

Accreditation requirements for children's contact services – June 2025 changes

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From 10 June 2025, a number of amendments to the *Family Law Act* came into effect. While most of these changes are related to property matters, in this blog, we are looking at one of the few changes that affect parenting matters – the new accreditation requirements for children's contact services.

What is a children's contact service?

Children's contact services ('CCS') are organisations that provide professional supervision services between children and their parents in high conflict circumstances, usually in parenting matters involving risk factors such as family violence. CCS support parents who may not be able to cooperatively or safely organise time between their child and the other parent.

These services may provide a space for:

- the child and the non-primary parent to meet and spend time together;
- supervising spend time arrangements; or
- supervising child changeovers arrangements.

Supervisors may also write reports detailing supervised time and provide these to the Court to assist with the making of parenting orders.

Changes to the accreditation requirements from June 2025

In 2024, the federal government passed the *Family Law Amendment Act 2024* ('the Amendment Act'), which brings about several changes to the family law system from 10 June 2025. One of these changes is the regulation and accreditation of CCS, which will primarily be governed by 'Accreditation Rules'.

These changes follow recommendations from the Australian Law Reform Commission's 2019 report on the family law system, which inquired into both the family court system and supporting services.

At the time of the report, CCS were either funded by the federal government or privately funded. Privately funded CCS bodies were not required to comply with the same rules and regulations as their government-funded counterparts.

The higher availability of private CCS compared to the long waitlists for the government-funded CCS increased the number of families using private organisations to undertake supervised contact, even if they were not accredited or regulated.

The recommendations made by the Law Reform Commission included for all CCS practitioners to hold an appropriate and relevant qualification and for the establishment of safe environment and administrative guidelines.

The Accreditation Rules for children's contact services

To encourage consistency and improve the safety of the children and families using CCS, the Amendment Act allows the federal government to create Accreditation Rules for all CCS services regardless of where their funding comes from. The changes do not outline the Accreditation Rules just yet – these will be made at a later date as regulations.

Once the Accreditation Rules are made, the courts will only be able to refer families to an accredited CCS. The amended Act will define a CCS person or business as being accredited under the Accreditation Rules, meaning that the CCS and its practitioners meet a certain level of qualification to be supervising changeovers and spend time arrangements.

The changes will make it an offence for a person or organisation to provide a children's contact service if they are not accredited under the Accreditation Rules.

Family violence and accessing children's contact services safely

Any CCS will be required to follow a clear set of rules regarding confidential information about contact sessions in order to promote the safety of the children and families involved.

The amendments define 'safety-related information' as:

'information that relates to the risks of harm to a child or a member of a child's family, or to the identification and management of such risks, if:

1. *children's contact services have been, are being, or will be, provided to the child; and*

2. *the risks are those that may arise in connection with the use, facilitation or provision of the service.'*

Employees and practitioners working for a CCS must not use or share safety information unless:

1. they are authorised to do so;
2. they believe it is necessary in order to comply with a court order; or
3. sharing the information is necessary to:

• protect a child from the risk of physical or psychological harm;

• prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the life or health of a person;

• report or prevent a possible offence involving violence or a threat of violence to a person;

• prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the property of a person, including intentional property damage; and

• assist any appointed Independent Children's Lawyer to properly represent the child's interests.

The accreditation requirements will help ensure that qualified CCS supervisors and employees are following these guidelines and create consistency for oversight in complex parenting matters involving family violence.

Get help from a family lawyer

Navigating parenting arrangements after separation can be tricky, particularly where there are issues of high conflict or family violence. If you are considering engaging a children's contact service or have been ordered by the Court to do so, our family lawyers have significant expertise and experience in parenting disputes and arrangements.

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