.

Information for parents considering adoption of their child



Published by the Department of Justice and Community Safety State Government of Victoria

[www.justice.vic.gov.au/your-rights/adoption](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/your-rights/adoption)

**Information for parents considering adoption of their child**

**Contents**

[Introduction 3](#_TOC_250007)

[Choices in bringing up your child 4](#_TOC_250006)

[Assistance available in caring for your child yourself 5](#_TOC_250005)

[Making an informed choice to consent to an adoption 6](#_TOC_250004)

Consent to adoption 9

What happens after consent is signed? 13

Once an adoption order is granted 15

Adoption information services 20

[Services and resources available to parents 22](#_TOC_250000)

# Introduction

If you are considering having your child raised by another family, it is important that you understand the choices for the care of your child, including adoption.

Adoption is permanent. It is important that you consider all options before making a decision.

This booklet is mainly about adoption, but it covers other ways of raising your child including caring for your child yourself.

Your adoption counsellor will assist you to understand this booklet and give information to help you decide about your child’s future.

# Choices in bringing up your child

If you are thinking about adoption for your child, there are several different arrangements you might want to consider for raising your child. One of these arrangements may be best suited to you and your child.

These arrangements include

* raising the child yourself using supports and ﬁnancial beneﬁts available in your community.
* temporary care by another family until you have set up living arrangements, income beneﬁts and other supports.
* stable and long-term care of your child by other parents who may have a legal order such as a parenting order. When these orders exist, they involve transfer of some or all of your legal rights as a parent.

More details of these arrangements are given on the following pages. This booklet cannot give sufﬁcient information for you to assess which choice will suit you best, as circumstances and preferences will not be the same for all parents. Your counsellor will be able to give more detailed information and discuss the beneﬁts and difﬁculties of each choice as they apply in your situation.

## Assistance available in caring for your child yourself

You may feel that you are not able to raise your child yourself because you lack money or support. This, on its own, does not mean that you have to consider adoption.

Assistance and support are available to help parents care for and raise their child. This includes parenting support and day-care services, ﬁnancial assistance, accommodation and education. Supporting parents’ beneﬁts and housing schemes for single parents may be available or it may be possible to ﬁnd suitable employment and use day-care services to care for your child.

A list of the types of support services is found at the end of this booklet. Your counsellor will give you names and addresses of services relevant to your situation.

## Stable and long-term care other than adoption

The Family Court may grant a Parenting Order which formalises arrangements around all aspects of the parenting of the child. A Parenting Order has a number of components:

* residence: who the child will live with
* contact: who the child spends time and communicates with
* speciﬁc issues: any other matter relevant to the child’s care, such as schooling or medical treatment.

The Parenting Order can be designed to suit the individual circumstances of the parties. The court will consider what is in the child’s best interests.

Any person concerned with the care, welfare or development of the child may apply for a Parenting Order. The Family Court requires that when a person other than a parent makes an application, the parties must attend a conference with a family consultant, and the court considers a report by the consultant.

A Parenting Order does not affect the child’s birth certiﬁcate or inheritance rights, although the child’s name may be changed. Parenting Orders include obligations on the parties involved, and parties must comply with the terms of the order.

# Making an informed choice to consent to an adoption

## What is an adoption order

Adoption orders are usually granted in the County Court.

The granting of an adoption order means that the child’s adoptive parents become the legal parents.

The order affects the child’s

* name
* birth certiﬁcate
* inheritance rights.

Please note ‘natural parent’ is the terminology used in reference to a mother or father of the child being adopted.

The adoption order usually includes arrangements for contact between the child and the natural parent(s) or other relatives, and/or exchange of information about the child.

Application may be made to the court to establish or vary conditions around ongoing contact or information exchange.

An application to discharge an adoption order can be made if special circumstances exist or if a natural parent’s consent was obtained by improper means.

Adoption arrangements may only be made by Adoption Services.

## Considering adoption for a child

### Contact with an approved adoption counsellor

Parents considering adoption for their child usually approach an adoption service. Sometimes another person, for example, a hospital social worker, may make the initial enquiry and referral to the adoption service on behalf of the parents. The adoption service which will provide the counselling will then make direct contact with the parents.

Contact with the adoption service may take place before or after the child is born or when the child is older.

Contact with the adoption service is conﬁdential.

### Counselling

A counsellor from the adoption service will discuss with you all the possible options for caring for your child. Written information is given, in the form of this booklet as well as the ‘Notice to parent considering placing a child for adoption’. Referrals to other agencies or services may be arranged. You will be given all the time you need to consider your options.

