Clients Impacted by Family Violence Policy & Procedure

QA REFERENCE	CWG I&G No 12
INTRODUCED	11th May 2010
LAST REVIEWED	3rd August 2021
NEXT REVIEWED	3rd August 2024
RESPONSIBILITY	The Operational Leadership Group (OLG) is responsible for the review and currency of this policy and associated procedures.
APPROVED	Approved by the A/Chief Executive Officer on 3 August 2021 *This policy and procedure is valid from the date of introduction and remains in force, as amended from time to time, until such time as formally revoked by resolution at a meeting of the Operational Leadership Group.*
ENDORSED	Endorsed by the operational Leadership Group (OLG) 3 August 2021
REFERENCES	
Related Legislative Acts and other sources of Authority	• Family Violence Protection Act 2008 • Privacy and Data Protection Act Victoria 2014 • Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM)
Related Standards, Guidelines and other References	• Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) • Family Violence Information Scheme (FVISS) • Child Safe Standards: Victorian State Government • A Framework for Practice: The Best Interests Case Practice Model and Summary Guide. • Ending Family Violence: Victoria's 10 -Year Plan for Change. State of Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. • Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families 2018-2028: A 10- year Agreement for Delivery of Family Violence Services for Aboriginal Victorians. State of Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.
Related MASP Policy and Procedure Documents	• Information Sharing under the FVISS & CISS P&P • Privacy and confidentiality P&P • Staff Impacted by Family Violence P&P
Related MASP Instructions and Guidelines	• This policy is to be used in addition to existing program documentation and guidelines.
Related MASP Forms and Templates	• This policy is to be used in addition to existing program documentation and guidelines.
ACRONYMS/DEFINITIONS Family Violence	The Family Violence Protection Act (2008) defines family violence as: 1) Behaviour that is: • Physically, sexually, emotionally psychologically or economically abusive; • Threatening or

	coercive; • Controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or well-being of that family member or another person. 2) Behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness or otherwise be exposed to the effects of any behaviour referred to above.
Aboriginal definition of family violence	Dhelk Dja Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families defines family violence as 'an issue focused around a wide range of physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological and economic abuses that occur within families, intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities. It extends to one-on-one fighting, abuse of Indigenous community workers as well as self-harm, injury and suicide.' Footnote: State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services, October 2018, p. 51
MARAM	Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Management
Risk Identification	Recognising through observation or enquiry that family violence risk factors are present, and then taking appropriate actions to refer or manage the risk
Risk Assessment	The process of applying Structured Professional Judgement to determine the level of family violence risk.
Risk Management	Any action or intervention taken to reduce the level of risk posed to a victim and hold perpetrators to account. Actions taken and interventions that are implemented appropriate to the level of risk identified in the risk assessment stage.
Safety Planning	Process of implementing a strategy or identifying steps to be taken, subject to timelines agreed with relevant parties, to reduce the likelihood of further family violence occurring and ensure safety for the victim/s.

1. **PURPOSE**

Domestic and Family violence (DFV) is a serious and unacceptable community issue. MASP is committed to providing training and awareness to all staff around issues of DVF and their responsibilities in responding. MASP is committed to supporting clients by ensuring that

they are recognised, listened to, feel safe and are proactively assisted to access relevant supports and services. This policy is linked to the MASP Strategic Plan 2019-2022 under:

- Priority 1, Benefit 3: Our systems and processes enable and empower people from diverse communities
- Priority 2, Benefit 1: Services are delivered in line with trauma-informed relationally safe care and
- Priority 2, Benefit 2: Effective collaboration with other agencies to ensure positive outcomes for clients.

2. SCOPE

This policy will be made available to all staff and be included in the employee induction materials.

3. POLICY

3.1   Family violence is behaviour that controls or dominates a family member and causes them to fear for their own or another person's safety or wellbeing, and includes exposing a child to these behaviours. Family violence presents across a spectrum of risk severity, from subtle exploitation of power imbalances, isolated incidents or escalating patterns of abuse over time. Its impacts include death, disability, mental health issues, mental illness or other serious health issues, and housing and financial insecurity.

