



Family Justice Centres:

A network of family justice centres operates across the province. These centres are staffed by family justice counsellors who assist families undergoing separation or divorce with issues related to child custody, access, guardianship, and child or spousal support.



FAMILY JUSTICE COUNSELLORS

Family justice counsellors are accredited family mediators who provide dispute resolution services to help parents and spouses resolve issues. They can also make referrals to parenting after separation programs, legal aid, other legal services, and community resources for families facing separation.

Trained to identify safety issues within family relationships, family justice counsellors refer individuals to emergency services and other resources when violence has occurred.

Family justice counsellors assist families by providing the following services:

- ❖ emotional support and short-term counselling to help parents and spouses make decisions about separation and divorce;
- ❖ a range of professional dispute resolution options, including mediation by accredited family mediators;
- ❖ referrals to emergency and community services that can help family members when violence has occurred within the family;
- ❖ information about the child support guidelines, tax changes, and resources for financial information about child support;
- ❖ assistance for people who are not represented by legal counsel in obtaining or changing orders and agreements regarding custody, access, guardianship, and child or spousal support;
- ❖ information about the enforcement of support orders through the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program (FMEP);
- ❖ information about parenting after separation programs: these programs explain alternative ways to resolve issues arising from separation; they also inform parents about the child support guidelines and the impact of separation on children;
- ❖ assistance with Provincial Court administrative procedures, and referrals to appropriate resources for people who require administrative assistance in Supreme Court;
- ❖ custody and access assessments when ordered by the court.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Discussions with a family justice counsellor are confidential, except when a family justice counsellor is told about situations involving child abuse or criminal activity.

No Cost

Family justice centres focus on providing services to separating or divorcing parents who are financially eligible for legal aid, and to other people of modest means. There is no cost for the services of a family justice counsellor. In locations where supervised access programs are available, there is a small fee for these services.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND REFERRALS

It is important for people to know their legal rights and obligations. Family justice counsellors do not provide legal advice, but refer people to legal information and advice.

VISITING A FAMILY JUSTICE CENTRE

People can contact or visit family justice centres when they are thinking about separation or divorce, or at any time when dealing with issues of child custody, access, guardianship and support. Family justice counsellors provide professional assistance that may result in resolving family issues outside of court.

PARENTING AFTER SEPARATION

Parenting after separation is a free three-hour information session for parents to help their family adjust to separation. The session is led by trained facilitators who provide information about options to resolve legal and parenting issues. Parents also receive information on the impact of separation on their children. Community resources are identified that may be of assistance to parents and children.

CONTACTING A FAMILY JUSTICE CENTRE

Family justice centres are located in various parts of the province. Call **Enquiry BC** at a number listed below and ask to be connected toll-free to the family justice centre nearest you:

- ❖ VANCOUVER: (604) 660-2421
- ❖ VICTORIA: (250) 387-6121
- ❖ ELSEWHERE IN BC: [TOLL FREE] 1-800-663-7867