Adoption counsellors are legally approved to arrange adoptions in Victoria. The purpose of counselling is to assist you in making an informed decision about options for the care of your child by providing support and information, and by assisting in exploring relevant issues. The counselling process can feel challenging for some parents who would like to quickly ‘move on’, but it is important for both you and your child that the profound effects of adoption are thoroughly explored.

Your counsellor will want to obtain information from you for the child later in their life. It is considered to be in the best interests of children to know as much as possible about their parents, their extended family and heritage. Any information provided by you will be extremely valuable for the child if they are placed for adoption, as it is common and natural for everyone to want to know about their origins. Family medical history is also valuable for the child.

When you are thinking about adoption, your counsellor will also talk to you about the long-term consequences for both you and your child. It is important for you to realise that parents who give consent to the adoption of their child often experience feelings of grief and loss. These feelings are very normal and may last for many years.

Believing that they have made the right decision for themselves and their child may assist parents in resolving their feelings of grief. Feelings of grief and loss, and issues with identity are also commonly experienced by adopted children and adults. It is important to consider the child's rights and interests as well as the interests and needs of the parent(s)

There are also community support groups and counselling agencies which can help you deal with your feelings about adoption. Your counsellor will discuss these services with you.

Sometimes adoption agencies are approached by both parents, and at other times it is the mother only who attends for counselling. It is important that you are aware that if you intend on proceeding with adoption and the adoption counsellor is told the name or whereabouts of someone who may be the father of the child, the counsellor must, by law, attempt to make contact and tell him of the plans for adoption. If you have particular concerns about contact being made with your child’s father, it is important that you discuss these with your counsellor.

Wherever possible, both parents are involved in planning for their children. In the future, it will be important for the child to know that both parents had this opportunity.

## Care for a child while the parent considers adoption

Foster care means that another family cares for a child for a period of time. The placement is arranged by a foster care agency, and the service is available to parents who are having difﬁculties caring for their child. If the placement is voluntary, the parent remains the child’s legal guardian and is encouraged to visit the child regularly.

You may wish to consider placing your child in foster care for a period of time while you work towards caring for your child yourself. In considering this type of care, it is important that you also consider the effect that a period of separation may have on your relationship with your child.

For this reason, foster care agencies will usually limit placements to several weeks, and expect that parents have a plan of what needs to be achieved during the time the child is in foster care. This is intended to ensure the child can be returned to the parents’ care at the agreed time. If you are interested in foster care, your counsellor and the foster care agency will help you work out a suitable plan.

The adoption service will then arrange a foster care placement for your child. Your child will not be placed with an adoptive family at this stage, but will remain with the foster care family until the end of the period during which you can withdraw consent.

If you decide not to proceed with signing consent, or later withdraw consent, the child will be returned to your care.

If you sign a child care agreement and your child is placed in foster care, you have the right to make regular visits to your child. Speciﬁc arrangements for visiting will be discussed between you and your counsellor and the foster care agency.

The adoption service will discuss arrangements for further visits once the period for withdrawing your consent has ended.

# Consent to adoption

When adoption consent is signed and becomes ﬁnal, you give up all your rights and responsibilities as a parent.

Consent to adoption cannot be given until fourteen days have lapsed after the birth of the child. This booklet must be given to the parent(s) at least seven days before consent is signed. This is to make sure that you have enough time to think about all the information in this booklet and to consider the alternatives to adoption.

If you consent to the adoption of your child, it is important that you understand the effects of an adoption order, and that you make the decision without undue influence or pressure from any other person.

## Who is required to sign consent?

Sometimes both parents attend counselling and sign consent and at other times only the mother is involved. The law requires that if the father of the child is known, the adoption service will try to involve him in the discussion about adoption. The father must be informed when the mother has signed an adoption consent. He then has the opportunity to legally establish that he is the father. This will be established automatically if his name is on the birth certiﬁcate. If it has been established that he is the father, he will need to sign an adoption consent before the child can be adopted.

In some cases, the court may dispense with the need to notify the father. The court may also dispense with the need for the father to sign consent in certain situations. Your counsellor can tell you about these options.

## How is consent given?

Consent is given in the presence of a court ofﬁcial and the counsellor from the adoption service. This takes place at an ofﬁce of the County Court. Your counsellor will explain the arrangements for giving consent and will be able to provide you with copies of the forms to be signed. The counsellor and the court ofﬁcial need to be certain that you understand the ways in which you and your child will be affected if you give consent to adoption.

