



PRE-BIRTH SIGNS OF SAFETY MEETINGS: GET A FREE LAWYER

This fact sheet has information on pre-birth signs of safety meetings and how you can get a free lawyer to help you at meetings.

What is a pre-birth signs of safety meeting?

If you are the parent of an unborn child, the Department of Communities (often called 'Child Protection') will want to meet with you if they are worried about your baby's safety after birth. For example, worries about drug or alcohol use or family violence. This is called a pre-birth signs of safety meeting.

The meeting will often be at the hospital giving you prenatal care or it might be at a Child Protection office.

You can get a free lawyer to go to a meeting with you.

How can a lawyer help?

A lawyer can help you to put a plan in place with Child Protection aimed at making it safe to keep your baby.

A lawyer can help you at a meeting by:

- giving you legal advice,
- making sure you understand what is happening,
- making sure your voice is heard, and
- making a record of what is said and agreed to at the meeting.

Having a lawyer at a meeting doesn't mean you will have to go to court. Getting help from a lawyer at an early stage may help you keep your baby in your care and avoid court.

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What happens at a meeting?

Everyone will work together to come up with a plan to try to make it is safe for your baby to go home with family and not into the care of Child Protection. This plan is called a 'safety plan'.

Child Protection will look at the worries (or dangers), the good things you are doing, and what needs to change when making the safety plan. Your lawyer can help you make the plan with Child Protection.

Do you have to go?

It is important you go to meetings. There are usually three meetings to talk about Child Protection's worries and make a safety plan.

You may have worries about working with Child Protection – however, it is best to go so you can tell your side of the story and put a safety plan in place. Child Protection will want to hear from you about what is working well to make your home safe for your baby. If you don't go Child Protection may have more worries about your baby's safety.

Who goes to a meeting?

The following people will usually go to a meeting:

- you and the other parent,
- the team leader and case worker from Child Protection,
- the hospital social worker,
- people to support you (such as a partner, friend, family member or support worker - some of these people may be a part of your support network or on your safety plan), and
- the facilitator who runs the meeting and helps everyone talk about the issues (they do not make decisions).

Both parents can have their own lawyer.

Scan to hear this information



Find a lawyer

Free legal representation at meetings is available for both parents. Help is available in Perth and across regional Western Australia.

Legal Aid WA

To arrange for a lawyer to go to a meeting with you call:

- the duty lawyer service at the Children's Court in Perth: (08) 9218 0160
- Infoline: 1300 650 579
- Legal Yarn (First Nations callers): 1800 319 803

Aboriginal Family Legal Services

- Perth: (08) 93551502
- Regional offices: www.afls.org.au

Aboriginal Legal Service of WA

Call (08) 9265 6666 or 1800 019 900 (Freecall).

Women's Legal Service WA

Call (08) 9272 8800 or 1800 625 122 (country callers).

Mental Health Law Centre (RUAH)

Call (08) 9328 8012 or 1800 620 285 (freecall).

Community Legal Centres

Find your nearest centre on the Community Legal WA website: www.communitylegalwa.org.au

Family Violence Prevention Legal Services

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have experienced or are at risk of family violence or sexual assault.

- Albany: 1800 557 187 or (08) 9842 7751
- Fitzroy Crossing: 1800 557 187 or (08) 9842 7751.

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