

FEBRUARY 2020

child support and the law

This booklet is for anyone who needs to ask for child support or has been asked to pay child support.



Victoria Legal Aid

Do you need this booklet in a different format?

Please go to www.legalaid.vic.gov.au and search *Child support and the law* for an accessible version of this booklet. You can also ring (03) 9269 0234 and ask for Publications. We can talk with you about what you need.

Produced by Victoria Legal Aid

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

- visit our website www.legalaid.vic.gov.au
- call Legal Help on 1300 792 387, Monday to Friday, 8 am to 6 pm, excluding public holidays.

For business queries, call (03) 9269 0234

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Changes to the law. The law changes all the time. To check for changes you can visit our website or call us.

Disclaimer: The material in this publication is a general guide only. It is not legal advice. If you need to, please get legal advice about your own particular situation.

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Victoria Legal Aid

Victoria Legal Aid is a government-funded agency set up to ensure that people who cannot afford to pay for a private lawyer can get help with their legal problems. We provide free information for all Victorians, family dispute resolution for disadvantaged families, provide lawyers on duty in most courts and tribunals in Victoria, and fund legal representation for people who meet our eligibility criteria. We help Victorian people with legal problems about criminal matters, family breakdown, child protection, family violence, child support, immigration, social security, mental health, discrimination, guardianship and administration, tenancy and debt.

ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

What this booklet covers

This booklet has information on:

- child support
- parentage testing. This is a DNA test that identifies the biological father of a child
- applying for a child support assessment
- child support payments
- how to question or change a child support assessment, payment or debt
- family violence and child support
- the Child Support Legal Service.

What the law says

The law says that parents must financially support (pay money to bring up) any children they have. Parents must do this even if:

- they do not spend time with their children
- they were never in a relationship with the other parent.

How much time a parent spends with their children may affect how much money they pay.

Children have a right to a relationship with their parents as long as they are safe. You can come to an agreement about who looks after the children. If you cannot come to an agreement, you can apply for court orders about who the children live with and who they spend time with.

This booklet has information for parents who automatically have the responsibility to financially support their children under the child support scheme. These are biological, adoptive or intended parents. For more information on these terms **see** page 5. If you play a parenting role (care for children), but are not in one of these categories you still could have options when it comes to seeing and caring for the children. You might also still have financial

responsibility for the children under a court order called child maintenance. Talk to a lawyer if you are in this situation. **See** 'Where to get help' on page 26.

Families come in many different shapes and sizes. Families might include step-parents and co-parents. They might include people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer and questioning (LGBTIQ). Sometimes the law affects people differently, so it is best to get advice from a lawyer about how the law applies to your family.

See 'Where to get help' on page 26.

Getting more help

Any relationship breakdown is stressful, especially when you have children. It may be harder to pay for what you and your children need. Making decisions during this time is not easy but there is help available. Getting legal advice and other support can help you understand what choices you have.

Talking to a lawyer does not mean you have to go to court. If you can, talk to the other parent about what will happen in the future. If you and the other parent can reach an agreement, this can be better for everyone, especially the children.

Always get legal advice (talk to a lawyer) before signing any documents, even if you have reached agreement with the other parent.

Lawyers can get interpreters if you need one.

Victoria Legal Aid's Child Support Legal Service may be able to help. To see if we can help you fill out an online form at www.legalaid.vic.gov.au or call 1300 792 387. **See** 'The Child Support Legal Service' on page 24.

CHILD SUPPORT

What is child support?

Child support is a legal scheme. Under the scheme, payments to help with the costs of raising children are collected from one parent and given to the other.

These payments are separate from any parenting or other Centrelink and family assistance payments. However, child support payments can affect how much you get from Centrelink.

What does the Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Support do?

DHS (Child Support) is a government organisation that helps parents support their children financially. DHS (Child Support) can help by:

- working out how much a parent should pay
- collecting payments from one parent and giving them to the other.

DHS (Child Support) can help all families, including LGBTIQ families.

Who can apply for child support?