## Can I express any wishes about the adoptive parents?

You can express in writing your wishes about the religion, race and ethnic background of the adoptive parents. You can do this before or after you sign consent to adoption, but before placement with the adoptive family. The adoption service must carefully consider your wishes and try to ﬁnd a suitable family for your child. You cannot name speciﬁc people you would like to be adoptive parents for your child. You may be involved in decisions around family selection if you wish.

## Can I express wishes about contact and information exchange?

After signing an adoption consent you are given the opportunity to indicate your wishes in writing about:

* whether you and/or a relative want contact with the child after adoption and if so, how often
* whether you would like information about your child to be provided after the adoption and if so, how often
* whether you would like the conditions for contact and information exchange included in the adoption order.

Your wishes are carefully considered by the adoption service when placing the child; and by the court when granting an adoption order.

Contact and information exchange are discussed in more detail later in this booklet.

## Can I be notiﬁed of certain events?

You may also indicate whether you wish to be told of the following events:

* the end of the period of time by which you can revoke your consent
* the placement of your child with a proposed adoptive parent or parents
* the termination of your child’s placement with a proposed adoptive parent or adoptive parents
* the Secretary is no longer the guardian of your child
* your child dies before an adoption order is made
* the Court makes an adoption order in relation to your child

The ﬁrst three events listed above are a usual part of the adoption process. However, the other two events are very uncommon. The counsellor will discuss if you wish to be told about any of these events. If you choose to be told about any of these events, you will be notified in writing.

## What forms will I receive after the consent is signed?

If you give consent to adoption you will be given:

* a completed copy of the consent forms
* a form for revoking consent
* a form for extending the time for revoking consent.

The forms include instructions for revoking consent or extending the time in which you can revoke consent. The adoption service will give any help you need to complete these forms.

## Who is legally responsible for my child after I give consent to adoption?

Once all necessary consents are given, the legal guardianship of the child transfers from you to the Secretary of the Department of Justice and Community Safety.

A member of staff from the adoption service will have the day-to-day responsibility for managing your child’s situation.

## Revoking your consent or extending the period during which consent can be revoked.

Having your child adopted is an important and life-long decision. You are given the opportunity to change your mind within a period of twenty-eight days after the day you gave consent to adoption.

By revoking your consent your child is no longer able to be adopted.

The normal time you have in which to revoke consent is twenty-eight days. You can add up to fourteen days to the twenty-eight-day period if you are uncertain about your decision. (For example, if you add ten days you will have thirty-eight days after the day you consent to adoption in which you can revoke your consent.)

Adding another fourteen days could be helpful in clarifying your thoughts, or you may wish to revoke your consent while you think more about your decision.

Once the period for revoking consent has passed, your consent is considered effective. You are no longer the legal parent of the child.

When you give consent, certain procedures are followed, as required by law. In the same way, there are certain steps you must follow if you want to extend the time in which you can revoke your consent or if you want to revoke your consent altogether.

## What are the steps for extending the time to revoke consent?

The steps for extending the time to revoke your consent are very formal. If you feel you may need more time to consider whether to consent to adoption, you should raise this with your counsellor, who will help you with the process.

You will need to:

* decide how many days you want to add to the twenty-eight day period. (Fourteen days is the most you can add).
* fill in the form for extending the period for revoking consent (You must use this form. You can obtain one from the adoption service.)

Do not sign it yet, as you must sign it in the presence of a witness.

The form must be witnessed by a person over the age of 18 years, and you need to follow the instructions on the form. They must witness your signature.

Hand-deliver the form or letter or post it by registered mail to:

The Registrar

County Court of Victoria

250 William Street

MELBOURNE 3000

The form must be received by the Registrar within seven days after the form is signed. You should contact the adoption service as soon as possible after you extend the time in which you can revoke consent.

## How do I revoke consent?

You can obtain a form for revoking consent from the adoption service. However, you do not have to use this form. If you do not have a copy of the form, write a letter giving your name, address and date of birth, and your child’s name, date and place

of birth, the agency involved with the adoption and the date that consent was given. You should state that you are revoking your consent to the adoption of your child. Do not sign it yet, as you must sign it in the presence of a witness.

The form or letter must be witnessed by a person over the age of 18 years. They must witness your signature.

Hand-deliver the form or letter or post it by registered mail to:

The Registrar

County Court of Victoria

250 William Street

MELBOURNE 3000

To be effective, the form must be received by the Registrar of the County Court before the end of the period for revoking consent. If you post it by registered mail, you need to allow three to four days for delivery. You may ask your counsellor to help you with the process.

