

Riverina Family Law Pathways Network

Terms of Reference - Updated January 2016

Purpose: The Purpose of the Riverina Family Law Pathways Network (the Network) is to assist family law service providers' work together to provide timely and appropriate services to separated families.

Aims: To develop and maintain a network of service providers to:

- Work together to achieve better outcomes for clients.
- Provide opportunities for the Network members to interact and continue to learn about aspects of the family law service system to develop a better understanding of all providers' roles.
- Develop stronger links between the family law courts, legal profession and community service organisations, including domestic violence and child protection services.

Objectives:

- Establish and maintain strong links with locally based providers operating within the family law system.
- Develop stronger relationships with agencies working in associated areas, in particular domestic violence and child protection.
- Develop and maintain appropriate referral mechanisms.
- Collaborate with Indigenous and CALD services, increase cultural awareness and ensure appropriate referrals are made to appropriate services.
- Assist members to gain a shared understanding of differing roles in the family law system.
- Assist members to gain an increased awareness of products, services and training available.
- Develop cross sector training to help build stronger working relationships across the family law sector.
- Increase the focus on the best interests of the child during family separation.

Funding Agreement and Auspice: The Network is an inclusive network that is accountable to its members. Relationships Australia Canberra and Region is the funds holder and employs a project officer on behalf of the network.

Structure: The *network* is resourced by a *steering committee* which meets bi monthly with the purpose of arranging a program of activities for the Network. Two of these meetings will be

extended to whole of network meetings. The network consists of organisations and individuals who are **members** of an email list.

Network Membership: A Network Membership email list is continually being updated to include services or individuals who have contact with families. The Network acknowledges that most services who work with families will need information about the local family pathways available to their clients during or after separation. This wider membership group will receive the 'e' Bulletin and invitations to local training and events. The 'e' bulletin will be prepared and distributed following bi monthly steering committee meetings – contributions from members are welcome.

Steering Committee Membership: Membership of the Steering Committee is open to representatives from key stakeholder organisations. Representatives will have decision making authority for their organisation. In 2013 the Steering Committee will consist of representatives from:

1. Family Lawyers
2. Multicultural Council Wagga Wagga
3. Legal Aid NSW
4. The Department of Family and Community Services
5. Relationships Australia – FRC, CCS
6. Centacare - PSCP
7. Wagga headspace
8. Department of Human Services
9. NSW Police Force – Regional DV coordinator & DVLO
10. Wagga Wagga Family Support Service

If a steering committee member is unable to attend a meeting they can designate a representative to attend in their place. That representative will have full voting rights on their behalf.

Steering Committee membership is to be reviewed each year. If an organisation or individual not currently on the above list would like to attend Steering Committee meetings, they should simply email the project officer and they will receive an invitation to attend the next meeting as an observer.

Role of the Steering Committee – also see guidelines

To further the Purpose and Objectives of the Network by:

- Develop a strategic work plan at the beginning of each financial year
- Develop a budget/s for the financial year
- Attend bi-monthly and annual planning meetings
- Promote network events and activities

Process for election of Chair/deputy Chair

Elections will be held annually for the position of chair/deputy Chair. There shall be a regular rotation of the chair/deputy Chair. The term of chair/deputy Chair will be no longer than 2 consecutive years.

A separate notice of pending election, including a formal request for nominations shall be sent to the Steering Committee members 6 week prior to the date of the election. Nominations shall be sent to the coordinator at least 3 weeks prior to the scheduled election. When there is more than one nomination, nominees are to submit a brief statement of interest with their nomination form. All nominees for the position of Chair/Deputy Chair shall be self nominated.

The election process shall be conducted by the coordinator as a secret ballot during a steering committee meeting. The outcome of the ballot will be determined as first past the post.

The position of Chair/Deputy Chair shall be elected by the Steering Committee.

All steering committee members shall be in attendance at the meeting at which the election is held. Where a steering committee member cannot attend they may supply a proxy. When a proxy is not supplied the ballot will continue as scheduled.

Quorum for a Steering Committee meeting; the quorum of a meeting will be half the Steering Committee members plus one.

Steering Committee members' responsibilities include:

- Adhering to proper meeting procedure
- Being informed on issues as a key stakeholder
- Contributing and supporting the work of the steering committee
- Being prepared – reading agendas, minutes and reports
- Participating in discussion
- Being open to others' opinions
- Accepting consensus decisions
- Circulating relevant information to their wider networks
- Providing a proxy when unable to attend
- Commitment to participating in additional working parties and sub committees

Resigning from the Steering Committee or nominating a replacement for your organisation needs to be in writing, addressed to the Chair; include the date, name and contact details.

Role of the Chair

The Chair will ensure that Steering Committee meetings are conducted in accordance with meeting principles including:

- Remaining impartial and facilitating consensus where possible
- Welcoming and introducing new members and guest speakers

- Ensuring there is a quorum
- Keeping to timelines
- Prioritising and adhering to the agenda
- Encouraging and facilitating participation in discussion
- Following correct procedure for decision making
- Summarising discussion and making sure decisions are recorded properly
- Demonstrating fairness and respect
- The chair will be responsible for orienting new committee members
- At the start of meetings call for further agenda items and add items and prioritise the agenda in consultation with the Steering Committee

The Chair shall chair all regular meetings. When the chair is unavailable the Deputy Chair will assume the responsibilities of the Chair.

Steering Committee Meeting Procedure

Agenda

Meetings will be informed by an agenda and written reports that are distributed to the steering committee members at least 5 days prior to a meeting. The agenda must contain:

- Financial reports including a budget year to date and profit and loss statements
- A written report from the project officer

The project officer will email members 7 days prior to a meeting for agenda items. All items raised by members will be placed on the agenda. The agenda should be logical and easily understood by members. Wherever possible items calling for a decision should have a clear written recommendation attached.

Decision making process

Consensus shall be sought where possible. When a decision can not be reached by consensus a majority vote will be sought after an appropriate period of time has elapsed, as deemed by the Chair.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting will be taken by the project officer or appointed administrative support. The minutes should be accurate and contain the recommendations and commentary.

Recommendations should be read back to the committee members as each agenda item is completed. Minutes will be distributed to the Steering Committee within 7 days of the meeting. An action sheet will be attached to the minutes including all actions not yet completed.

Amendments to minutes be forwarded to the coordinator and tabled at the next committee meeting.

All correspondence prior and during Steering committee meetings (such as minutes agenda etc) will be distributed to Steering Committee members only. Members may request copies of the minutes.

Sub Committees

Sub committees may be set up from time to time – involving steering committee members and other network members. The objectives of the subcommittee are to assist the steering committee to conduct its business and implement the annual work plan.