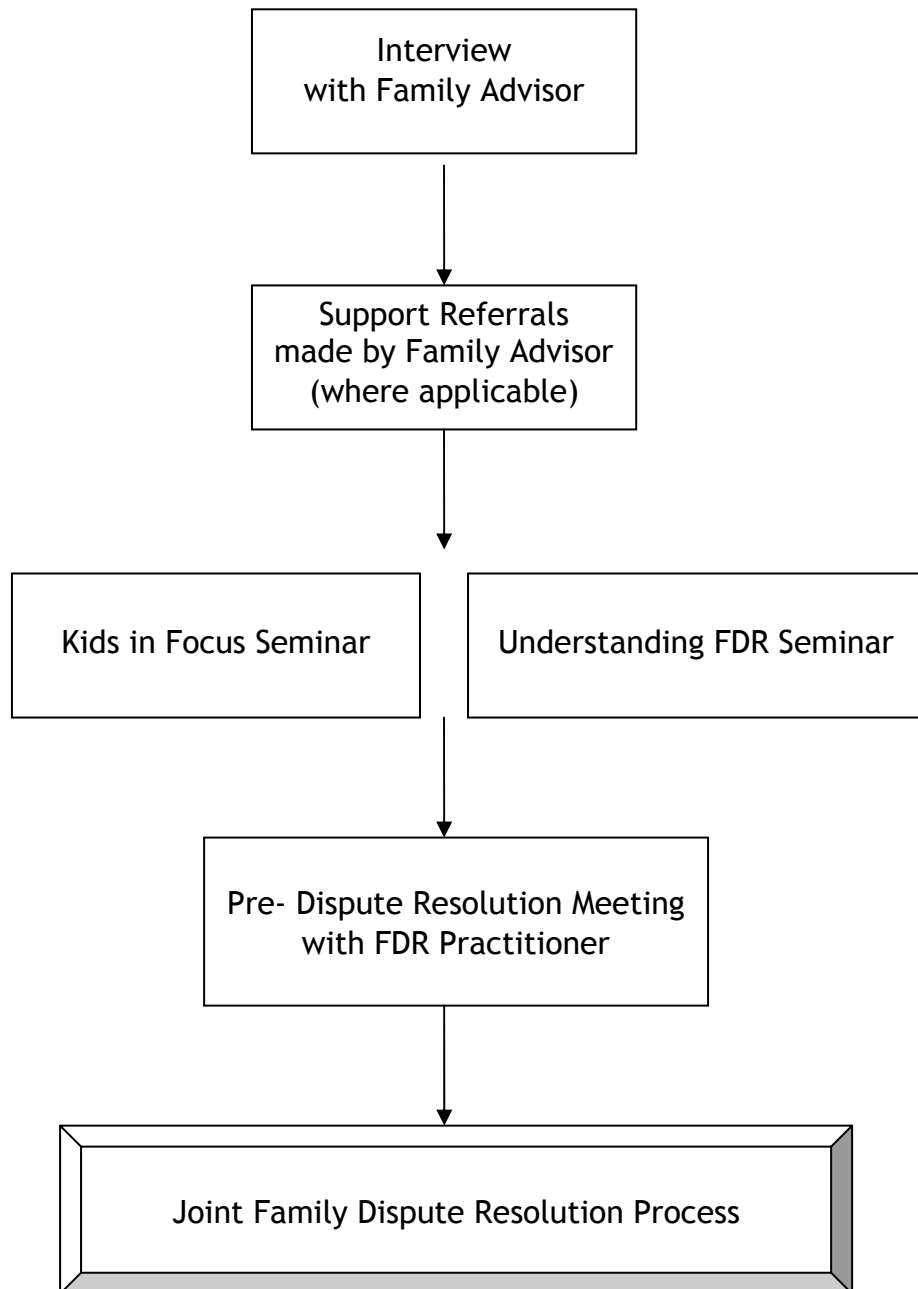


A basic guide to Family Dispute Resolution (FDR)
at Penrith Family Relationship Centre



Note: All clients will be required to follow at least this basic guide.