3.2   Family violence is defined in section 5 of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) (FVPA) and includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and economic abuse, as well as coercive and threatening behaviour. Family violence can constitute criminal offences and behaviours that are unlawful.

3.3   All community members are entitled to safety, dignity and respect. In addition, if staff become aware of a child safety concern they MUST also act in accordance with Child Safe Guidelines and the Victorian Child Protection Legislation.

3.4   The Procedure section of this policy details information and procedures in relation to:

1. Recognising Family violence experiences within our client group
2. Use of evidence-based risk factors to identify and assess family violence
3. Recognising children as victim survivors in their own right
4. Recognising trauma indicators in children
5. Identifying perpetrator patterns of behaviour and our responsibilities
6. Understanding adolescents who use violence and their unique and complex needs
7. Our role and responsibilities in information sharing and collaborative practice
8. Safety planning
9. Confidentiality and privacy
10. Websites and counselling services

4. PROCEDURE

4.1   Recognising Family violence experiences within our client group

4.1.1   At the time of writing MASP Hub Practitioners played a vital role in supporting over 3,000 community members through Child First, Orange Door. The Orange Door provides a range of specialist supports to individuals, families and care givers engaged in our Youth Services, Family Services and Inclusive Communities programs.

4.1.2   MASP recognises that clients from diverse communities face particular risks and forms of family violence and that for many, additional barriers may exist to accessing services and supports. MASP recognises that diverse communities include Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ people in culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and older people. MASP is committed to ensuring that clients from these communities will be given every opportunity to seek support to address family violence in a way that considers their unique needs.

4.2   Use of evidence-based risk factors to identify and assess family violence

4.2.1   Staff should refer to the latest version of the Family Violence MARAM Framework, Shared Understanding of Family Violence. The 2018 summary table is available to read here:

https://content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-02/Family%20violence%20multi-agency%20risk%20assessment%20and%20management%20framework%20%2811%29.pdf

4.2.2   As a minimum, all staff should be familiar with the use of the Adult Screening Tool or appendix 3 of the MARAM to screen for Domestic and Family Violence. An online word template is available here:

https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/Responsibility%202-%20Appendix%203%20-%20Adult%20Screening%20Tool.docx

4.3   Recognising children as victim survivors in their own right

4.3.1   The Victorian Government MARAM Practice guide states that services provided to child victim survivors should acknowledge their unique experiences, vulnerabilities and needs, including the effects of trauma and cumulative harm arising from family violence (MARAM Practice Guides: Foundation Knowledge P8).

4.3.2   It is expected that all child victim survivors will have their own assessment and safety plan.

4.3.3   Recognising and responding to child victim survivors can be a technically complex and emotional task. Staff can seek assistance and support from their supervisor, Orange Door and MASP Practice leads. Other supportive resources are listed at the end of this procedure.

4.4   Recognising trauma indicators in children

4.4.1   In addition to professional development and supervision, staff are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the available literature and resources available online and via the MASP Practice Leader role. Berry Street Take Two has some excellent resources on understanding and responding to trauma in children and the following has been taken from their fact sheet on Family and Domestic Violence.

4.4.2   Violence is defined as any act which makes another person feel fearful, unsafe and not in control of their own destiny. Symptoms of children witnessing family and domestic violence can include:

- physical abuse symptoms (injuries that can't be explained; being jumpy and extra vigilant; aggressive and anti-social behaviour. Other symptoms of child abuse)
- problems communicating
- regressing developmentally (for example, an older child who stops talking or appears excessively clingy to mum)
- learning problems
- difficulty managing their emotions
- being bullied or bullying others
- increased antisocial behaviour
- being increasingly anxious or scared
- hurting or inflicting cruelty on animals or other children
- sleeping problems, such as nightmares and bedwetting.

