

CAN I BRING MY CHILDREN WITH ME TO COURT?

Violence affects everyone in a family, including children. It is better if you do not bring your children to court. This is because you may have to wait a long time at court before your case is heard by the magistrate. It may also be upsetting for your children to be in the court while your case is being heard. If possible, find someone to look after them or see if you can come to court while they are at school or in care.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

The applicant support worker and court registrars are all bound by the Commonwealth and Victorian privacy laws. They are not allowed to disclose any information gained during their interviews to anyone who is not legally entitled to have access to that information.

The family violence applicant support worker may ask you questions about your situation to better be able to respond to your needs and to inform research to find better ways to help those coming to the court in the future.

You may be asked to take part in confidential and voluntary research about your experience at court because the Specialist Family Violence Service is testing new ways of dealing with family violence.

COURT CONTACT DETAILS

Frankston Magistrates' Court
Fletcher Road, Frankston 3199
Phone: (03) 9784 5777
Fax: (03) 9784 5757

Melbourne Magistrates' Court
1st Floor, 233 William Street, Melbourne 3000
Phone: (03) 9628 7873
Fax: (03) 9628 7874

Sunshine Magistrates' Court
10 Foundry Road, Sunshine 3020
Phone: (03) 9300 6200
Fax: (03) 9300 6269

Werribee Magistrates' Court
Corner Duncans Road and
Salisbury Street, Werribee 3030
Phone: (03) 9974 9300
Fax: (03) 9974 9301

Legal services

Victoria Legal Aid
To find your nearest Victoria Legal Aid office, phone the following number.
Ph: (03) 9269 0234 or
(toll free for rural callers) 1800 677 402

Community legal centres
To find your nearest community legal centre, phone the following number.
Ph: (03) 9602 4949

Women's Legal Service Victoria
Ph: (03) 9642 0877 or
(toll free for rural callers) 1800 133 302
Free advice and representation for women only.
Some casework and referrals provided. Also offering an intervention order support program.

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS)
Head Office, 6 Alexandra Parade,
Fitzroy 3065.

24 hour service
Ph: (03) 9419 3888 or
(toll free for rural callers) 1800 064 865

Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention
and Legal Service (Victoria)
Level 1, 210 Lonsdale Street,
Melbourne 3000
Ph: (03) 9654 3111 or
(toll free for rural callers) 1800 105 303

SUPPORT SERVICES

Victims of Crime Helpline
Ph: 1800 819 817
For help in dealing with the effects of crime.

Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service Victoria
Ph: 1800 015 188 or (03) 9373 0123
For 24 hour support and information for women and children living with, or escaping, domestic violence.

Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre
Ph: (03) 9486 9866 or 9417 1255 (TTY)
For information and referral to local agencies. Country callers can reverse the charges.

Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service
Ph: (03) 8413 6800 or
(toll free for rural callers) 1800 755 988
For information and support for women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds affected by domestic violence.

WIRE Women's Information
Ph: 1300 134 130 for information, support and referral across Victoria for the cost of a local call.

Translating and Interpreting Service
Ph: 131 450
For people who do not speak English and for English speakers needing to communicate with them. Accessible anywhere in Australia for the cost of a local call. 24 hours, 7 days a week.

The Family Violence Court Division is part of the Government's new approach to family violence that integrates justice, police and community services to provide consistent and strong support for victims of family violence.

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SPECIALIST FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICE

VIOLENCE AFFECTS EVERYONE IN A FAMILY, THE FAMILY VIOLENCE APPLICANT SUPPORT WORKER CAN OFFER EMOTIONAL SUPPORT.

The material in this pamphlet is a general guide only. It is not intended to, and should not, be relied on as a substitute for professional legal advice. The information in this pamphlet only applies to the Magistrates' Court of Victoria at Frankston, Melbourne, Sunshine and Werribee.

This brochure is intended to provide information about the Specialist Family Violence Service to people who have experienced family violence and are applying for an intervention order at the Magistrates' Court of Victoria at Frankston, Melbourne, Sunshine and Werribee. The Specialist Family Violence Service enhances services already in place at these Magistrates' Court venues by creating a new family violence applicant support worker role, enhancing existing staffing resources and providing specialist family violence training to these staff.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THESE COURT LOCATIONS?

- There is a family violence applicant support worker who can offer emotional support; give you information on community services for yourself and your children, including referral to appropriate support services in the community; and help you to understand what is happening at court for any family violence matters that you are attending the court for.
- There is a family violence registrar, who is responsible for coordinating activity at court relating to family violence, to make the process of applying for an intervention order easier for you.
- The magistrates, family violence registrars, police prosecutors and applicant support workers receive special training in family violence matters.

WHO SHOULD I SPEAK TO FIRST?

When you arrive at court, you should ask to see the registrar. The registrar will interview you and ask you to complete a form setting out information about why you need the intervention order, who that order will protect and what you would like the intervention order to contain. If you would like to speak to the applicant support worker, please let the family violence registrar know either before or after the interview.

FAMILY VIOLENCE APPLICANT SUPPORT WORKERS

If you are making an application for an intervention order, the applicant support worker at court can provide you with general information about the process of applying for an intervention order.

The applicant support worker can offer emotional support; give you information on community services for yourself and your children, including referral to appropriate support services in the community; and help you to understand what is happening at court.

Help is available for you to make your own decisions about safety planning, finances, housing, legal issues, children's needs and health issues.

You can also talk to the applicant support worker if you want advice on how to keep you and your family safe from further family violence and abuse; for example, you may need to arrange new locks for your home.

The applicant support worker is available to female and male adults who have experienced family violence and have a case at court relating to family violence.

To make an appointment to speak to the applicant support worker, contact the family violence registrar on the telephone numbers in the court contact details section of this brochure. You can also visit the court between 9 am and 4.30 pm, Monday to Friday. You will probably find it easier to obtain an appointment to speak to the applicant support worker in the afternoon because they are often busiest in the morning.

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

For access to further information and referral to legal services and other support services in the community, speak to the family violence applicant support worker.

The Victoria Legal Aid booklet *Applying for an intervention order* also has a list of services on the back cover. You can get this booklet at the Magistrates' Court, from the Victoria Legal Aid website (www.legalaid.vic.gov.au), or from a Victoria Legal Aid office.

INTERPRETERS

You can also ask for an interpreter at court if you do not feel confident speaking English. You do not have to pay for this service. If you need an interpreter at court, tell the registrar as early as possible and one can be arranged for you.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

You may be able to claim compensation for expenses from the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT). The expenses incurred must have been the result of criminal acts. VOCAT can provide financial assistance with medical expenses, counselling, loss of income and other related expenses in certain circumstances. Ask the family violence registrar or applicant support worker for more information about VOCAT. In some circumstances, a VOCAT registrar can also make an urgent interim award to contribute towards expenses such as the changing of locks, counselling services, or emergency accommodation where none other is available.

FAMILY VIOLENCE AND YOUR CHILDREN

Children may be included in intervention orders if they are victims of assault, harassment, threats or offensive behaviour. In addition, if you have children, the magistrate will ask if they have heard or witnessed violence before making an intervention order. The magistrate may decide to include the children in an adult's intervention order or make a separate intervention order for the children if the magistrate believes that the children need protection from hearing or witnessing violence. This is because violence affects everyone in a family, including children. Children respond to violence in many ways. Younger children may be violent towards other children, blame themselves for the violence or have sleeping problems. Older children may start using drugs or alcohol, become violent themselves or start a relationship with someone who is violent.