



Family Court Counselling and Consultancy Service

The Consultancy Service Supporting Parents/Carers to transition between
Family Court of WA and Family Relationship Centres.

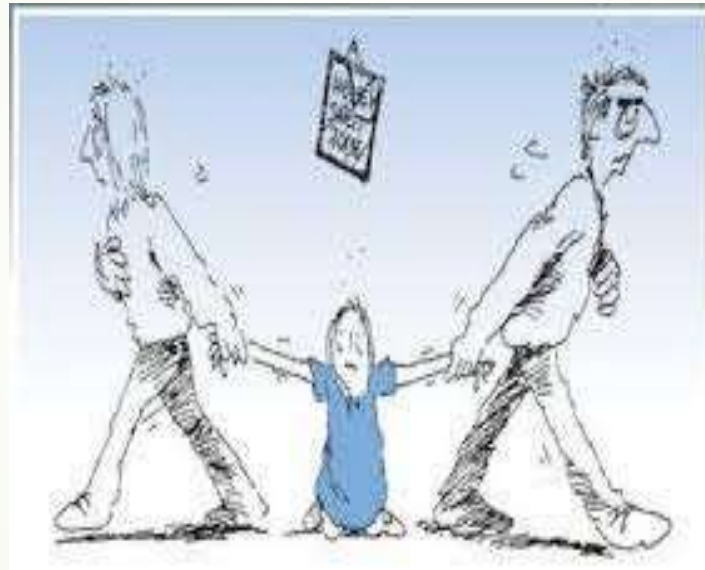


Statistics



- ▶ There are 16 Family Consultants in the FCWA
- ▶ 2 Team Managers
- ▶ 1 DOC worker
- ▶ Admin staff
- ▶ Approximately 2000 parenting applications lodged each year
- ▶ Approximately 1,100 Case Assessment Conference per year
- ▶ 23 Circuits of the Family Court to regional areas per year

Role of Family Consultants



Child Related Proceedings List (CRP list)



- Approx 3 days per week
- up to 12 parenting matters listed (as first appearance/new applications)

CRP List



- ▶ Family Consultants familiarise themselves with files/assess the cases (accessing information from Department of Communities/criminal charges if appropriate/etc.) **prior to Court**

Role In Court



- To assist Magistrate regarding appropriate services
- Matters can be referred to a **Case Assessment Conference** with Family Consultant



Matters not appropriate for a Case Assessment Conference

- ▶ Party seeking a passport or a parentage test
- ▶ Low risk matters with 60i Certificate confirming FDR requiring judicial decision
- ▶ Interim matters have been dealt with and the parties are referred to FDR to negotiate the outstanding issues for compliance as per 60i certificate;

In the CRP list, the Family Consultant may recommend that the parties attempt FDR (for eg if one party did not attend FDR prior to making application to the Court).

Case Assessment Conference



- ▶ Approximately 50-60% of parenting applications from the CRP list proceed to a CAC, some referrals come directly from judicial officers
- ▶ CAC is the first meeting with a Family Consultant, or previous matters with a new application – 2 hour duration

Case Assessment Conference



- ▶ Family Consultant undertakes preliminary assessment of risk/safety issues (alcohol/substance abuse, mental health, family violence, child abuse/neglect)
- ▶ Incorporates information from WA Police/DOC as ordered at CRP hearing
- ▶ Assess family dynamics, including family conflict, issues of attachment/child development and parenting issues

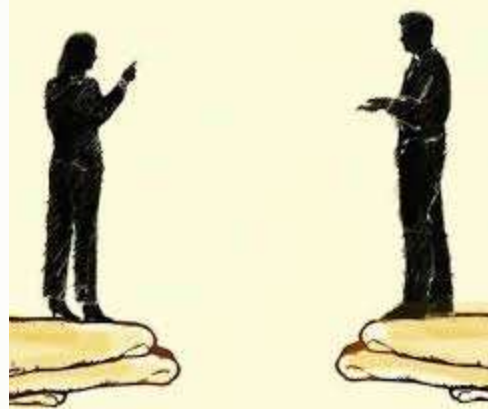
Case Assessment Conference



- ▶ **Make recommendations to the parties and to the Court** regarding assessment outcomes and options to the parties to resolve their dispute (a written report is provided to the Court, oral report occasionally)
- ▶ Some parties can negotiate a consent Minute (agreement) at the CAC

