services. The funding for this project is \$183,700.

How project findings will be used

The findings of this project will be reported to DSS and may be reported in scientific and academic journals or presented in conference meetings. You can contact the Research Supervisor (see below) to obtain a summary of the final report.

Further information or complaints

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact: The Manager, Ethics and Biosafety, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, research-ethics@deakin.edu.au. Please quote project number **2016-380**.

If you require further information, or if you have any other concerns about this project, you can contact the **Research Supervisor**, Elizabeth Clancy, at elizabeth.clancy@deakin.edu.au or by phone at 03 9246 8383 (ext 95085).

Thank you for your time.

Elizabeth Clancy

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