## If the child is older

When adoption is arranged for an older child, the child must be counselled by an adoption worker regarding the effects of an adoption, and their wishes must be sought, and considered. A written report regarding this must be provided to the court. This applies to children of about primary school age and above.

# What happens after consent becomes effective?

## Foster care

Once consent is signed, Adoption Services will enter into a new child care agreement with the foster care agency, so that the child may continue staying in their foster care placement until they are placed for adoption, or the consent is revoked.

## Selection of adoptive parents

Adoption services carefully review all prospective adoptive parents and consider factors such as age, health, ﬁnances, and family relationships. Families attend education sessions to familiarise themselves with the meaning and effects of adoption and are then assessed as to their suitability to become adoptive parents by the adoption service.

Prospective adoptive parents are required to understand the importance of participating in forming an adoption plan for the child, which includes arrangements for contact with natural family and for meeting the child’s cultural needs.

Your views about the type of family you would like your child to be raised in will be sought. This information is very valuable in the process of identifying possible adoptive families for your child.

Your adoption service may give you an opportunity to engage in a discussion about which family your child will be placed with, should more than one suitable family be identified. The final decision is made by the Department of Justice and Community Safety.

### Can I meet the adoptive family before placement?

If you wish, prior to the child’s placement, you may meet with the adoptive parents who are selected for your child.

## Placement of the child

After an adoptive family has been selected, the adoptive parents are introduced to the child, and the child is placed with them shortly afterwards.

Depending on the particular circumstances, your child will be placed with the adoptive family about 2–3 months after all the necessary consents are signed.

### Placement support

After placement, the adoptive family and child are supported by the adoption service. An adoption worker visits the family for a period of time to ensure that the placement is progressing well. The adoption service also helps the natural parents decide about contact and exchange of information about the child.

### Legalisation of placement

After about twelve months, the adoption service will recommend that the placement is ready to progress to legalisation. An application is made to the County Court and an adoption order is granted.

# Once an adoption order is granted

The County Court makes decisions about adoption orders. The granting of an adoption order causes major legal changes affecting your relationship with your child, namely:

#### Transfer of parental rights and responsibilities

Once an adoption order is granted, the child is treated in law in every way as the child of the parents who adopt the child. Your rights and responsibilities as a parent are given to the adoptive parents.

An adoption order is permanent.

#### Inheritance

After adoption, your child is entitled to inherit from the adoptive parents as if the child was born to them. Your child may only inherit from you or your relatives if named in your will or the will of a relative.

If an adopted person has been included in the will of a natural parent or relative and their adopted name is not known, the State Trustee will make enquiries of relevant adoption agencies to ﬁnd out the name of the adopted person.

#### Names of the child

After adoption the child may have new names. When an adoption order is made, the court approves the names of the child speciﬁed in the adoption application. The surname is usually the surname of the parents applying to adopt. Adoptive parents are encouraged to keep the given name that was chosen by the natural parent(s).

If your child is an older child, the court will take their preference into account in approving the child’s name. These matters are discussed by the adoption service before the adoption application is taken to court.

#### New birth certiﬁcate

After adoption, your child receives a new birth certiﬁcate which names the adoptive parents as the child’s parents.

#### Rights of parents

The law allows you as a parent to have some rights after an adoption order is made. It entitles you to information about your child after the order is made. The order may also provide for you to have direct contact with your child. These arrangements are outlined in more detail in the next section.

## Your right to a copy of the original birth certiﬁcate

At any time before or after an adoption order is made you (a natural parent) can apply to the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages for a certiﬁed copy of your child’s original (pre-adoptive) birth certiﬁcate.

A certiﬁed copy of a birth certiﬁcate gives full details of the child’s birth. This includes the child’s name, date and place of birth, sex, full details of the natural parents and any of their other children, and details of the hospital.

The birth certiﬁcate may be the only ofﬁcial evidence that you are the parent of your child.

To obtain a copy of or extract from your child’s original (pre-adoptive) birth certiﬁcate you can apply online at https://[www.bdm.vic.gov.au/births/adoptions](http://www.bdm.vic.gov.au/births/adoptions).

You will need to provide the following details: the child’s full name, date and place of birth, and the full names of both parents, including the maiden name of the mother if married.

