



You choose

Whether you choose a meeting run by Families SA or a judicial officer from the Youth Court, it will not make any difference to decisions about returning a child to your care.

If you decide you would rather have a judicial officer from the Youth Court run your reunification review meetings, you need to:

- tell your child's Families SA case manager
- tell your lawyer

before the final court hearing for the 12-month Care and Protection Order. This is so a judicial officer from the Youth Court can plan ahead for the review meetings right from the start and this can be agreed to in the court documents.

The following note will be placed on the court documents so that your choice is clear to everyone involved.

Notation:

The parents and Families SA agree to participate in reunification review meetings on a six-weekly basis, led by a judicial officer from the Youth Court. The purpose of these meetings is to review progress towards reunification case plan goals and assist in helping families get back together.

If you decide you would rather have Families SA run your *reunification review meetings*, you need to:

- tell your child's Families SA case manager
- tell your lawyer

before the 12-month Care and Protection Order is granted. This will allow Families SA to plan ahead for the meetings.

About Families SA

Families SA is part of the Department for Education and Child Development. This is a South Australian government agency with the responsibility to make sure that every child is safe and lives in a place that allows them to grow into happy, healthy adults.

Sometimes, to keep a child safe, the child is placed in care (eg, foster care) by Families SA. When this happens, Families SA must make an application for a Care and Protection Order with the Adelaide Youth Court. They must attach to the application written reports and other documents to explain why they are worried about the child's safety. Families SA will apply for certain orders to be made by the court and ask the court for permission to take over the care of the child for a time, usually up to one year. The report will also say what needs to happen for the child to be returned home safely and how the family will be supported to do this. This is known as the reunification plan.

About the Youth Court

The Youth Court has the responsibility for making sure both a child's rights, and your rights as their parents, are upheld in cases that come before the Court.

When the Youth Court agrees that a child is unsafe at home, Families SA will take over the care of the child for an agreed period of time and will ask you to make changes so that it is safe for the child to return home. The Court makes the agreement legal by granting a *12-month Care and Protection Order*. The child will then live away from home until it is safe for the child to return home. Families SA will make sure the child is safe and support you to create a safe and caring home life for the future. Representatives of the Youth Court have agreed to work with Families SA to help everyone to do what they agreed to do in the best interests of the child.

If you would like further information about these meetings please speak with your Families SA caseworker.

Families SA
Onkaparinga Office - Noarlunga
Tel: 8207 3000



Government of South Australia
Department for Education and
Child Development

Families SA

HELPING FAMILIES GET BACK TOGETHER

A brochure for parents
about reviewing progress
in reunification





Reunification – helping families get back together

Reunification – helping families get back together

When home has become unsafe for a child and they have been placed with other carers, the process to help the family get back together is called *reunification*.

Families SA will aim to help you create a safe and nurturing home life so that your child can return home.

As soon as a child is placed with carers, Families SA will work with you to help reunite your family safely. Families SA will provide you with support and refer you to appropriate services that will help you to make the necessary changes. Support will be available until the child returns home and is settled, and even longer if needed.

To achieve reunification, parents and Families SA need to be clear about what has to change for the child to return home safely. Everyone must work together to make sure there is an understanding of what the safety concerns are, and what needs to change.

Reunification review meetings

To keep everyone on track, regular meetings, called *reunification review meetings* are held with you and the people from the services helping you. Your child and the carers looking after your child might also attend so everyone understands what is happening and how your child is managing.

What are the review meetings for?

The review meetings are conversations. They are held to talk about support, services and things you need to do to make your home a safe and healthy place for your children so that they can be returned home. Your progress will be reviewed at each meeting so that all of the services working with you can see what you are achieving and what needs to happen next to keep things moving forward. From these meetings, a 'plan of action' is put together, usually called a *case plan*, that describes how everyone will work together so that you know what you are expected to do and how services working with you can help.

The meetings are usually held every six weeks.

You can choose who runs your reunification review meetings:

- Your child's Families SA caseworker, or
- A judicial officer from the Youth Court.

Meetings run by a judicial officer from the Youth Court

A *reunification review meeting* run by a judicial officer from the Youth Court follows the same process as a *reunification review meeting* run by Families SA.

You can talk openly about how you are going and what you need.

It is important to understand that the *reunification review meetings* run by a judicial officer from the Youth Court **are not court hearings**.

The main differences

Reunification review meetings run by a judicial officer from the Youth Court are:

- not held in a Families SA office – they are held at the Christies Beach Court Building (but not in a court room)
- will be led by a judicial officer from the Youth Court who will oversee your work with Families SA