Other roles of Family Consultant

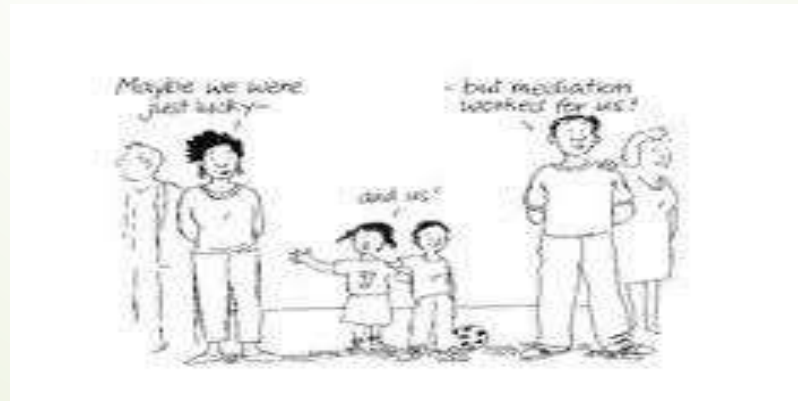
CHILD DISPUTE CONFERENCE (CDC) – Mediation



- ▶ Not new referrals - parties negotiate/review **ongoing parenting arrangements**
- ▶ Several CDCs can be held to review attendance at treatment/education programs, feedback from Single Experts, supervision agencies and other matters

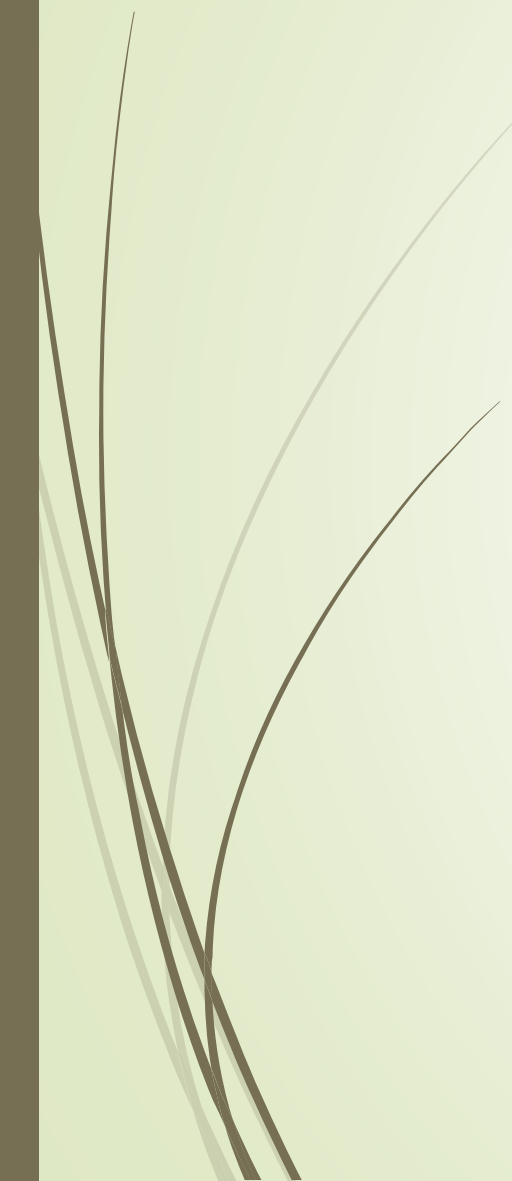
Child Inclusive Conference (CIC)

- ▶ A CIC is offered - **when Family Consultant concludes** so collaboration/co operation is possible A mature child where there is defined or narrow issues
- ▶ demonstrate that they **will listen to the child's views**
- ▶ Potentially **therapeutic** for the family group
- ▶ **effective** way to resolve matters
- ▶ Opportunity to **review arrangements** with the child at a further CIC





Family Reports

- Only after a CAC has established the risk issues
 - May proceed to a Family Report
 - A social science perspective
 - Assessment of the family dynamics
 - Evaluation of self reported information
 - Analysis of impact of violence and other risk on children
 - This type of report provides summary and context when read in isolation from other Court documents.
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Hague Convention Reports

- ▶ These are infrequent
- ▶ **They take priority** – required in a short time frame (usually six weeks)
- ▶ Focus on **perceptions of risk if the child/children** if the children are to be returned to their country of origin



Family Consultants



- ▶ All work is reportable
- ▶ Our emphasis is on risk assessment, child focused in negotiations
- ▶ Can be cross examined in Court on any reports provided