4.5   Identifying perpetrator patterns of behaviour and our responsibilities

4.5.1   Drivers of Family Violence

4.5.1.1 A perpetrator's use of violence is a choice. Understanding the drivers of family violence risk can help to understand what influences perpetrators to use violence, and to understand individual acts of violence as part of a broader cultural context of gender dynamics and structural inequalities. Understanding these drivers can improve the way we identify risk and respond to family violence; however, this does not lessen perpetrators' responsibility for their choices.

4.5.1.2 The underlying drivers of family violence can reflect inequalities in the distribution of power, resources and opportunity within family relationships, particularly between women and men and in intimate partner relationships.

4.5.1.3 Communities with attitudes reflecting greater levels of gender inequality generally have higher rates of family violence and sexual violence.

4.5.1.4 Gender inequality between men and women refers to the unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunities across a range of institutions and settings including employment, education and training, health, safety and wellbeing, leadership and representation.

4.5.1.5 Inequality of power may be expressed as entitlement-based attitudes or a belief of ownership by a perpetrator over family members. Drivers of family violence risk are

consistent with the overarching drivers of violence against women and children including condoning violence against women, men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life, rigid gender roles and stereotype constructions of masculinity and femininity, and male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

4.5.2   For more information of the drivers of violence or the evidence-based risk factors see the MARAM framework document here:

https://content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-02/Family%20violence%20multi-agency%20risk%20assessment%20and%20management%20framework%20%2811%29.pdf

4.5.3   Presentation of Violent Behaviours

4.5.3.1 Physical abuse is one form of domestic or intimate partner violence. It is characterised by the pattern of actions that individuals use to intentionally control or dominate their intimate partner.

4.5.3.2 For a simple example of these behaviours refer to the Duluth Model power and control wheel. The Power and Control wheel outlines the following forms of behaviours that a perpetrator can use:

- Coercion and threats
- Intimidation
- Emotional Abuse
- Isolation
- Minimizing, denying, and blaming
- Children as bargaining tools
- Male Privilege
- Economic Abuse

    For further information on the Duluth Model and the Power and Control wheel visit:

    https://www.theduluthmodel.org/wheels/

4.6   Understanding adolescents who use violence and their unique and complex needs

4.6.1   Family violence used by adolescents is a distinct form of family violence and requires a different response to family violence used by adults, because of their age and the possibility that they are also victim survivors of family violence. Adolescents who use violence is a focus of the MARAM Practice Guides and staff can read specific information under section 11 available here:

https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-07/MARAM-practice-guides-foundation-knowledge.pdf

4.6.2   In summary, the MARAM Practice Guide states that:

- Most incidents of violence are committed by male adolescents against mothers. This may progress to violence against women.
- Violence in the home from an adolescent toward a sibling is a specific form of violence.
- There is evidence that sexually abusive behaviours by adolescents is more often directed towards younger siblings
- Professionals working with adolescents need to be mindful of collusion. Collusion occurs when a practitioner sides with the adolescent against other family members or gives a message (even inadvertently) that the use of violence is understandable.

4.6.3   If a staff member becomes aware of an adolescent who uses violence MASP expects that:

- The staff supervisor is kept informed and any agreed actions are documented on the client file.
- Enquires are made about the safety of other children (or adults) who may be at risk
- Staff follow the Victorian Child Safe standards and associated legislation and if necessary, report their concerns to Orange Door, Child Protection and/or police.
- Every effort is made to ensure the dignity and safety of the adolescent and any other family members or professionals who may be at risk.
- In some instances, it may be necessary to complete an internal incident report (where there has been incident involving staff) or a CIMS report (where there has been an incident involving another client).

4.7   Our role and responsibilities in information sharing and collaborative practice.

4.7.1   Staff must familiarise themselves with the <u>MASP Information Sharing Policy and Practice</u>.

4.7.2   No matter the stressors, violence is never excusable. A person using violence is responsible for their actions and the consequences of those actions. MASP is committed to naming violent behaviours and keeping perpetrators in view and holding them accountable for their actions.