## Contact and information exchange

After placement, contact may occur between the child and yourself (and anyone else named in wishes documents you sign). This can take the form of direct contact and/or information exchange. You may request both types of contact. Direct contact is usually a meeting of one to two hours in a neutral place, with the adoptive parents and the child. Information exchange is usually between you, the adoptive parents and the child and may include photographs, letters, school reports, etc.

Ongoing contact can have beneﬁts for both the child and parents. The purpose of ongoing contact is to assist the child’s identity development, and to reassure parents of the child’s development within the adoptive family.

### Expressing preferences about contact and information exchange

At the time you express your wishes regarding frequency of contact and information exchange, you may also indicate whether you want your child placed with people who agree to have these wishes included in the adoption order.

It is also possible for you to have a private arrangement with the adoptive parents regarding contact and information exchange. This means that you and the adoptive parents decide about the frequency of contact and information exchange, with the assistance of the adoption service, but the agreement is not included in the adoption order.

The wishes expressed by parents around contact and information exchange will form the basis of an adoption plan, which is an agreement between the adoptive parents and the natural parents about contact and cultural needs of the child.

### Conditions about contact and information exchange on the adoption order

The adoption order may include conditions around contact and information exchange. The judge decides whether to include conditions regarding contact and information exchange on the adoption order, and the amount of contact. The court will be guided by consideration of the best interests of the child, and that there is agreement between the parties. The order may contain conditions about contact, or information exchange, or both.

### If you later wish to vary the arrangement

Any arrangements (whether in the adoption order or not) may be varied if you and the adoptive parents agree following granting of an adoption order.

If contact and information exchange provisions are included in the adoption order you, the adoptive parents, the child or a person acting for the child, may apply to the court at any time after the order is made to change or cancel these provisions.

If contact and information exchange provisions are not included in the adoption order you, the adoptive parents, the child or a person acting for the child, may apply to the court at any time after the order is made to have conditions for contact or information exchange included in the order.

However, the court will only vary an adoption order if it is satisﬁed that any change is in the best interests of the child. The court cannot grant new or additional levels of contact unless the adoptive parents agree, and the wishes of an older child have been considered. In addition, the court must be provided with a report from an approved counsellor, before altering the adoption order.

### Assistance with contact

Contact works best when all parties show goodwill and participate in information exchange and meetings.

The adoption service will arrange contact visits until the parents and adoptive parents feel comfortable about managing the arrangements themselves. The adoption service worker may attend visits.

The aim is for both families to work towards managing arrangements independently, after the adoption order is granted.

If any difﬁculties are experienced with contact arrangements, parents are encouraged to seek assistance from the adoption service.

Information can be exchanged through the adoption service until parents feel comfortable about exchanging contact details.

If the adoption service organises the information exchange, it is important that parties keep the adoption service informed of their current contact details.

Making and maintaining contact arrangements requires a responsible and sensitive approach by everyone involved. If you want to change the arrangements in the future, it is important that you think about the effect of the changes on all those involved.

It is expected that parents will inform each other of any change they wish to make and attempt to negotiate the proposed changes. The adoption service can assist with this.

### Adoption of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child

The Adoption Act gives special rights to the parents of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child who are considering the adoption of their child. These rights will apply if you state in the consent form that you wish the child to be adopted within the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community. In that case you must receive counselling from an Aboriginal agency, unless you express a wish in writing not to do so.

The Act provides that the child should be placed if possible, with a member of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community to which a parent belongs.

You may include in the consent form:

* whether or not you want contact with the child
* how often you want contact with the child
* which relatives you want to have contact with the child
* how often you want the relative to have contact with the child, and
* whether you want members of the Aboriginal community to have contact with the child.

It is important that Aboriginal children maintain their Aboriginal identity. If you are the parent of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child and considering adoption, you are encouraged to speak to your counsellor about contacting the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, which can provide support, advice and counselling. You may contact the Aboriginal Child Care Agency yourself, at https://[www.vacca.org/.](http://www.vacca.org/)

If you decide not to see an adoption worker from the Aboriginal Child Care Agency, your counsellor from the adoption service will inform the Aboriginal Child Care Agency that an Aboriginal child may need adoption in the future. Your privacy and conﬁdentiality will be protected as much as possible, and your personal information will only be shared with your agreement

# Adoption information services

Adoption information services are provided to eligible applicants. These services provide information regarding past adoptions and may also assist eligible applicants to ﬁnd relatives from whom they have been separated by adoption.

A record of all applicants is kept on the Central Register. Adopted people, natural parents, adoptive parents, natural relatives and adult children of adopted persons may register their wishes regarding exchange of information or contact. They may also apply to receive information about the adoption.

