

Legal Aid and Advisory Authority Services

While legal aid and advisory services are not a formal part of the structure of the Family Court, the court's personnel will refer persons who are in need of such assistance and who may qualify for it, to the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority, situated at the corner of Oxford and Edwards Streets, Port of Spain.

Social Welfare and Other Agencies

The **Family Court** will refer to social welfare or other agencies, persons who are in need of special types of assistance that are not provided by the Court. Provision is also made in the Family Court building for social welfare and other agencies to offer information to the public.

The FAMILY COURT brings together in a centralized physical environment, a team of social service providers, who are all experts in their respective fields. They will help and support you and the other members of your family; adults as well as children, as you resolve family conflict.



THE FAMILY COURT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

4 Cipriani Boulevard

Port of Spain

familycourt@ttlawcourts.org



- Intake Service
- Children's Services
- Probation Services
- Mediation Service
- Family Counseling
- Judicial Services

INTAKE SERVICE

The **Intake Officer** has special skills and training. This officer is the first person you will meet and to whom you will relate your concerns. The intake officer is very experienced and has wide knowledge about the kinds of issues that families face and the services that will best assist them to resolve their family matters. The Intake Officer, after listening to you, will direct you to the person or agency that will best suit your needs.

CHILDREN SERVICES

Children's Waiting Room

The Family Court has a children's waiting room for the convenience of parents and children in Court. The centre is well equipped with toys and other activities to keep your babies, toddlers and young children occupied and entertained, while you are receiving assistance from members of the Court.

Youth Waiting Room

The Family Court has a youth waiting room where children and young persons can engage in meaningful activities while awaiting the Court's attention. This is done under the watchful eye of trained youth care officers. There is a library. There are audio visual sets and computers.

PROBATION SERVICE

Probation officers are specially trained social workers who monitor and assist families with respect to compliance with orders and resolutions of difficulties. They are officers of the Court who will investigate problems in the family and will prepare a report for the Court.

MEDIATION SERVICE

Mediation services are provided by persons who are specially trained in family mediation. The mediator is an impartial third party and therefore does not take sides. The mediator will help you and your spouse or partner to discuss your issues and come to an agreement that is satisfactory to both of you.

FAMILY COUNSELING SERVICE

Family conflict can sometimes be stressful, and families as well as individuals must be empowered to make the important decisions that they must face. Our family counselors are trained to assist in this regard.

JUDICIAL SERVICES

The Judges and Magistrates of the Family Court are widely experienced and specially trained in family matters. They will decide all matters in which you and our spouse or partner have not reached an agreement or matters in which there must be a court hearing. One such matter is adoption. While the Adoption Board is the only agency that is legally responsible for arranging adoptions, adoption orders must be made in the Family Court.

JURISDICTION

Geographical

The Family Court is organized as a pilot project within the boundaries of the St. George West Magisterial District and the Port of Spain High Court.

Capacity

The Family Court handles various types of family matters including:

- **Matrimonial** –divorce, separation, annulment, maintenance of spouses and matrimonial property;
- **Children-** Custody, access, (visiting rights), child maintenance, paternity, abuse and neglect of children, adoption;
- **Cohabitation-**rights of persons who are or have been living together in a common law union;
- **Succession-** rights of parties to inherit on the death of a spouse, a parent, child or other relative
- **Domestic Violence** of all types

FAMILY COURT PROCEDURES

When you come to the Family Court, if you do not have a lawyer, you will be invited to see an intake officer, who may refer you to either:

- a member of staff who will help you file your court application
- mediation
- counseling
- other social services

If you have a lawyer, your lawyer may have advised you to file your court application, in which case, your lawyer will file the documents for you.

If you have to come to court, you will be given an appointment date **and time** to come to court. It is important that you are on time.

When your matter comes up in court, the Judge or Magistrate may direct you to mediation or to social services. If you are so directed, you should go immediately to arrange your mediation or social service appointment.