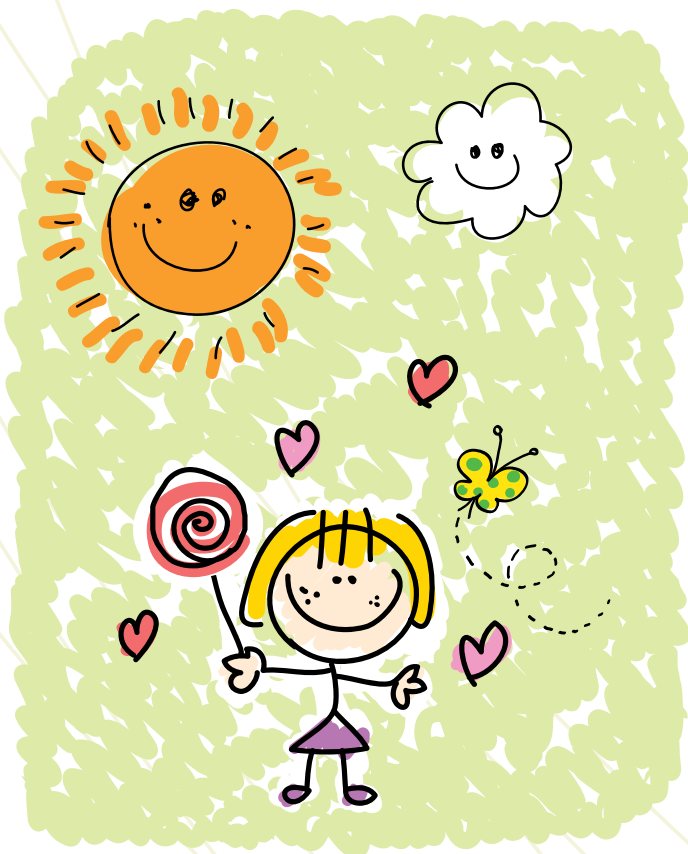


How can child consultations help parents' decision making?

If parents get to know their children's wishes, fears and needs, they can keep them in mind when making agreements in family dispute resolution.

Joint decisions can then more effectively focus on:

- how to incorporate their needs in plans for time-sharing and co-parenting
- how to support and maintain important relationships
- making sure kids get to do the things kids like to do.



Relationships Australia (Victoria) provides family dispute resolution services at the following centres:

Ballarat

116 Lydiard Street
5337 9222

Greensborough

3/25-33 Grimshaw Street
9431 7777

Kew

46 Princess Street
9261 8700

Shepparton

634 Wyndham Street
5820 7444

Sunshine

1st Floor, Harvester Centre
4 Devonshire Road
8311 9222

Traralgon

1/42 Kay Street
5175 9500

www.relationshipsvictoria.com.au

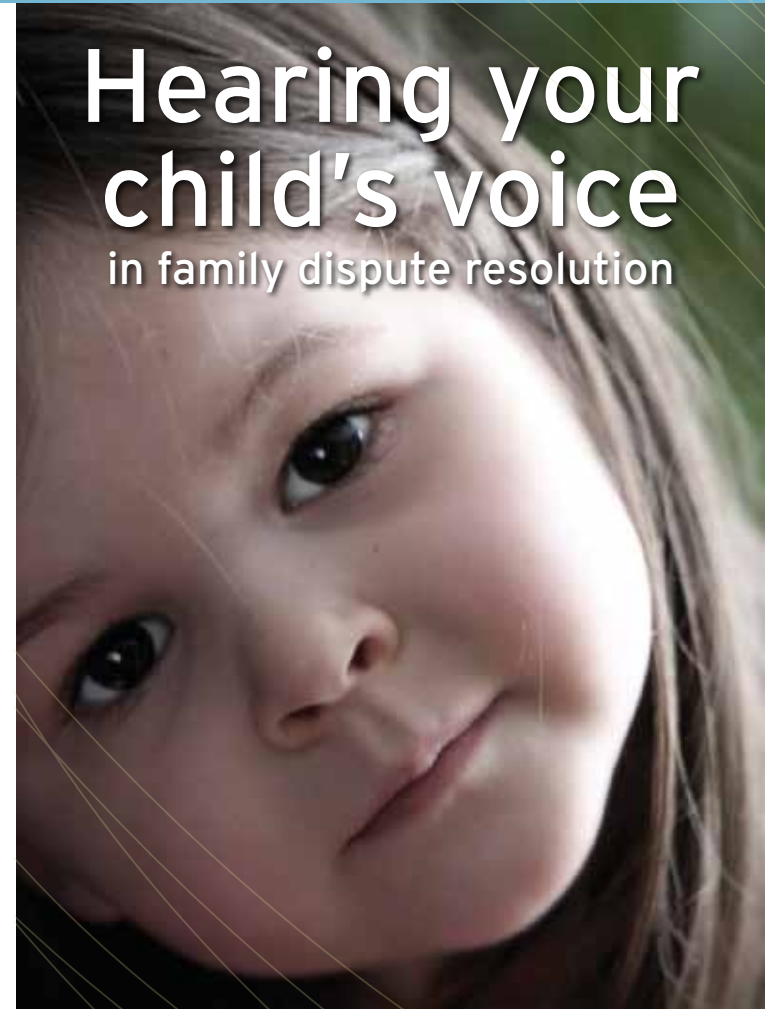
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Relationships Australia
VICTORIA

Hearing your child's voice

in family dispute resolution



Relationships Australia
VICTORIA

Helping you make decisions
about your children.

Hearing your child's voice

Understanding and making decisions about your children's needs during and after separation can be difficult. You can think about arrangements that will work for your children by hearing how they are experiencing the changes in their family and life.

Sometimes it is helpful for children to talk on their own to a person trained to understand their feelings and views in a safe environment, before decisions are made in family dispute resolution.

During your interview with the practitioner, there will be an opportunity to discuss whether you want your children to be involved and whether this would be helpful. Consent is needed by both parents. Any decision involving children at any stage needs to be made with your practitioner.

What happens in a child interview?

Depending on their age and the child, children may express themselves through drawing, playing, talking, stories or other activities.

If there is more than one child, each is seen separately. Siblings may also be seen together.

Children are never asked to make decisions - that's their parents' job.

It can be a relief for a child to be able to express their views to a person separate to the conflict. However, the consultation is not to be confused with child counselling.

Its purpose is to allow the child to share what it is like for them and to help parents in their decision making in family dispute resolution.

Feedback to parents

On a separate occasion, parents are invited to a feedback session with the person who has seen their children to learn:

- what the situation is like for the children
- what is going well
- what the children would like to change.

Are the consultations and feedback sessions confidential?

As with the rest of the dispute resolution process, information is kept confidential within the program, except if authorised or required by law, such as to protect someone from harm.

Qualifications

All our child consultants are trained and qualified to work with children in divorce and separation.

Cost?

Where a means-tested fee is charged for family dispute resolution, that fee will also be payable for the time spent with the child.

