

What to expect from the FFMPU counselling service

FFMPU services

FFMPU was established in 2000 and is part of the NSW Department of Justice. We provide free and confidential support to families and friends of missing people at different times during the police investigation. Support may include: crisis support, counselling, liaison, practical information, publications and referrals. FFMPU counsellors are trained professionals with a social work or psychology degree.

FFMPU counsellors endeavour to provide a safe, non-judgmental place to talk about your experiences, guidance in understanding the impact of unresolved loss, and support through different experiences, including: coronial proceedings, legal or financial issues or media involvement. We respect that the needs of individuals and families will vary and may change over time.

Our support is guided by the research and literature relating to the experience of families of missing people and ambiguous loss, including:

Boss P (2006) *Loss, Trauma, and Resilience: Therapeutic Work with Ambiguous Loss*. New York, USA: Norton and Company.

Wayland S (2007) *Supporting those who are left behind: A counselling framework to support families of missing persons*, National Missing Persons Coordination Centre, AFP.

(These frameworks are available online or by contacting FFMPU.)

How and where we offer support

FFMPU offers support to individuals or families:

- face-to-face;
- by telephone;
- video conferencing; or
- e-mail.

Face-to-face support can be offered at the FFMPU Parramatta offices. In some circumstances home visits may be offered. Support may also be available for particular events, for example, inquests or media engagement.

For interstate or regional clients, telephone, email or video conference is the primary form of contact.

FFMPU works as a team. Throughout your contact with us, you may receive support from one or more of the FFMPU counsellors.

FFMPU also facilitates support groups and missing persons' events, providing an opportunity for family members to come together. Information about groups and events can be accessed via our website or Facebook page (see contact details listed over page).

Timing of contact

Support is offered **9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays)**. Phone and email messages are responded to within two business days. At different times, you may find you need more or less frequent contact. Families may choose to 'opt-in' to FFMPU for support at different times during a police investigation or significant events.

Cancellations and safety

If you need to cancel an appointment please give the counsellor as much notice as possible. Your counsellor will similarly provide adequate notice in the unlikely event of cancelling a session.

If at any time you or your counsellor does not feel safe you both have the right to interrupt or end the session.

Referrals

Please ask FFMPU staff for referral advice if you need assistance from other agencies. Referrals will be made after consultation with you and with respect to your right to privacy.

Confidentiality

Information shared with FFMPU, including scheduling of, or attendance at, appointments, and the content of your sessions, is confidential except where:

- There is a legal requirement to disclose, for example, a subpoena is issued. In this instance FFMPU will inform you.
- Failure by FFMPU to disclose the information would place you or another person at serious and imminent risk.

- There is a disclosure of significant risk of harm to a child. More information about mandatory reporting is available online:

Web: www.community.nsw.gov.au

- You have given approval to exchange information on your behalf (see below).

Exchange of information

FFMPU counsellors will ask you to sign a consent form prior to liaising with other agencies at your request (for example police or health professionals).

Choosing not to sign this form will not affect your access to FFMPU services. The form can be found at:

Web: http://www.missingpersons.justice.nsw.gov.au/Pages/missingpersons/ffmpu_mp_multimed.aspx

Collection and holding of client information

FFMPU collects and records personal information relevant to your current situation to allow the counsellors to provide an informed counselling service.

Please note that you do not have to disclose all your personal information and you have the right to not answer questions asked of you. All information is kept in accordance with privacy laws set out in the *NSW Health Records and Information Privacy Act (2002)*.

Complaints procedure and feedback

If you have positive or negative feedback we would appreciate hearing from you so we can ensure our service is as relevant as possible to our clients.

You may find yourself in a situation where you are unhappy with, or have concerns about, the counselling services provided. You have a right to have a voice about this. You may raise a concern or grievance about the service in a number of ways (that suits you best):

- 1) Initially you can aim to discuss the matter with the staff member you are dealing with
- 2) You can speak to the FFMPU Coordinator on:
Phone: (02) 8688 8186 or
Email: ffmpu@justice.nsw.gov.au
- 3) If it is a complaint about a serious or complex matter or allegation it is best to put it in writing. Written complaints should be addressed to:

Commissioner of Victims Rights
Locked Bag 5118
Parramatta NSW 2124

It is important to:

- tell us as soon as possible about the matter
- state clearly what your concern is
- provide information and details to assist in investigating the matter

Interpreters and National Relay Service

FFMPU can arrange for interpreters to attend counselling sessions as required. To contact FFMPU by phone through the Translating and Interpreting Service:

Web: <https://www.tisnational.gov.au/>

Phone: 131 450

(state what language you speak, and ask to be connected to FFMPU on [1800 227 772](tel:1800227772)).

If you have hearing or speech difficulties you can contact FFMPU through the National Relay Service:

Web: www.relayservice.gov.au/contact

Phone: 1800 555 677 (speak and listen users), or
1800 555 727 (TTY users)

Contact details

For further information about this material or other topics, please use one of the methods from the contact panel below.

Contact details

Phone (02) 8688 8173 or 1800 227 772 • **National Relay Service** 1800 555 677

Facebook www.facebook.com/missing.501 • **Email** ffmpu@justice.nsw.gov.au

www.missingpersons.justice.nsw.gov.au

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Alternative formats of this information are available.

This document has been prepared by Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit for general information purposes.

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