You can apply for child support if you care for a child at least 35 percent of the time. That is about five nights every two weeks. You can be a parent, relative, step-parent or co-parent or any other person that cares for the child.

How do I apply for child support?

First you can ask for DHS (Child Support) to work out how much child support you should get. This is called an assessment. Call DHS (Child Support) on 13 12 72 and ask to apply for a child support assessment. You can also apply online at www.humanservices.gov.au. Click the 'separated parents' button.

If you claim more than the base rate of Family Tax Benefit, you must apply for child support through DHS (Child Support). You have 13 weeks to apply after you separate. Your Family Tax Benefit can be reduced if you do not apply. You have more time to apply and get advice about your options if there are special circumstances. These include:

- you do not know who the other parent is
- you do not know where the other parent is
- you fear violence from the other parent, or they have threatened you.

The Child Support Legal Service may be able to help you get child support. **See** 'Where to get help' on page 26.

The next step is to prove the person you are asking for child support is the biological, adoptive or intended parent. There is more information on this in the next section.

What if the other person does not want to pay child support?

You will have to prove the other person is the biological, intended or adopted parent. Our Child Support Legal Service may be able to help. **See** 'The Child Support Legal Service' on page 24.



PAYING CHILD SUPPORT

Do I have to pay child support?

You may have to pay child support if you are a parent and your child lives with someone else at least 35 percent of the time. That is about five nights every two weeks.

These laws say you are the parent if you are a biological, adoptive or intended parent. This is for the child support scheme only.

If you are not the biological, adoptive or intended parent but care for or have cared for the child, you may need to pay a different type of financial support, called child maintenance. Talk to lawyer if you are in this situation. **See** 'Where to get help' on page 26.

Biological parents

The law says you are the parent of a child if:

- you are a woman who gave birth to a child
- you are the man who made the woman pregnant by having sex.

You prove you are a biological parent by signing the birth certificate.

Sometimes the law will presume (think that) a person is the biological father of a child. This can happen when they are married or are living with the biological mother and a child is born. Get legal help if you are in this situation. **See** 'Where to get help' on page 26.

Intended parents: artificial conception procedure

If a couple used artificial conception procedures, the law says the parents of a child are:

- the woman who gave birth to a child
- the person who was married or in a de facto relationship with the woman at the time of the procedure and agreed to it. The law says this partner is the 'intended parent'.

You prove you are the intended parent by signing the birth certificate.

DHS (Child Support) will think you agreed to the artificial conception procedure unless you can show you did not agree.

A sperm donor is not usually regarded as a parent when sperm is donated as part of an artificial conception procedure. However, if you donate sperm informally to a woman you know, you may have to pay child support if you are asked. If you are in this situation, talk to a lawyer. **See** 'Where to get help' on page 26.

Adopted parents

If you adopt a child, you are their parent. The adoption papers prove this.

What if I am not on the birth certificate?

There are other ways to prove you are a parent. These include:

- you signing a form telling the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages that you are a parent. This means your name will be put on the birth certificate
- you signing a statutory declaration saying that you are the child's biological father. A statutory declaration is a formal written statement, signed in front of a witness
- you being named as the parent by a court
- you taking a parentage test (a DNA test) that shows you are the biological father. **See** 'Parentage testing' on page 8 for more information.

What if I get a child support assessment notice?

DHS (Child Support) could send an assessment notice that asks you to pay child support. If you agree you are the biological, intended or adoptive parent you will have to pay child support.

If you do not think you are the biological, intended or adoptive parent you can apply to court to prove you are not the parent. You will need to tell the court

why you think that you are not the parent. Different courts have different time limits to do this. Generally you must apply within 56 days of being told of the assessment by DHS (Child Support). If the court agrees you may be able to make a late application. Delays can have a serious effect on your case. Get legal advice if you want to question an assessment. **See** 'Where to get help' on page 26.

Do I have to go to court?

If you do not think you are the biological father you may not need to go to court if you and the other parent agree to a parentage test.

Can the court make me have a parentage test?

The court can order you to have a test but not physically force you.

However, if you do not take a test when the court orders you to, the court can still name you as the parent.



