

You've been notified about a court hearing

What you need to do and what to expect

You have received a 'Written Notice to Eligible Carer' because there are court proceedings involving a child who has been in your care for more than 8 months.

Under the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007*, this means you are a party to the Court proceedings.

You should have received 4 documents:

- your 'Written Notice to Eligible Carer', with information about the court proceeding and next hearing
- a 'Form 4E-C: Carer Notice of Participation and Contact Details', which you need to complete and return to the Court
- a 'Carers and the new laws factsheet', which explains your rights and responsibilities as a party
- this factsheet which explains what you need to do next and what to expect.

1. Check your Written Notice

Your Written Notice tells you:

- which child and court proceeding the notice relates to
- the date, time and location of the next hearing
- the section of the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* that applies
- how to contact the relevant Court registry.

The section listed on your notice tells you the type of proceeding you are a party to:

Section	What kind of hearing you will be party to
137D(2)(ba)	A Permanent Care Order , which can remain in place until the child turns 18.
125(2)(ca)	A Protection Order , which can include a Short-Term Parental Responsibility Direction for up to 12 months, or a Long-Term Parental Responsibility Direction for at least 5 years and up to when the child turns 18.
94(1)(da)	Applies to all proceedings in the Local Court under the Act and is subject to the above.

2. Complete Form 4E-C

Form 4E-C tells the Court how you would like to participate in the proceedings and gives the Court your contact details.

Your case worker can help you complete Part A, including identifying the relevant section of the Act from your Written Notice. You will also need to provide your details in Part B and choose one of the participation options in Part C.

3. Choose how you want to participate

You are already a party to the proceeding. You do not need to apply to become a party, and you cannot opt out of being a party.

You can, however, choose how you want to participate.

Option A – Active Participation

Choose this option if you want to actively participate in the proceeding.

You will generally:

- receive notice of upcoming court dates
- be able to attend and participate in hearings
- participate by video link unless the Court agrees otherwise
- receive court material, subject to any directions or orders of the Court
- be able to provide information or evidence and make submissions to the Court.

Option B – Information-Only Participation

Choose this option if you do not want to actively appear or participate.

You will:

- remain a party to the proceeding
- receive copies of orders made by the Court
- not be required to actively participate in hearings unless the Court directs otherwise
- be able to change to active participation later by submitting another Form 4E-C.

4. Return Form 4E-C to the Court

Your Written Notice tells you when your next hearing is scheduled. Complete and return Form 4E-C directly to the Court registry **no later than 3 business days before the hearing**. The Court can continue to hear the matter and make orders whether or not you return the form and choose to attend or actively participate.

The relevant Court registry details are included in your Written Notice, Form 4E-C and outlined below. If you cannot submit the form electronically, you can lodge a hard copy at your nearest Local Court registry.

Region	Address	Email
Darwin	Darwin Children's Court Ground Floor, TCG Building, 80 Mitchell Street, Darwin	Darwin.ChildrensCourt@nt.gov.au
Katherine	Court House, First Street, Katherine	Katherine.LocalCourt@nt.gov.au
Tennant Creek	Court House, 53 Paterson Street, Tennant Creek	TCLC.Registry@nt.gov.au
Alice Springs	Parsons Street, Alice Springs	ASLC.CivilRegistry@nt.gov.au

5. If you choose active participation

Unless the Court orders otherwise, you will generally attend hearings by Audio Visual Link (AVL) which means either via telephone or video call.

Make sure you include a current telephone number and email address on Form 4E-C so the Court can send you the video link and information about future hearings.

If you want to attend a hearing in person instead, you must apply in writing to the Court registry at least 3 business days before the hearing and explain why.

What happens after I return the form?

You do not need to apply to become a party. The law already makes you a party where the requirements apply. DCF will confirm with the Court that department records show the child has been in your care for more than 8 months.

The Court will then manage your participation in the proceeding according to your Form 4E-C and any directions or orders it makes.

Who can help me?

Your case worker can:

- explain the DCF process and information you have received
- help you complete Part A of Form 4E-C
- help identify the relevant section of the Act
- answer questions about the child and their day-to-day care.

Your carer support service may be able to provide practical support and help you understand the information you have received. The Court registry can answer questions about Court processes, filing Form 4E-C and hearings, but cannot give you legal advice.

You can also choose to seek independent legal advice about your own rights and responsibilities. DCF staff and DCF lawyers cannot provide any legal advice to you.

For more information about your rights and responsibilities, confidentiality and independent legal advice, please read the attached Carers and the new laws factsheet.

Carer support services

Foster and Kinship Carers Association of the Northern Territory

- web: fkca.org.au/
- call: 1800 367 837

Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation

- web: larrakia.com/
- call: 08 8997 2111
- email: minbanibebe@larrakia.com

Kalano Community Association

- web: kalano.org.au/
- call: 08 8918 6130
- email: kalanokinship@kalano.org.au

Yalu Aboriginal Corporation

- web: yalu.org.au/
- call: 08 8970 5155
- email: intake@yalu.org.au

Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation

- web: tangentyere.org.au/
- call: 08 8951 4222
- email: kinshipcare@tangentyere.org.au

Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council

- web: npywc.org.au/
- call: 08 8958 2308
- email: cap.teamleader@npywc.org.au

Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation

- web: julalikari.org.au/
- call: 08 8962 2699
- email: cfss@julalikari.com.au

More information

families.nt.gov.au/child-protection