



## FAMILY COURT OF FIJI ISLANDS

# FAMILY COURT COUNSELLING SERVICE

### WHAT IS THE FAMILY COURT COUNSELLING SERVICE ?

Separation is difficult for everyone. You may need help to sort out your problems. The Family Court Counselling Service is a specialised professional counselling service to assist people who are going through separation and divorce proceedings in the Family Court of Fiji Islands. There is no charge to use the Family Court Counselling Service.

The Director and Counsellors located at the Family Court are all professionally qualified as counsellors and have special training in aspects of Family Law.

### HOW CAN THE FAMILY COURT COUNSELLING SERVICE HELP ME ?

A counsellor of the Family Court Counselling Service will help you resolve many of the issues regarding the future welfare of your children. They will help you to work out what is in the best interests of your children (see **Information Sheet 3**).

You can see a counsellor on your own, or you and your partner may wish to discuss these things together with a counsellor. It is best for you and your partner to agree about all the issues in your separation, including the future care of your children. **But if you cannot agree**, counselling may help you become clear about your issues. You will also have a better idea of the way the Court will look at your problems.

There are many advantages in seeking Counselling.

- You can greatly reduce the financial costs and distress of a legal battle.
- You may be able to make your own decisions.
- Your continuing relationship as parents is likely to work better.
- You are able to move forward and make a new life for yourself.
- You may improve communication with your former partner and be better able to resolve disputes in the future.

Counselling sessions in children's matters can help you to

- identify any possible risks to your children and your family.
- explore each person's needs and interests;
- explore possible safe solutions, taking one problem at a time;

- assist in finding the most suitable solution, taking into account the age of your children and your individual circumstances;
- assist in developing agreements.

### **HOW CAN I SEE A FAMILY COURT COUNSELLOR ?**

There are different ways in which you may seek the assistance of a Family Court Counsellor.

- You may speak to a Counsellor on the telephone, who will advise you about the most appropriate assistance for you. You may be able to arrange an appointment with the Counsellor. In some cases, if the matter is urgent, you may be able to see the Duty Counsellor on the day. You can telephone the Court Registry in your area. The telephone numbers are on the back of this Information Sheet.
- If you have made an application to the Court relating to your children, your first Court appointment in most cases will be a Case Assessment Conference with a Family Court Counsellor. Your appointment will be made at the time of application.
- In some situations, the Court may tell you to see a Counsellor. If so you will be given the next available appointment, or when urgent you may be seen on the same day.

When speaking with a Counsellor, you will be encouraged to make your own decisions. The Court Counsellors cannot decide for you, or give you legal advice. Please seek legal advice if you need this. (see contacts below).

### **WHERE ARE THE FAMILY COURT COUNSELLORS LOCATED?**

They are available at the locations on the back of this Information Sheet. You could contact the Court nearest to you and ask for an appointment.

### **WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT PRIVATE?**

What is discussed with a counsellor is kept private unless the Court Counsellor:

- hears that there is child abuse, or a risk of child abuse, violence or a risk of violence, or risk of harm to anyone, they will be required to report this matter, and/or
- is called upon to give evidence in your Court proceedings, they may be required to provide information about your discussion.

This is to help keep you and your children safe.

Sometimes, the Court Counsellor may tell the lawyers who are involved in your case, and in particular, the lawyer who is helping your child or children, to discuss

- your agreement or your disagreement

- why your case may or may not continue in the court.

They may also discuss any other urgent issues including violence, abuse, or the risk of taking the child away from his/her home.

## FAMILY COURT COUNSELLING SERVICE LOCATIONS

Family Court counsellors are based in:

**Suva, Government Buildings, Telephone 3211811**  
**Lautoka, Magistrates' Court**  
**Labasa, Magistrates' Court**

The counsellors will provide a service on circuits to all court locations. Please contact the Court Registry in your area to find out when the counsellors will be available at your local court:

### ***Central/Eastern Division***

Suva - Government Buildings, Telephone: 3211341, GPO Box 2215 Government Buildings, Suva.

Navua - Navua Court : The court operates on ad hoc basis. Contact Suva Family Court.

Nasinu - Nasinu Magistrate's Court, Telephone: 3390466, PO Box 7748, Nasinu.

Nausori - Nausori Magistrate's Court, Telephone: 3400006, PO Box 227, Nausori.

Vunidawa - Vunidawa Court – Ad hoc basis only, contact Nausori Magistrate's Court.

Korovou - Tailevu Court House, Telephone: 3430060, PO Box 102, Tailevu.

Levuka - Levuka Magistrate's Court, Telephone: 3440355, PO Box 66, Levuka.

### ***Western Division***

Lautoka - Lautoka Magistrate's Court - Telephone: 6660016, PO Box 103, Lautoka.

Lautoka High Court - Telephone: 6660877, PO Box 388, Lautoka.

Sigatoka - Sigatoka Magistrate's Court, Telephone: 6500067, PO Box 87, Sigatoka.

Nadi - Nadi Magistrate's Court, Telephone: 6701322, PO Box 1275, Nadi.

Ba - Ba Magistrates Court, Telephone: 6674096, PO Box 430, Ba.

Tavua - Tavua Magistrate's Court – Telephone: 6680023, PO Box 516, Tavua.

Rakiraki - Rakiraki Magistrate's Court, Rakiraki, Telephone: 694348.

### ***Northern Division***

Labasa - Labasa Magistrate's Court, Telephone: 8811772, PO Box 56, Labasa.

Nabouwalu - Nabouwalu Magistrate's Court - contact Nabouwalu Police Station: 8836022.

Savusavu - Savusavu Court, Telephone: 8850272, PO Box 160, Savusavu.

Taveuni - Taveuni Magistrate's Court, Telephone: 8880081, PO Box 31, Taveuni.