PARENTAGE TESTING

What is parentage testing?

In child support cases parentage testing is used to identify a child's biological father. The test looks at your DNA, and the DNA of the child and the other parent. The results are put in a scientific report.

DNA testing is the most accurate testing method. The test can show that someone is highly likely to be the biological father or is not the biological father.

Which testing laboratories can be used?

The courts will only let you use an accredited laboratory for your test. The laboratory must give you a full report of your results. The Attorney-General's Department has a list of laboratories you can use. Go to www.ag.gov.au and search for 'parentage testing'.

See 'Where to get help' on page 26.

Does the test cost money?

Yes. Call the laboratories to find out how much it costs. If more than three people need to be tested it costs more. For example if there are two or more children.

Who has to pay?

If you are getting help from the Child Support Legal Service, you may not have to pay for testing or legal help. Ask the Child Support Legal Service about what you have to pay for and when.

If you do not think you are the biological father, you may be asked to pay for the test. If the test shows you are not the biological father, you will usually get your money back. Make sure the person asking you to take the test agrees to this before the test.

How long will it take?

About one month. However, if you need court orders for the test, this may take about six months. If you get Centrelink payments, tell them of your court action.

How is testing done?

The laboratory will take samples, usually a mouth swab, from you, the other parent and the child or children. Appointments are made for each person to give their samples at different dates and times.

Before testing you must fill in a form about any illnesses or medical procedures you have had which may affect the test. Everything on this form must be true. You must sign it in front of someone else (an approved witness). The main carer fills in and signs the form for the child or children.

You must attach one passport-sized photograph to the form and give a second photograph to the person collecting the sample.

What happens when I get the report?

Get legal advice after you get the test results. You may need to sign documents saying that:

- you agree to pay child support if the test shows you are the parent
- you do not have to pay child support if the test shows you are not the parent.

You may need to go to court. DHS (Child Support) may need more than a parentage testing report to accept or end a child support application.

Can the birth certificate be changed?

In some cases a birth certificate can be changed with a parentage testing report or court order. Contact the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages to find out how to do this.

See 'Where to get help' on page 26.

APPLYING FOR CHILD SUPPORT: THE PARENTAGE TESTING PROCESS

Note: if the other parent agrees they are the biological, intended or adoptive parent you do not need to go to court.

STEP 1:

Apply to DHS (Child Support) for child support.

STEP 2:

DHS (Child Support) reject your application because you need to prove who the other parent is. You generally have 56 days to apply for a court order.

STEP 3:

Apply for court order. Get legal advice.

STEP 4:

Contact the other parent. If they agree to sign a proof of parentage go to **Step 5**.

If they say they are not the biological father DNA testing can be organised. Go to **Step 6**.

If there is no agreement for DNA testing go to **Step 7**.

STEP 5:

Court order by agreement to allow assessment. Go to **Step 9**.

STEP 6:

DNA testing. If results are 'Highly likely to be the biological father', go to **Step 7**.

If results are 'Not the biological father', go to **Step 8**.

STEP 7:

Court order: Order by agreement OR court makes order. Order to allow a child support assessment. Go to **Step 9**.

STEP 8:

Court order: Order by agreement OR court makes order. Court application withdrawn by parent or dismissed by court. **Completed.**

STEP 9:

Send order to DHS (Child Support). Child support assessment made from date of your application in Step 1. **Completed.**

I DO NOT THINK I AM THE BIOLOGICAL FATHER: THE PARENTAGE TESTING PROCESS

STEP 1:

You get a notice of a child support assessment from DHS (Child Support).

STEP 2:

Apply for a court order. Get legal advice.

STEP 3:

Contact the other parent. The other parent may agree to DNA testing. If there is no agreement, you can get a court order for DNA testing.

STEP 4:

DNA testing. If the results are 'Highly likely to be the biological father', go to **Step 5**.

If results are 'Not the biological father', you may be able to get a refund on child support paid. Talk to a lawyer. Go to **Step 6**.

STEP 5:

Court order: Order by agreement OR court makes order. Court application withdrawn or dismissed by court. Go to **Step 7**.

