

FDR Opening Statements Help Sheet

What is an 'Opening Statement' and How Do I Prepare One?

At the beginning of a Family Dispute Resolution session, each person is given the opportunity to give their 'Opening Statement'. An 'Opening Statement' is an opportunity for you to tell your version of the story and express your individual interests. This is an important stage of Family Dispute Resolution as it allows each person to hear the other persons' point of view, which is an important part of resolving any differences.

Your Opening Statement allows you to speak freely without interruption and to be heard by the other person. While you present your Opening Statement, the Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner will take notes and become more familiar with the matters in dispute. The main points you make, the words you use, and concerns you present will assist with setting the Agenda for the session.

When thinking about what to include in your Opening Statement, think about what has brought you to Family Dispute Resolution, what the matters in dispute are, how these matters have affected you and your child/children, and what you would like for the future.

Your Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner will summarise and confirm the key points from both person's Opening Statements in order to satisfy both people that what they said has been clearly heard and the issues in dispute have been correctly identified. These key points will identify the problems common to both people and help steer the mediation toward mutual agreement.

From these key points, an Agenda for the Family Dispute Resolution session is formed which will provide the basis of discussions to follow. The order in which these key points on the Agenda are discussed will be decided upon according to their importance.