



# Child Inclusive Practice

## Children and separation

Arrangements after separation can sometimes be difficult for children, as they may feel alone and stressed during and after family separation.

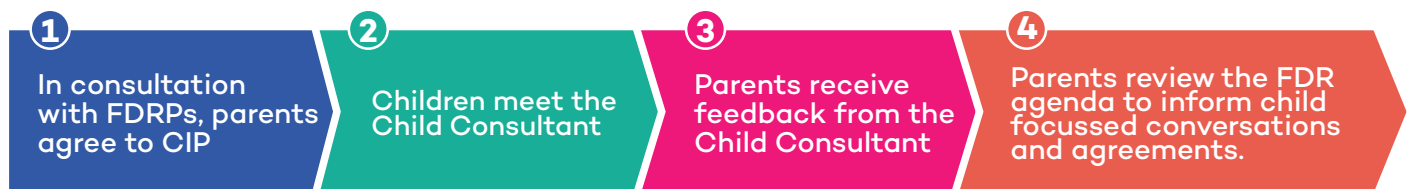
This information explains how Child Inclusive Practice can help parents have child-focused conversations in Family Dispute Resolution meetings.

Child Inclusive Practice (CIP) can make the separation process better for children and lead to good parenting arrangements that work for the whole family.

## What is Child Inclusive Practice?

CIP is a safe way for parents to hear and understand their child's experience of family separation. Children are invited to talk and do some creative activities with a specially trained Child Consultant. Although parents know their children the best, child consultants can provide special knowledge of child development and the impact of separation on children. Children are asked for permission to share feedback about how they are coping. Parents hear this feedback from the Child Consultant in a Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) session. This feedback helps parents jointly agree on a new child-focused agenda to inform their conversations in FDR.

## How does CIP work?



## Children and CIP

- gives children the opportunity to talk safely and privately with a trained Child Consultant
- gives children a way to share their thoughts and feelings about the separation process with their parents
- CIP often results in better family arrangements around separation

- allows a Child Consultant to see if children need additional supports, such as ongoing counselling etc.
- research shows that children find it helpful to talk to a Child Consultant about their troubles.

## Parents and CIP

- helps parents understand how their children are coping with the separation
- creates an opportunity for parents to think about how they can help their children by improving post separation arrangements
- may strengthen relationships between parents and children.

## Why does Bankstown Family Relationship Centre encourage CIP?

- CIP supports the Family Law Act, which says that the child's best interests and safety are the most important part of a workable parenting plan
- CIP helps both children and parents during and after separation.

## How can parents support children through the CIP Process?

Parents can support their children by talking to them before and after the CIP meeting. This helps them to feel confident and get the best out of the CIP meeting.

Before the CIP meeting, explain to your children who will talk to them, why they are having the meeting, and what might happen there. Remember to talk in a positive way, saying it is a good thing for mums, dads and children. When talking about CIP, parents can use words that match their family situation. Sometimes finding the right words can be difficult. If you need help with this, please speak to your Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner or Child Consultant for some ideas.

## Before the CIP meeting

You can explain to your children that:

- “This is an opportunity for you to talk about how things have been for you: the things that are going well, the things that are difficult, and the things that you would like to be different”
- “Mum and I/ Dad and I are working on ways to support you to live in two houses now that we are separated”
- “Your thoughts are really important to us. We want to consider these as we work things out”
- “Children can have different feelings when parents separate. It can be helpful for children to talk to someone outside the family about their worries”
- “You won't be asked to make decisions or to choose between parents”
- “The Child Consultant is specially trained to talk and do some fun and interesting activities with children and young people”

## After the CIP meeting

No matter how your child responds after the session, it is helpful to show support and listen to what they share with you. Try to not ask them questions but show interest in what your child chooses to tell you. Some children will talk about the fun activities they have done in the session and others may not want to talk at all – just follow their lead. It is also helpful to show that you are looking forward to meeting with the Child Consultant and hearing how you and the other parent can best support your child. Overall, respond in a positive and sensitive way. If you are feeling anxious or have more questions about the process, you can talk to your Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner, the Child Consultant, or a counsellor.