



Lawyers working with children

The judge may appoint an independent family lawyer to your court case, called a 'Lawyer for Child'.

This lawyer helps the judge understand the child's views and communicates their best interests.

What the lawyer does

The lawyer's job is set by the judge

The lawyer represents the child, so they can't represent or give legal advice to anyone else involved.

The lawyer may:

- talk to the child to understand how a separation or change in family situation is affecting them
- explain the court process and judges' decisions in a way the child will understand
- make sure the child's views are explained to the judge
- spend time with other people in the child's life. This might be parents, teachers, social workers, whānau (family and friends) and anyone else
- go to court hearings and meetings with the judge.

You don't have to speak to the lawyer if you don't want to.

The lawyer gets paid to represent the child

The government pays for at least one third of these costs. The judge will then decide if you and/or others involved in the case have to pay for the remaining costs. If this happens, the judge will make a 'Cost Contribution Order'.

To find out more about Cost Contribution Orders:

- Visit www.justice.govt.nz/family/about/cost-contribution-order
- Freephone the Ministry of Justice on **0800 224 733**

If there's a problem

If you think someone is telling a child what to say to the lawyer for child, you should tell your own lawyer and the child's lawyer. The court may get specialist help to find out if this is happening.

You can get legal advice at any time

It may be helpful to talk to a lawyer when you're working through a separation or change in family situation. If you're not sure where to start, visit your local Community Law Centre or communitylaw.org.nz

You have the right to feel safe

You can get help if you or someone else feels unsafe:

- If you or someone else is in immediate danger call 111
- Visit justice.govt.nz/family-violence
- Visit areyouok.org.nz
- Freephone 'Are You OK' on 0800 456 450

Where to get support

In your community

Kaiārahi (Family Court Navigators), Family Court Co-ordinators and court staff can guide you when sorting out parenting arrangements but cannot give you legal advice. Kaiārahi can also connect you with community support services in your area.

Contact:

- Visit your local court
- Email kaiarahi@justice.govt.nz
- Freephone the Ministry of Justice on 0800 224 733

Organisations to help you

Citizens Advice Bureau

They help you understand your rights and fill out forms.

- Freephone 0800 367 222
- Visit cab.org.nz

Community Law Centre

They offer free, confidential one-on-one legal help for people across Aotearoa New Zealand/

- Visit communitylaw.org.nz

Family Services Directory

They have a list of support services that help whānau (family and friends) across Aotearoa New Zealand. These services range from housing to counselling.

- Freephone 0800 211 211
- Visit familyservices.govt.nz/directory/

CCS Disability Action

They provide information and support to people with disabilities and their whānau (family and friends)

- Freephone 0800 227 200
- Email info@ccsDisabilityAction.org.nz

Counselling

For professional support for mental health, or other personal issues, contact:

- Need to Talk – Freephone or text 1737 or visit 1737.org.nz
- Lifeline – Freephone 0800 543 354 or text 4357
- Skylight – Freephone 0800 299 100 or visit skylight.org.nz

For children and young people

- What's Up – Freephone 0800 942 8787
- Youthline – Freephone 0800 376 633 or text 234

If you feel unsafe

- Visit areyouok.org.nz
- Freephone 'Are You OK' on 0800 456 450