

# ADR Methods / Alternative Dispute Resolution

## FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCING



ADR-Link provides access to several streams of service for families/youth involved with Children's Aid Society offices. Brochures are available for each service:

- Family Group Conferencing
- Indigenous Approaches to ADR
- Child Protection Mediation
- Ready, Set, Go Response
- 4th Option

### › Family Group Conferencing (FGC) is used primarily when:

- A family or caregiver does not consent to a plan for a child's care that will form the basis of a court application put forward by the CAS (in process or contemplated)
- Family and/or other caregivers and CAS are willing to work together to create a plan to care for children
- Access, placement, adoption/openness, supervision orders are in discussion
- Participants are willing to come together (in person or virtually) to work together to develop best plans for the child(ren)'s care (usually 3 or more family members/caregivers and other supports, CAS worker, practitioner and OCL if assigned)
- All parties agree to participate voluntarily and accept that CAS is involved with the family

### › Is Family Group Conferencing Fair?

- The Practitioner doesn't take sides, make decisions for you, or judge you
- Everyone works together to reach an agreement on care for the child(ren)
- Family Group Conferencing may help reduce your time spent in court and the time your family/caregivers and child(ren) are unsettled
- Family Group Conferencing can improve the relationship between family members, caregivers, and society workers by helping to develop inclusive and respectful communication
- There is no cost to the family to participate
- Practitioners are independent, neutral and not employed or selected by CAS
- Family Group Conferencing is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time if you wish
- Practitioners are all trained members of George Hull Centre's provincial roster



All Family Group Conferencing Coordinators are trained members of the Ontario Provincial FGC Roster maintained by George Hull Centre.





### › What Is The Process?

1. Family/caregivers meet with their worker (referring organization)
2. Everyone works together to reach an agreement on care for the child(ren)
3. The ADR Practitioner:
  - will reach out to CAS and other parties listed on referral form
  - will arrange time(s) and space for conference meetings (family/caregivers, practitioner, worker attend – children 12 yrs and older may attend - OCL may attend but other lawyers do not generally attend)
  - opens the meetings to ensure communications are clear around addressing issues of child safety and wellbeing supports needed and expectations as a group and all participants have a voice at the table
  - invites the referring worker and, if applicable, other support people to speak regarding the concerns and hopes for the child(ren)'s care
  - sets up the family/caregivers to continue the meeting without any professionals in the room to create a plan
  - with the worker (and OCL if applicable) review the plan with the family, work together to finalize it, confirm it adequately addresses the safety and wellbeing of the children and confirm agreement with the plan with all present
  - produces a written copy of the final plan and sends it to each participant within 10 days of the conference - participants are encouraged to review the agreement with their lawyer prior to signing it
  - may meet with the group to sign the agreement
  - will arrange for follow up meetings as requested
4. Participants move forward with a clear understanding and commitment to the care plan for the child(ren)

### › What if Family Group Conferencing Does Not End In An Agreement?

If there is no agreement, the case continues just like it was before it was referred.

### › What if I'm Not Satisfied With the Process?

Please reach out to [ADR-Link@lfcc.on.ca](mailto:ADR-Link@lfcc.on.ca) to offer feedback.

#### Or contact us another way

- **Phone:** 519-282-6991
- **Fax:** 519-679-4234
- **Web:** [www.lfcc.on.ca/adr-link](http://www.lfcc.on.ca/adr-link)



ADR-Link connects parties in dispute with an independent Child Protection Mediation Practitioner, Family Group Conference Practitioner, Indigenous Approach or Ready, Set, Go Practitioner. None of the Practitioners are employees of London Family Court Clinic (LFCC) or affiliated with LFCC. All mediators are certified in child protection mediation by the Ontario Association for Family Mediation and listed on its roster. All family group conference coordinators have been trained and mentored through the George Hull Centre and are listed on its roster. By participating in ADR-Link services, you acknowledge that ADR services are not provided by LFCC and agree to hold harmless ADR-Link and LFCC for any and all claims, actions, suits etc brought against ADR-Link directly or indirectly.

ADR-Link is administered by London Family Court Clinic - [info@lfcc.on.ca](mailto:info@lfcc.on.ca) for contact