4.7.3   A key part of keeping perpetrators in view and holding them accountable for their actions is to document and share information about perpetrator behaviours. Assessing coercive and controlling tactics/forms of violence used by perpetrators to exert power and control over victim survivors is an important part of risk assessment, which supports professionals' understanding of the pattern of behaviour.

4.7.4   If through your work you become aware or suspect someone is engaging in coercive and controlling behaviours or using violence you need to consult with your line manager and/or supervisor and explore if you need to share information to help with other agencies to manage the risk of the perpetrators, or make a new referral to manage the risk.

4.7.5   When sharing information with other services ensure that you are familiar with the MASP Information Sharing Policy and Practice and that you have informed a manager or supervisor that you are going to share information for this purpose.

4.8 Safety Planning

4.8.1   Orange Door is available to support staff with safety planning tools and questions.

4.8.2   All managers, supervisors, case managers and staff in direct client support roles will have foundation knowledge skills in safety planning through completion of one of the following training modules:

- 2018 Information Sharing and MARAM Introduction Training or
- 2019 DHHS Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Training (with MARAM introduction) or
- ISTA Module 2: accessed through the Information Sharing and MARAM Learning Management System
- (Essential pre -reading) Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework

4.8.3   The detail that staff write into a family violence safety plan will depend upon their role and responsibilities as described in the MARAM.

4.8.4   Tier four staff such as reception and administration <u>are not</u> expected to complete safe planning tools with clients

4.8.5   The majority of staff at MASP are Tier two and three staff and <u>are </u>expected to have a working knowledge of the Brief and Intermediate Risk Assessment and Risk Management Tools available here:

https://www.cfecfw.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/FINAL-DHHS-Brief-and-Intermediate-Participant-Guide.pdf

4.8.6   Tier one staff includes family specialists such as Orange Door Child First are expected to use the comprehensive risk management and safety planning tools available here:

https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-07/Responsibility-8-Comprehensive-Risk-Management-and-Safety-Planning.pdf

4.9 Confidentiality and privacy

4.9.1   Best practice and MASP preference is that staff work with Victim Survivors and gain consent before referring to services and sharing information. However, staff should always weigh up safety considerations and use their professional judgement when deciding to intervene or share information.

4.9.2   Where staff become aware of perpetrator risks staff should speak to their supervisor and refer to the policy on information sharing. Consent is not needed to share information where serious risk is identified or where there is a child safety concern.

4.10 Websites, Counselling and Support Services

Case managers and supervisors should be aware of websites, apps and referral pathways for clients who experience or perpetrate domestic violence, including counselling and intervention programs. The following is a starting point and is not an exhaustive list:

- **If a client is in immediate danger call 000**

- **Orange Door Mildura (1800 290 943)** The Orange Door is a free service for adults, children and young people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence and families who need extra support with the care of children.

- **Mallee Sexual Assault Unit and Domestic Violence Service (03) 5021 2130** Confidential and client direct service. 24 hour crisis response for all victims of sexual assault and / or family violence. 24 hour crisis refuge accommodation.

- **Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre (1800 015 188)** Safe Steps is Victoria's 24/7 Family Violence Response Centre. For 24/7 help, call Safe Steps on 1800 015 188. Web chat support available Mon-Fri, 9am – 9pm. This service is Victoria's state-wide access point for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence.

- **1800RESPECT (1800 737 732) – 1800RESPECT** is the national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service. Providing free and confidential information and support to people in Australia 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

- **Daisy** – Daisy is a free app made by 1800RESPECT to connect women to support near them. Daisy can link to service phone numbers and websites, which you can access from within the app so they don't show in browser history. There is also information on what to expect when contacting a service.

- **Family Safety Victoria (www.vic.gov.au/family-safety-victoria)** Find latest updates on the progress of the family violence reforms, news across the family violence sector, including opportunities to get involved.

- **MARAM Practice Guides and Resources (www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources)** MARAM will support workers across the service system to better understand

their responsibilities to undertake risk assessment and management, including information sharing and working collaboratively.