Note: Assessment is ongoing throughout this process; you may be offered the opportunity to access additional services to increase the potential for a positive outcome.

Penrith Family Relationship Centre Client Service

FRC Clients

FRC Clients include anyone in the community who would like access to information, assistance, guidance and/or support in managing their family relationships. This includes Parents who are together, separating, separated and/or divorced, ex-partners & step parents, Grandparents, children, extended family members and other community services that support these groups of people.

In the outline below the term 'Parent' is used to describe any of the Clients referred to above.

Initial Contact

A Parent will make contact via phone or by dropping into the Centre. Depending on the particular situation, first point of contact Staff will book an appointment with a Family Advisor (FA). If there are time concerns, Parents may see the on-duty Family Advisor briefly to provide triage, (usually including warm referral to other services for support, see below) until a full interview can be held.

General Information Inquiry

If a parent(s) phones or drops into the Centre with a general information inquiry, first point of contact staff and/or the Family Advisor on Duty will attend to their individual request (either over the phone or in person). This may include providing Parents' access to resources like printed information, booklets, brochures, research articles and/or web-based information via the Family Relationships On-line site and/or referral information about local services that can assist further with their specific needs including education groups/classes/courses.

Interview with Family Advisor

Parents' and Children's needs will be discussed at the interview with a Family Advisor and after careful needs assessment will generally be offered referral to a broad range of local services, including counselling, family support, domestic violence support services, Father/Men's groups, special needs services, groups and courses, the Family Relationship Advice Line and on-line service, plus CSA, Centrelink and community legal services. These referrals to other services can be via direct contact at the interview or follow up later on.

Invitation to other Parent

Following the interview with a Family Advisor, the other parent is then invited (by letter) to make contact with the FRC. Where the other parent responds to the FRC's letter, the same Family Advisor will interview them to complete the picture of the Family story & offer relevant information and/or referrals.

If the other parent does not respond to the letter, further letters will be sent with information outlining the compulsory nature of FDR prior to attendance at court. Where appropriate, parents may be provided with further referral options to assist them to make a decision about what they would like to do next. If any parent wishes to take matters concerning children to Court, then the relevant Certificates can be issued after completion of the 'alternative to court' process.

Education Seminars

After both parents have had their interviews and FDR is assessed as appropriate, both parents will be required to attend the Kids in Focus and Understanding Family Dispute Resolution seminars separately. Family Advisors may keep contact with both parents during this period.

Child Focussed Family Dispute Resolution

After both parents have attended the seminars, an FDR practitioner will conduct separate pre-FDR sessions for both parents. This will be in preparation for FDR and discuss how they can make good use of it. Safety & appropriateness for FDR is assessed throughout. Information about our Child-focussed & Child Inclusive approach is provided. Both parents are recommended to seek independent legal advice.

A joint FDR session date is set and both parents notified. Two FDR Practitioners (usually male & female) conduct the joint sessions where both parents have the opportunity to listen and understand each others' concerns, try to resolve their differences and reach their own agreements.

Child Inclusive Practise

If during this first joint FDR process, it becomes clear that a Child Consultation would be beneficial, then both parents will be consulted at this session. Following contact with both Parents a Child Consultant conducts the Child Consultation and provides feedback to both parents at a further FDR session.

Parenting Agreements

To complete the FDR process, the FDR Practitioners will assist both parents to come to some interim agreement(s) and if appropriate formulate a Parenting Plan based on their agreements.

Further support & Follow up

Parents are encouraged to set a review time for their Interim agreements or Parenting Plan at which they will return to the FRC and make alterations or adjustments as may be required because of significant developmental changes in their Children's lives.

Further, both parents are encouraged to make further contact with the FRC as other family matters arise that they require assistance to deal with.