Before information or documents are given to applicants, they will be offered counselling with an approved counsellor.

Adult adopted people receive a copy of the court records relating to their adoption (including a copy of their original birth certiﬁcate) and any records held by the agency who arranged the adoption.

Adopted people under the age of 18 years need both adoptive parents’ or guardian’s agreement in writing before obtaining any information. To obtain identifying information, they need the agreement of their natural parents as well.

Natural parents may obtain identifying information about the adult adopted person. If the adopted person is under eighteen years, the agreement of adoptive parents or guardian is required and views of the adopted child must be considered.

Adoptive parents may obtain information about the adopted person’s background, other than information from which a natural parent may be identified.

Relatives may initially only be given non-identifying information. Identifying information can be provided only with consent of the adult adopted person. If the adopted person is under eighteen years, the adoptive parents’ or guardian must agree and the adopted person’s wishes must be considered.

Adult children of adopted people have the same rights to information as adopted people. However, the adopted person must be informed of the enquiry or evidence of death of the adopted person provided.

# Services and resources available to parents

Sometimes parents need extra help and support for a range of reasons. Your counsellor will discuss with you some of the services that could assist you if your child is not placed for adoption. Such services include:

* financial support
* accommodation support
* parenting support
* day care
* foster care
* education services

Information about some specialist services is also included below.

## Support with caring for children

Family services can help if:

* you are pregnant or a new parent and need support and advice
* you are worried about the wellbeing and/or development of your child(ren)
* you need help to strengthen your parenting skills and develop positive family relationships
* your family needs help to get through stressful times, which may be caused by a range of reasons including separation, mental health, grief, drug and alcohol abuse, financial worries, illness or living with a disability
* you need extra help managing the behaviour of your child(ren)
* someone at home is making you, your children or another family member feel unsafe or afraid

Support includes:

* listening to you to understand the difficulties you’re facing
* helping you to explore your options and think about what you want to do next
* working with you to improve you and/or your family’s situation
* connecting you to services that can help, such as parenting support groups, services for children, family violence support, counselling, financial help, or legal assistance
* supporting you to access funding for basic living expenses and other costs.
* providing information and advice to professionals if you are worried about a vulnerable child in your community.

**Orange Door** provides a range of services to parents across Victoria. You can find a service close to you at: <https://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/find-a-service-near-you>

The **Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency** (VACCA) is a state-wide Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) and provides a range of services to Aboriginal parents. You can find a service close to you at:

<https://www.vacca.org/page/services/children-and-families/family-support>

## Support with caring for a child with a disability

**National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)**. The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is the independent government organisation that runs the NDIS. Partners are community-based organisations working with us to help deliver the NDIS.

If you have a child that is younger than 9 with disability, you will work with an early childhood partner. Early childhood partners are specialist local organisations who deliver our early childhood approach on behalf of the NDIS. They have experience and clinical expertise in working with young children with development delay or disability, and their families.

Early childhood partners also help families connect with other appropriate supports such as community health services, playgroups and educational settings. To find your local early childhood partner call **1800 800 110**.

You can find a service close to you at: <https://ndis.gov.au/contact/locations>

### Housing or financial services

You can search for specialist housing or financial services close to you at: <https://www.1800respect.org.au/services>

### Family violence services

If you are in danger right now, call Triple Zero (000).

**Safe Steps** is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week call service for women and children who are victims of family violence. You can call Safe Steps on **1800 015 188**.

**Orange Door** also provides a range of services to people at risk of family violence across Victoria. You can find a service close to you at: <https://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/find-a-service-near-you>

### Sexual assault support services

Sexual assault is a broad term that captures any sexual act or attempt to engage in a sexual act where consent is not obtained or freely and voluntarily given.

If you have experienced a recent sexual assault or need after-hours support, call the Sexual Assault Crisis Line: **1800 806 292**

You can find a sexual assault service close to you at: <https://www.sasvic.org.au/our-members>

Sexual and reproductive health services

These might include services for contraception, abortion, pregnancy options counselling, STI testing and cervical screening. You can use our online search, to find the locations and contact details of services across Victoria. You can find a sexual and reproductive health services close to you at: <https://www.1800myoptions.org.au/information/where-to-go>

### Your General Practitioner

Your General Practitioner can assist you if you are struggling with your mental health, and can make a mental health plan with you. They can refer you to mental health services which may include both private and community based services.

### Notes

 