STEP 6:

Court order: Order by agreement OR court makes order. Order to end child support assessment and/or order for repayment of child support decided by court. Go to **Step 8**.

STEP 7:

Notify DHS (Child Support). You must pay child support. **Completed.**

STEP 8:

Notify DHS (Child Support). You do not have to pay child support. **Completed.**

CHILD SUPPORT ASSESSMENTS

What is a child support assessment?

A child support assessment is when DHS (Child Support) works out how much you get or need to pay to care for your child through the child support scheme.

How does DHS (Child Support) work out the payment?

DHS (Child Support) will look at:

- how much money each parent makes
- if you are looking after or paying child support for other children
- how much it costs to bring up children. This includes how old the child is and how many children you have
- how much time each parent spends with the child. This is called your 'level of care'.

DHS (Child Support) do not normally take into account the income of other partners.

You can estimate (guess) how much your assessment is. Search for 'online estimators' on the DHS website www.humanservices.gov.au. Click on 'online estimators', then 'child support estimator' and click the launch button.

Your assessment amount is worked out for a period of time, usually up to 15 months. The amount is calculated for a year (the annual rate) and spread out as monthly payments. This is why payments are still made when a child may be with the parent who pays child support. For example, during school holidays.

Can I claim childbirth expenses?

You may be able to apply to court for some childbirth expenses within 12 months of your child's birth. Get legal advice about how to do this. **See** 'Where to get help' on page 26.

What is a private agreement?

Parents can make their own agreements about child support. This means they do not need to ask DHS (Child Support) for an assessment. A private agreement can be about how much money is paid, and how it is paid. Keep any receipts of the money you give or get in case there is a disagreement.

Any agreement you make you should write down and sign. You can register your agreement with DHS (Child Support). DHS (Child Support) can collect and give out some types of payments only. Depending on how the agreement is written, some payments such as medical and school costs may not be able to be collected by DHS (Child Support). This means you may have to take your own legal action if the agreement is not followed. You can make two types of private agreements.

A binding agreement

You and the other parent can agree to any amount of money to be paid as child support. This amount can be less than what DHS (Child Support) would calculate as the right amount. You and the other parent must get legal advice separately before making a binding agreement. You must use different lawyers. Binding agreements can only be ended in exceptional circumstances.

A limited agreement

You and the other parent agree to an amount of money that is the same or more than the amount DHS (Child Support) would say is the right amount. You do not need to get legal advice however it is still a good idea. A limited agreement can last for up to three years.

Centrelink may work out your Family Tax Benefit Part A using a different amount than the child support amount in your private agreement. If you register your agreement for collection by DHS (Child Support) you can ask Centrelink for your Family Tax Benefit to be paid using the 'disbursement method' so you are not overpaid.

CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS

How are child support payments made?

Child support payments can be made:

- privately
- to DHS (Child Support). They will give the money to the other parent.

Will child support affect my Family Tax Benefit?

Yes. Your Family Tax Benefit will be affected by:

- your parenting arrangements
- how much money you and the other parent make
- your private child support agreement if you have one
- your second family or families
- any child support you get or should get even if you have not received the payments.

If Centrelink overpay you, you may get a debt. To avoid Centrelink overpaying your Family Tax Benefits, contact:

- Centrelink. Ask they pay your Family Tax Benefit using the 'disbursement method' and
- DHS (Child Support). Ask them to collect your child support payments.

Our website has information about how child support affects Family Tax Benefit Part A. Go to www.legalaid.vic.gov.au and click on 'find legal answers' then 'child support'.

What if the other parent will not pay?

You can ask DHS (Child Support) to get the unpaid child support payments. Do this as soon as you can. Usually DHS (Child Support) only get three months of unpaid payments. But they can get up to nine months in exceptional circumstances.

You can also go to court and ask for a court order to get the other parent to pay. This is called a private enforcement order. You may have to pay for a lawyer. Do this as soon as you can, as it may affect your application. Keep bank statements to show that you are not being paid or are not being paid enough. **See** 'Where to get help' on page 26.

