

Health, Legal and Security Costs Associated with Improved Safety from Family Violence During Family Court Involvement



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Who is this research relevant to?



The findings are particularly relevant to **policy makers, researchers and decision-makers** and **professionals** involved in the **health, family violence** and **family law sectors, family court reform**, and the safety of separated families.

It also brings cost awareness for court-involved parents in the face of family violence risk.

What did we do?

We looked at the legal, safety and wellbeing-related costs incurred by **416 parents** in the first year of their involvement with the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia ('the Courts') for a parenting dispute.

We examined whether these costs varied across parents with different levels of family violence risk and different demographic characteristics.

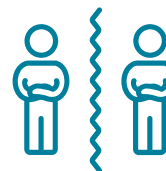
What did we find?

We found that parents involved in family court proceedings where family violence risk was a serious concern faced substantial personal costs on direct expenditure related to their safety.



The average cost per parent in the **first year** was

AUD\$41,360.^[1]



Across all **416 parents** in the study, total costs exceeded

\$17 million.

[1] This research was published in August 2026. Based on exchange rates at the time of publication, this amount was equivalent to approximately USD \$29,779, GBP £21,920, and EUR €25,230.

Other key findings included:

1

Families experiencing ongoing family violence risk faced the highest costs, particularly for physical safety and security measures such as locks, alarms, accommodation changes, and protecting personal property.

2

Parents reporting continued risk were more than nine times as likely to face security-related costs compared with parents who reported feeling safe.

3

Expenditure on counselling was strongly associated with improved safety. Parents who became safer over the year were significantly more likely to report expenses on counselling services, especially counselling for their children.

4

Mothers reported higher security and healthcare costs (including accessing doctors and counselling for themselves and their children). Fathers reported higher legal and mediation costs.

5

Legal costs were the largest expense category, although spending varied considerably across families. These costs were not associated with family violence risk status.

What does this mean?

The findings suggest that improving safety from family violence during family court involvement can require substantial personal investment. Much of this cost is currently absorbed by families themselves, particularly women.

Improving safety and reducing the financial burden carried by families during this time may require investment in:



early identification of family violence risk,



accessible counselling for parents and children,



targeted support for mothers



coordinated responses across court and support systems.

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