

**The Child Protection Conferencing Unit (CPCU) of the Dispute Resolution Branch provides a fair and confidential conferencing service for people involved in court ordered child protection conferences.**

**Court ordered child protection conferences provide an opportunity for parents, guardians, applicant and support officers to discuss the application for a child protective order in a safe and supportive environment.**

**How does the conference work?**

When parents oppose a child protection application made by the Office of the Director of Child Protection Litigation, the Queensland Courts schedule a court ordered child protection conference. A child protection order cannot be made until a conference has been held or reasonable attempts have been made to schedule one.

Conferencing is an alternative dispute resolution process that allows participants to discuss issues and concerns relating to the wellbeing of the child/ren named in the court application. Conferences are confidential. The aim of the conference is to reach an agreement about the best interest of the child/ren without the need for a contested hearing.

Once an agreement has been reached participants attend the mention date (first day in court) and the order will be made. If an agreement is not reached, participants need to attend court for the mention date followed by the hearing. The decision is then made by the court.

**Role of the Conference Convenor**

The role of the Conference Convenor is to facilitate the conference to ensure a fair and just process between all parties. The safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child is the primary focus of the conference.

**Convenors assist the parties to:**

- » discuss what is going well
- » understand others' views and concerns
- » make decisions
- » discuss alternative solutions
- » negotiate outcomes.

They ensure everyone is given an opportunity to contribute and be heard during the conference. They do not take sides, give advice or suggest who is right or wrong.

After the conference, the convenor is obligated to report to the court whether or not an agreement was reached.

**Convenors are:**

- » highly skilled mediators who are nationally accredited
- » trained in the facilitation of court ordered conferences
- » impartial and independent
- » have professional qualifications in fields of law, social or behavioural science, education.

Convenors have taken an oath of secrecy and anything discussed or produced at conference cannot be used in a legal process without consent, except in exceptional circumstances.

**Role of the Intake Officer**

The role of the Intake Officer is to prepare the participants for the conference. This is called the Intake Process.

The Intake Officer will contact each party individually involved to:

- » explore worries, concerns and possible outcomes
- » explain the conference process
- » explain the purpose and the role of the convenor.

They also ask participants to consider what efforts have been made to remedy child protection issues and how case plan goals have been managed.

This information is given to the Conference Convenor to assist with the conference.



**THE AIM OF THE CONFERENCE IS TO REACH AN AGREEMENT ABOUT THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD.**

### Who attends the conference?

People listed in the Court Notice must attend the conference.

A support person may attend the conference, if approved by the Conference Convenor, but they are not allowed to participate.

A support person must be discussed with the Intake Officer before the conference.

An Intake Officer will contact participants before the conference.

### How is a conference arranged?

The Child Protection Conferencing Unit (CPCU) receives the Notice for a court ordered conference, which includes the conference date set by the court.

The CPCU appoints an Intake Officer to manage the intake process and a convenor who will facilitate the conference.

### Where will the conference be held?

The conference will be held at the courthouse where the application for the child protection order was made. Details are listed on the Court Notice.

It may take place as a face-to-face meeting, a phone conference or a mixture of both with some participants attending face-to-face and others by phone.

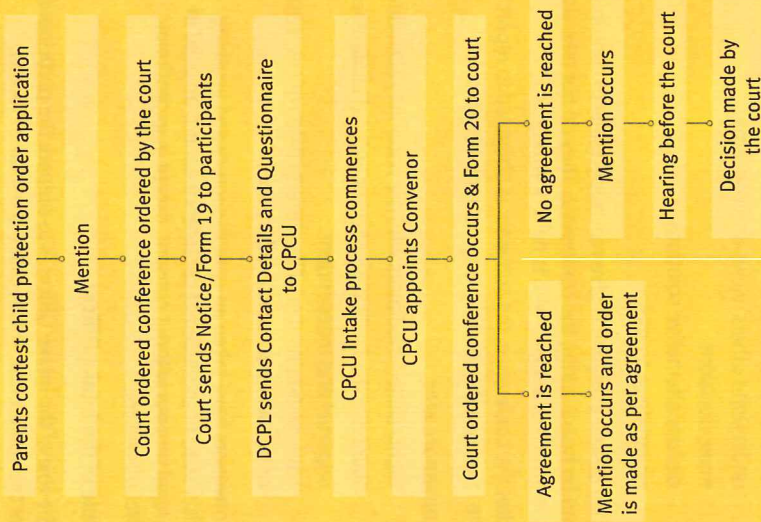
Participants can only request changes to a date or time by making an application to the court.

# Dispute Resolution Branch

## Court Ordered Child Protection Conferencing Services



### Court Ordered Child Protection Conference Process Map



### Contact information

For more information contact the Child Protection Conferencing Unit on (07) 3006 2515



Queensland Government