How does DHS (Child Support) get unpaid child support?

DHS (Child Support) can get unpaid child support from the parent who has to pay by:

- taking money from their pay
- making them put in a tax return
- taking money from their tax refund
- banning them from travelling overseas
- going to court
- taking money from their bank account
- taking money from their Centrelink payments
- getting someone else (a third party) to collect the money.

Contact DHS (Child Support) for further information. **See** 'Where to get help' on page 26.

Can I ask the other parent to pay for school costs?

All parents have to pay public school costs. Public school costs are part of the child support assessment. If both parents want the child to go to a private school you can agree who will pay the fees or apply to change your assessment. **See** 'Questioning or changing child support' on page 20.

How can I make direct payments to support my child?

If you have less than 14 percent care of your child, you can pay 30 percent of your child support directly for:

- childcare, kindergarten or school fees
- medical or dental costs
- rent, bond, mortgage, gas, water or electricity of the other parent
- costs of car maintenance of the other parent.

This means you pay the provider not the other parent. Other direct payments can be made if the other parent agrees. Send receipts to DHS (Child Support).

Do I still have to pay child support if I am on a Centrelink benefit?

Yes. DHS (Child Support) will take out the lowest amount. This is called the minimum assessment.

Do I still have to pay child support if I am in jail?

Centrelink does not tell DHS (Child Support) that you are in jail.

Contact DHS (Child Support) to ask for your payments to be reduced. DHS (Child Support) can lower your payments to:

- nothing if you get a basic prison allowance and have no other income. If DHS (Child Support) agree, you do not have to pay child support while you are in jail
- the minimum assessment. You will still have to pay child support, but only the minimum (lowest) amount.

If DHS (Child Support) send you a letter saying you have to pay more, contact them and tell them that you are still in jail. You can nominate (ask someone) to talk to DHS (Child Support) for you while you are in jail.

Can child support payments continue when a child is 18 or over?

If your child turns 18 while they are in full-time secondary school, you can apply to DHS (Child Support) to extend your child support payments until the last day of that school year. You must contact DHS (Child Support) before your child turns 18.

In some circumstances, you may have to apply for a court order if your child is continuing their study or has a disability. Get legal advice before your child turns 18.

See 'Where to get help' on page 26.



QUESTIONING OR CHANGING CHILD SUPPORT

Can the child support amount be changed?

Yes. Tell DHS (Child Support) right away of any changes for you, your child or the other parent. You can tell DHS (Child Support) about some changes over the telephone. These include:

- care arrangements for your child
- if you have a new child
- if your financial circumstances change. For example, you change jobs.

Often DHS (Child Support) will only change the payments from the day of your call. Make sure you get a receipt number when you speak to them.

Do your tax return every year. DHS (Child Support) and the Australian Taxation Office share information. If you put in your tax return late, your child support assessment for past years may change. You may have paid or been paid too much child support.

Are there other ways to make changes to the payments?

For other changes you may need to fill out an *Application to change your assessment - special circumstances form*. You must show that:

- you have special circumstances. Speak to a lawyer about what these are
- you have a legal reason to apply
- the change would be fair to you and the other parent.

Go to www.humanservices.gov.au and search for 'change your assessment' to find the form.

DHS (Child Support) will give the other parent a copy of your application and any supporting documents. The other parent can respond. They can also make their own application. DHS (Child Support) will talk to both parents before making a decision.

Contact DHS (Child Support) to see if you can get a change of assessment. You cannot ask for a change of assessment if your case has ended. **See** 'Where to get help' on page 26.

Can a change of assessment be backdated?

Yes. DHS (Child Support) can increase or decrease the amount for up to 18 months from the date you applied. This can be up to seven years if you apply to the court.

What if I do not agree with a DHS (Child Support) decision?

You can object to the decision within 28 days. If your objection is not successful, you can apply to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal for a review. You must do this within 28 days but you can get more time by asking for an extension. Get legal advice about how to do this. **See** 'Where to get help' on page 26.

I disagree with the assessment. Do I still have to pay?

