



CHILD DISPUTE SERVICES (CDS) IN-PERSON INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The Family Court of Australia (FCoA) and the Federal Circuit Court of Australia (FCC) (the 'Courts') are increasing in-person work in a staggered way over the coming months commencing Monday, 15 June 2020. This is the most appropriate way, at present, for the Courts to balance important health and safety considerations of judges, staff and the community with the need to continue providing an essential service for Australian families. This protocol is designed to reduce the risk of being in close contact with a court user who may be infectious and replaces the previous Child Dispute Services (CDS) In-Person Interview Protocol dated 3 April 2020.

We have put in place arrangements in all public areas to help people maintain 1.5 metre distance. As well as floor and seat markings, we have introduced a series of posters throughout our court buildings to remind court users of the requirement to maintain a 1.5 metre distance and to wash hands thoroughly and regularly. We have introduced additional cleaning measures to ensure our buildings are clean.

This protocol is to be used in addition to the usual COVID-19 hygiene practices of regular washing of hands and not touching one's face.

Use of technology

Wherever possible and appropriate, face-to-face interviews should not take place, and should instead be conducted electronically.

Scheduling interviews/observations

If interviews are to be conducted in-person, CDS are arranging interviews in such a way so as to minimise the number of people coming into the court at any one time. Care is being taken to ensure that larger numbers of people do not gather in a waiting area at any one time.

Parents and children will not be able to go to any other floors in the court building save for the entrance and the floor on which the interview/observation is being conducted. Parents and children will be required to exit the registry immediately after the interview/observation has concluded.

Interview/observation rooms

When conducting interviews, CDS are adhering to the maximum amount of persons per room as indicated on signage erected outside each room. Care should be taken to maintain appropriate distance between persons from different household groups in waiting room areas. Additional cleaning of interview and observation rooms will be conducted as often as practicable.

Distance from parents/children

During interviews or observations, taking into account the age of the child, Family Consultants are, to the extent possible, to keep an appropriate distance (i.e. at least 1.5 to 2 metres apart) from parents and children.

Note:

All those attending the Courts are encouraged to download the Australian Government Department of Health COVIDSafe app. Alternatively, the Courts ask (but do not require) that the names and contact details of any additional persons other than the parents and children involved in the CDS event be recorded (eg: grandparents or support persons). These details will only be disclosed to health authorities if required for the purposes of contact tracing.

24 June 2020