

WHAT IS A FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY AGREEMENT?

A Family Responsibility Agreement is a voluntary plan of action that Appropriate Agencies from the Northern Territory Government can make with a family if the family is in need of assistance in managing the anti-social or criminal behaviours of their child. The Agreement aims to get the young person and family back on track.

When is a Family Responsibility Agreement made?

Part 6A of the *Youth Justice Act* says that an Appropriate Agency may enter into an Agreement with a family if:

- a child has demonstrated behavioural problems;
- family circumstances may have contributed to the behavioural problems; and
- the Agency believes an Agreement may assist in resolving the problems.

Who decides that a Family Responsibility Agreement is needed?

Authorised Officers, who represent the government agencies working directly with a family, contribute to the decision that a Family Responsibility Agreement is needed. They come to a decision by sharing information with other Authorised Officers who work with the family.

The family whose child is showing behavioural problems is also very important in the process, as a Family Responsibility Agreement is a voluntary commitment.

What will a Family Responsibility Agreement contain?

A Family Responsibility Agreement will contain information about the actions parents, the young person and other family members are encouraged to take to make the Agreement work. These actions will take into account the special needs and circumstances of each family and may include:

- parents to undertake counselling or therapy to overcome addictive, destructive or damaging behaviour and to gain parenting skills;
- parents to join and participate in activities of a support group and other courses or programs for their personal development;
- parents to exercise proper care and supervision of their children, including ensuring children go to school, avoid contact with certain persons, or stay away from certain places;
- young person to attend counselling/programs for their personal development; or
- any other actions that will assist families and their children.

How long is a Family Responsibility Agreement for?

A Family Responsibility Agreement is valid for a maximum period of 12 months and expires when a child turns 18 years old. Additional agreements can be made after one expires.

What happens if the Agreement is not followed?

If the Appropriate Agency who has signed the Agreement with the family finds out that the Agreement has been breached in any way, or if the young person continues to exhibit behavioural problems, is charged with a criminal offence, or breached on bail, the following may occur:

- a further Family Responsibility Agreement may be made;
- an application for an Inquiry into Family Circumstances may be made to a Court; or
- a Family Responsibility Order may be made for the family.

For more information on Inquiry into Family Circumstances and Family Responsibility Orders, see fact sheet 4.