Yes. You have to go to court and ask to stop your payments. This is called a stay order. You can do this if you are waiting for a decision on your:

- application to change your assessment
- objection to DHS (Child Support)
- application to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal
- court application.

A stay order stops DHS (Child Support) from:

- collecting some or all child support payments from you
- paying some or all child support to the other parent.

A stay order is only temporary. This means it will only stop DHS (Child Support) doing these things for a short time.

A court will take into account how the other parent or the child will be affected if a stay order is made.

Carefully think if going to court for a stay order is the best decision for you as:

- there may be legal costs for going to court
- if you are not successful you may have to pay the other parent's legal costs
- you may have to wait more than two months before going to court
- DHS (Child Support) or the Administrative Appeals Tribunal may make a decision before you get to court.

If you are thinking about getting a stay order, get legal advice. **See** 'Where to get help' on page 26.

Can my child support debt be reviewed or reduced?

If you do not pay the child support amount you need to or if you put in your tax returns late you may get in child support arrears. This is a debt. You can also get a child support debt if the assessment is wrong. In some circumstances you can ask DHS (Child Support) or a court to review the debt. Get legal advice about how to do this. **See** 'Where to get help' on page 26.

FAMILY VIOLENCE AND CHILD SUPPORT

Financial or economic abuse is family violence.

Financial abuse can happen when a parent:

- avoids paying child support
- provides false income information
- misuses child support procedures and legal processes.

If you are in immediate danger and fear for your safety, call the police on 000.

DHS (Child Support) can investigate unpaid child support. To report child support fraud call 131 524.

See 'Where to get help' on page 26.



THE CHILD SUPPORT LEGAL SERVICE

How can the Child Support Legal Service help?

The Child Support Legal Service is part of Victoria Legal Aid. It gives legal help to people who get or pay child support. It is independent from Centrelink and DHS (Child Support).

Our funds are limited and demand for legal services is high. How we can help you will depend on:

- your legal problem
- if you get a Centrelink benefit
- if you meet Victoria Legal Aid's guidelines for getting assistance.

To check eligibility for an appointment with the Child Support Legal Service fill out an enquiry form. Go to www.legalaid.vic.gov.au and search for 'child support appointments' or call 1300 792 387.



We may be able to:

- give information and advice
- refer you to other organisations that can help
- give you a self-help kit
- contact the other parent about DNA testing
- organise DNA testing
- contact DHS (Child Support) to get information about your case
- help you apply for or change an assessment
- help you object to decisions made by DHS (Child Support)
- help you ask for a review of any child support arrears (debt)
- help you if you have a case at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal
- help you get or stop a court order
- help you to apply for child maintenance payments if your child is over 18
- go with you to our family dispute resolution service
- prepare court documents
- help you reach agreement or represent you in court.

You may get help from a lawyer from the Child Support Legal Service, a community legal centre or a private law firm. **See** 'Where to get help' on page 26.

WHERE TO GET HELP

Victoria Legal Aid

Legal Help

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

- visit our website www.legalaid.vic.gov.au
- call 1300 792 387, Monday to Friday, 8 am to 6 pm, excluding public holidays.

Do you need help calling us?



Translating and Interpreting Service
Tel: 131 450



National Relay Service
Speak and Listen users:
Call 1300 555 727

Internet relay users:
<https://nrschat.nrscall.gov.au>

SMS relay: 0423 677 767

Local offices

We have offices all over Victoria. Our offices are open Monday to Friday, 8.45 am to 5.15 pm.

See the back cover for office locations.

All offices are accessible to people with a disability.

Victoria Legal Aid Family Dispute Resolution Service

Victoria Legal Aid clients and their families may be able to use our Family Dispute Resolution Service to work out a parenting plan. You are always encouraged to try to sort out your family law dispute before, during or after you go to court.

More information is available from your lawyer or from Victoria Legal Aid on 1300 792 387.

Financial counselling

Community-based financial counsellors provide free, independent advice and advocacy for people experiencing financial difficulty.

