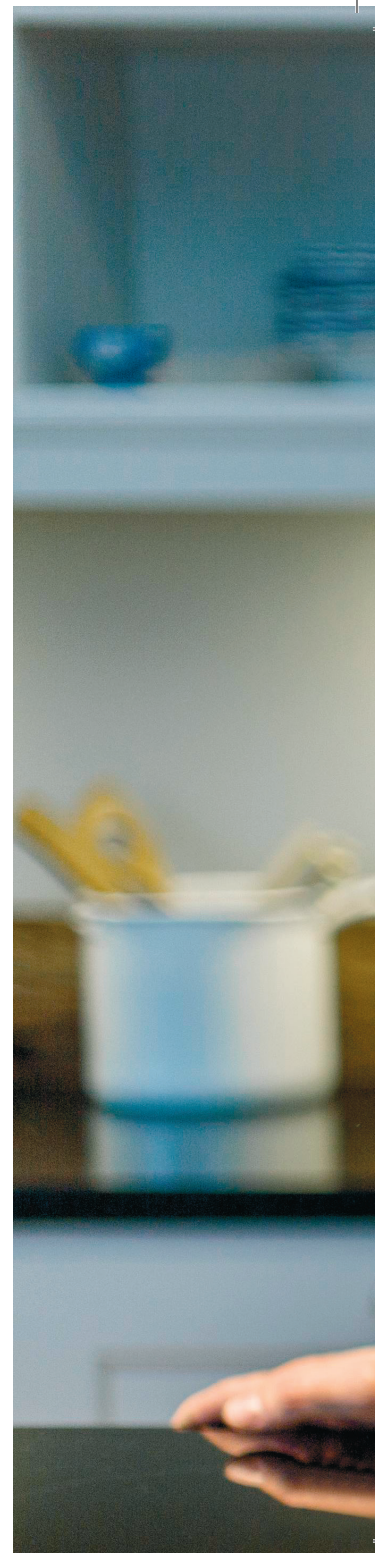


For parents who have lost
custody of their child

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Family Counselling Services (Familievernnet) offer counselling and treatment for families experiencing difficulties, conflicts or crises. This covers a wide range of problems, from everyday matters to divorce and the placement of children in alternative care. Family Counselling Services is staffed by family therapists, psychologists and social workers. Use of the services is voluntary, and free of charge.

Whenever a child is taken into alternative care, Child Welfare Services (Barnevernet) are responsible for following up on both the child and its parents. Some parents find it difficult to cooperate with and receive help from Child Welfare Services in this situation, while still being in need for help and support. This is why Family Counselling Services have been assigned a special responsibility to offer services to parents who have lost custody of their child.





What can Family Counselling Services offer?

Emotion processing

Losing custody of one's child is among the most severe crises a parent can experience. Even parents who consent to the child being taken into care by Child Welfare Services, might also need help and support. You might find the whole situation chaotic and difficult to grasp, and you may have many unanswered questions. It is quite common to experience a wide range of strong emotions, such as despair, longing, anger, grief, guilt and powerlessness. Some parents may also feel relief, and it is not uncommon to feel guilty when this happens.

It often helps to share emotions and experiences with someone who is used to discuss matters like these on a professional level. Family Counselling Services can help you cope with your new circumstances, regardless of whether the care order is temporary, or considered to be long-term. The services can offer support on your own terms and help you move forward.

Advice and counselling

Many parents feel unsure about how to parent children who no longer live with them. Family Counselling Services can help you recognize your child's needs, so that the time spent together will be a positive experience for both you and your child. You will be better prepared for situations that may arise, and Family Counselling Services can give you the tools to help you manage these situations. We can also help you build a constructive cooperation with the other parties involved in caring for your child.

Groups

Some family counselling offices offer support groups and programmes for parents who have lost custody of their children. Many find comfort in meeting other parents in the same situation, and in the opportunity to discuss similar experiences with them.

*What is Family Counselling Services **not able** to help with?*

Family Counselling Services cannot formally assess parents' care-giving competence.

Family Counselling Services cannot amend or overturn a care order.

Family Counselling Services cannot amend access arrangements or increase the frequency or duration of access.



Is it important for your children that you accept help?

Children often think about how their parents are doing when they live apart, for instance when children live in an institution or foster home. If they believe their parents are struggling, they may worry. This worry may make it difficult for them to relax and play, or to concentrate in school. Your child may find comfort in knowing you are receiving help and support from other adults.

Confidentiality, duty to report, and duty to inform

Family Counselling Services employees have a duty of confidentiality, and cannot, under normal circumstances, tell anyone about what they learn in their contact with you. However, if they have serious concerns about the welfare of a child, they have a duty to report their concerns to Child Welfare Services. Child Welfare Services have the right to collect information from Family Counselling Services. This should primarily take place in collaboration with the parents. Employees in Family Counselling Services may be called upon to testify as witnesses before the county social welfare boards or the district courts, and are in these situations obligated by law to answer any question.

How to get in touch with a family counselling office

At www.bufdir.no/familie you will find a list of all the family counselling offices in Norway. You may contact an office directly and book an appointment yourself. If you prefer, Child Welfare Services may assist and book an appointment for you. You can book your appointment with any one of the family counselling offices. This means that, if you want to, you can choose to go to a different office than the one nearest to your home. If you incur considerable travel costs in connection with the use of family counselling services, please contact your Child Welfare Services case worker to see whether it is possible to have some or all of the costs reimbursed.

This leaflet is available
in the following languages: Norwegian:
Bokmål and Nynorsk; Sami; English; Polish;
Russian; Somali; and Arabic.

Download a printer-friendly version from:
www.bufdir.no/fratattomsorg



Bufetat

**The Office for Children, Youth
and Family Affairs**

Illustration photo: Tine Poppe
bufdir.no/familie