

# Position Description

**Job title:** FDR Child Specialist  
**Date:** May 2025  
**Group:** Operations  
**Location:** Nationwide  
**Reports to:** Operations Manager Family Services

## Family Dispute Resolution

Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) is a mediation service that helps parents, guardians and whānau who have separated come to an agreement on the care of children. The focus is on building better co-parenting relationships and communication with the assistance of a mediator. It is designed to help parties make their own decisions for their children's future, with a view to resolve childcare issues without the time, expense and stress of going to court. An impartial mediator runs the session(s) to help the parties identify issues that everyone can have their say and reach agreement about the care of the children. Following an amendment to the Family Dispute Resolution Act 2013, FDR services require children who are the subject of the dispute to be given any reasonable opportunities to participate in the decisions affecting them that the FDR provider considers appropriate.

## Position Purpose

The Child Specialist role helps to ensure children can fully participate in the FDR process and the decisions that have an impact on them and their care arrangements, when their parents, guardians and whānau are accessing FDR.

The Child Specialist role:

- champions best practice when working directly with children to ensure that the child's views are safely and appropriately elicited when participating in FDR; and
- supports FDR child practitioners and FDR mediators where required.

The Child Specialist role requires patience and understanding, especially regarding a child's development needs at different ages and complex family dynamics. They require knowledge of techniques for eliciting the views of children about their care arrangements, including those with disabilities and communication challenges. They will need to have a good understanding of the FDR process.

## Position Dimensions

<b>Budget</b>	n/a
<b>Staff</b>	No direct staff responsibilities
<b>Internal relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of Practice</li> <li>• GM Operations</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operations Manager Family Services</li> <li>• Resolution Practitioners</li> <li>• FDR Mediators (including contractors)</li> <li>• Senior Resolution Coordinators and Resolution Coordinators</li> <li>• All other Fair Way staff members</li> </ul>
<b>External relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children of the parties attending mediation</li> <li>• Parents / whānau who are participating in FDR</li> <li>• Lawyer for Child</li> </ul>

## Position Responsibilities

The Child Specialist role will be responsible for providing specialist support, advice and guidance to child practitioners and mediators facilitating child inclusion. You will also be responsible for directly engaging with children to seek their views regarding their care and/or making recommendations to mediators so that the mediator can ensure the child's needs and views are given due weight in their care arrangements.

### Child inclusion standards

- Work alongside mediators to undertake assessment of children's circumstances and requirements and agree the process and extent of children's participation in the mediation process.
- Consider the whānau / family context, including history of family violence, cultural factors (beliefs and preferences), potential cross-cultural tensions, and language barriers.
- Comply with relevant legislation or guidelines that may be provided under the Family Dispute Resolution Act 2013.
- Ensure safe engagement with children adhering to the FDR Operating Guidelines and Fair Way's Quality Practice Framework.

### When engaging with children and young people

- Engage children in a safe, culturally responsive, and age-appropriate way to elicit and document their views on their needs and preferences relating to the post-separation family and their care arrangements.
- Use engagement techniques that are appropriate to children's different stages of development, abilities (consider disabilities) and cultural context.
- Seek out a suitable and neutral support person for children to help them feel safe and confident during their engagement or when expressing their views directly in mediation, should the child or children choose.
- Ensure that children are aware that the process is voluntary and that they can terminate the session at any time; and that they can express their concerns and provide feedback about their experience in the session using various clearly stated options.
- Ensure sessions with children are terminated where requested by the children.

- Plan ahead to ensure that:
  - » session time is used efficiently;
  - » unnecessary re-scheduling of sessions is avoided; and
  - » session lengths are appropriate to the age and development stages of the child/ren.
- Ensure sessions with children are terminated where requested by the children.
- Complete post-session documentation.
- Follow-up with children to ensure that they understand the mediation outcome and how their inclusion in the process has informed this.
- Provide guidance and best practice advice to mediators and child practitioners on how they can best engage with children to include them in the mediation, while managing risks and keeping them safe.

### **Peer support to mediators**

- Provide information and expert advice to the mediator (or child practitioner) for them to ensure children's views are fed into the decision-making process and that children's needs are given due weight for care arrangements.
- Provide practical support to mediators and child practitioners when they are engaging with children, if needed.

### **Ongoing professional development**

- Undertake professional supervision, other training and professional reading as required.
- Build in feedback and incorporate experiences gained into the ongoing refinement of procedures, policy and practice.
- Maintain your registration with the appropriate professional body, as required.

## **Technical capability and experience requirements**

- Proven ability to build rapport and trust with children and their whānau in environments of family conflict and complexity.
- Knowledge and understanding of tikanga Māori, te reo Māori, Te Tiriti o Waitangi and how it applies to FDR.
- An understanding of the impact of adversity and trauma, child and adolescent brain development.
- Knowledge of, and experience in using techniques for eliciting the views of children, including those with disabilities and communication challenges.
- An ability to recognise and respond to family violence and concerns regarding abuse and neglect.
- Knowledge of:
  - » Care of Children Act 2004
  - » Family Dispute Resolution Act 2013
  - » Oranga Tamariki Act 1989

- » Children's Act 2014
- » Health and Safety at Work Act 2015

## Qualification requirements

A Child Specialist requires:

- A relevant qualification e.g, clinical psychology, social work, youth work, health teaching, or human services (Level 6 or above).
- Up to date registration with relevant professional body.
- At least two years' proven practice experience engaging with, or interviewing children or young people in a family post-separation context.
- A clean, current driver's license

## Behavioural requirements

- Ensure the safety of contractors and staff is managed in all the work we provide to clients.
- Work with People & Culture to ensure we capture and report any H&S incidents related to the work that we do, or as part of our contractual requirements with any clients.
- Promote highest standards of health and safety for Fair Way employees and clients.
- Fair Way's business practices are built on a foundation of people, practice and a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Employees are encouraged and supported to share this commitment through ongoing learning and development of cultural awareness and comfort.
- Understands the importance of people in achieving strategic objectives.
- Inspires a sense of purpose; focuses strategically, demonstrates judgement, intelligence and common sense.
- Proven resilience and adaptability and the ability to keep focus on short or long-term goals.
- Creates strong working relationships with stakeholders – values the inputs of others, has empathy with other cultures and viewpoints, puts time and effort into being accessible to stakeholders.
- Is adaptable and can operate confidently with ambiguity.
- Takes accountability and ownership – does not hide behind others or blame others for undesirable outcomes.
- Someone who will live and nurture the Fair Way brand and story.