Tel: 1800 007 007 for the National Debt Helpline

Website: www.ndh.org.au

Other legal services

Djirra

Culturally safe legal advice and representation on family law matters for Aboriginal people.

Tel: 1800 105 303

Website: www.djirra.org.au

Federation of Community Legal Centres

Call to find your nearest community legal centre

Tel: (03) 9652 1500

Website: www.fclc.org.au

Fitzroy Legal Service

Monthly LGBTIQ family law legal advice clinic.

Tel: (03) 9419 3744

Website: www.fitzroy-legal.org.au

Law Institute of Victoria

Referral to private lawyers. First 30 minutes are free

Tel: (03) 9607 9550

Website: www.liv.asn.au

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

Culturally safe family law assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Victoria.

Tel: 1800 064 865

Website: www.vals.org.au

Courts

Federal Circuit Court

Information about the Federal Circuit Court.

Tel: 1300 352 000

Website: www.federalcircuitcourt.gov.au

Magistrates' Court of Victoria

Information about the Magistrates' Court and its locations in Victoria.

Tel: (03) 9628 7777 (Melbourne) or 1023 directory assistance to find your nearest court location.

Website: www.mcv.vic.gov.au/

Government

Attorney-General's Department

Tel: (02) 6141 6666

Website: www.ag.gov.au

Centrelink

Tel: 13 61 50 (Families) or 13 12 02 (multilingual line)
DHS (Child Support)

Tel: 13 12 72

Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages

Tel: 1300 369 367

Family and support services

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRC)

Provides support to workers and families to prevent and respond to violence against women.

Tel: (03) 8346 5200

Website: www.dvrcv.org.au

Family Relationships Advice Line

A national telephone service that helps families affected by relationship or separation issues.

Tel: 1800 050 321

Website: www.familyrelationships.gov.au

InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence

Free and confidential support services to migrant and refugee women in Victoria who are experiencing or have experienced family violence.

Tel: (03) 9413 6500 or 1800 755 988

Website: www.intouch.org.au

Kids Helpline

Free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people under 25.

Tel: 1800 55 1800

Website: www.kidshelpline.com.au

Lifeline

Provides 24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services.

Tel: 13 11 14

Website: www.lifeline.org.au

MensLine Australia

A telephone and online counselling service for men with emotional health or relationship concerns.

Tel: 1300 789 978

Website: www.mensline.org.au

Men's Referral Service (No to Violence)

A free, anonymous and confidential telephone counselling, information and referral service for men and those concerned about their behaviour, or the safety of their family members.

Tel: 1300 766 491

Website: www.ntv.org.au

Parentline

Confidential and anonymous counselling and support for parenting issues for parents and carers of children under 18.

Tel: 13 22 89

Website: www.education.vic.gov.au

Safe Steps

Support for women and children to live free of family violence.

Tel: 1800 015 188

Website: www.safesteps.org.au

Women's Information and Referral Exchange (WIRE)

Free support, referral and information for all Victorian women, nonbinary and gender diverse people.

Tel: 1300 134 130

Website: www.wire.org.au



w|respect

A specialist LGBTIQ+ family violence service.

Tel: 1800 LGBTIQ (1800 542 847)

Website: www.withrespect.org.au

1800Respect

Confidential information, counselling and support services for people impacted by sexual assault or family violence and abuse.

Tel: 1800 737 732

Website: www.1800respect.org.au

Useful Victoria Legal Aid resources

To order publications

We have free booklets about the law in English and other languages. Visit www.legalaid.vic.gov.au to order or download booklets. Call (03) 9269 0234 and ask for Publications to find out more.

Our public law library

Open Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm
570 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000



You and family law: a short guide

This free booklet explains how ending a relationship affects you, your children and your property.



Safe at home

how to get a family violence intervention order. This free booklet is for people experiencing family violence.

Watch me on **YouTube**

Watch our community legal education videos.

Child support and the law

Victoria Legal Aid

For free information about the law and how we can help you, please visit our website www.legalaid.vic.gov.au or call Legal Help on 1300 792 387

For business queries, call (03) 9269 0234

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