



Victoria Government Gazette

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Family Violence Protection Act 2008

FAMILY VIOLENCE RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Purpose

1. To:
 - a) describe the foundations of the service system response to family violence risk assessment and management, including from initial identification of potential family violence risk;
 - b) support framework organisations and section 191 agencies to understand their roles and responsibilities; and
 - c) support system-wide continuous improvement and building of a future evidence base through evaluation and validation.

Authorising Provision

2. The Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework is approved under section 189 of the **Family Violence Protection Act 2008**.

Commencement

3. The Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework comes into operation on 27 September 2018.

Definitions

4. A ‘perpetrator’ is a person who a framework organisation or section 191 agency reasonably believes, informed by a family violence risk assessment, may commit family violence.
5. A ‘victim survivor’ is a person who a framework organisation or section 191 agency reasonably believes, informed by a family violence risk assessment, is at risk of being subjected to family violence.

Principles

6. The following **Principles** underpin the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework. The **Framework Requirements** should be implemented with regard to these **Principles**, as appropriate and relevant to each organisation’s roles and responsibilities. The **Principles** are that:
 - a) family violence involves a spectrum of seriousness of risk and presentations and is unacceptable in any form across any community or culture;
 - b) framework organisations and section 191 agencies should work collaboratively to provide coordinated and effective risk assessment and management responses, including early intervention when family violence first occurs to avoid escalation into crisis and additional harm;
 - c) professionals should be aware, in their risk assessment and management practice, of the drivers of family violence, predominantly gender inequality, and how these intersects with other forms of structural inequality and discrimination;
 - d) the agency, dignity and intrinsic empowerment of victim survivors must be respected by partnering with them as active decision-making participants in risk assessment and management, including being supported to access and participate in justice processes that enable fair and just outcomes;
 - e) family violence may have serious impacts on the current and future physical, spiritual, psychological, developmental and emotional safety and wellbeing of children who are directly or indirectly exposed to its effects, and should be recognised as victim survivors in their own right;

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- f) 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;
- g) services and responses provided to people from Aboriginal communities should be culturally responsive and safe, recognising Aboriginal understanding of family violence and rights to self-determination and self-management, and take account of their particular experiences of colonisation, systemic violence and discrimination and recognise the ongoing and present day impacts of historical events, policies and practices;
- h) services and responses provided to diverse communities and older people should be accessible, culturally responsive and safe, client-centred, inclusive and non-discriminatory;
- i) perpetrators should be encouraged to acknowledge and take responsibility to end their violent, controlling and coercive behaviour, and service responses to perpetrators should be collaborative and coordinated through a system-wide approach that collectively and systematically creates opportunities for perpetrator accountability; and
- j) 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.

Framework Requirements

Pillar 1: Shared understanding of family violence

Framework organisations and section 191 agencies demonstrate an evidence-based, shared understanding of family violence risk and impact. A shared understanding promotes an effective, integrated service response to family violence and comprises:

- spectrum of family violence types
- evidence-based risk factors used to support determination of seriousness of risk
- complexity of experiences across the community.

Pillar 2: Consistent and collaborative practice

Framework organisations and section 191 agencies use a shared approach to identification, screening, assessment and management of family violence risk. Framework organisations and section 191 agencies use tools that are consistent with the evidence based factors at **Schedule 1**, and share information relevant to family violence risk assessment and management with other services in accordance with relevant laws.

The use of tools that share an evidence-base, and information sharing, support consistency of practice across services and help to:

- keep victim survivors safe and manage ongoing risk
- keep perpetrators in view and accountable for their actions and behaviours and assisting them to change their behaviour
- reinforce a shared understanding of family violence and risk
- strengthen formal and informal collaborative arrangements.

Seriousness of risk is to be assessed through structured professional judgement, which comprises a victim's self-assessed level of risk, fear and safety, assessment against evidence-based risk factors, information sharing to inform assessment and professional judgement.

Pillar 3: Responsibilities for risk assessment and management

Framework organisations and section 191 agencies understand their responsibilities in risk assessment and management practice and how these relate to the operation of Part 5A of the **Family Violence Protection Act 2008**, as applicable.

Framework organisations and section 191 agencies assign responsibilities of services and service providers within them in accordance with **Schedule 2**.

Pillar 4: Systems, outcomes and continuous improvement

Framework organisations and section 191 agencies:

- establish or utilise existing relevant governance and advisory structures to implement the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework
- collect consistent information about the evidence-based family violence risk factors, through tools aligned to **Schedule 2**, of service users' individual experience of the forms of family violence
- undertake activities to change organisational culture and practice to promote continuous improvement in risk assessment and management practice, information sharing and enhanced collaboration with other services.

Schedule 1 – Recognised family violence risk factors¹

Risk factors relevant to an adult victim’s circumstances
Physical assault whilst pregnant/following new birth*
Self-assessed level of risk
Planning to leave or recent separation*
Escalation – increase in severity and/or frequency of violence*
Imminence
Financial abuse/difficulties
Risk factors for adult or child victims caused by perpetrator behaviours
Controlling behaviours*
Access to weapons*
Use of weapon in most recent event*
Has ever harmed or threatened to harm victim of family members
Has ever tried to strangle or choke the victim*
Has ever threatened to kill victim*
Has ever harmed or threatened to harm or kill pets or other animals*
Has ever threatened or tried to self-harm or commit suicide*
Stalking of victim*
Sexual assault of victim*
Previous or current breach of court orders/Intervention Order
History of family violence
History of violent behaviour (not family violence)
Obsession/jealous behaviour toward victim*
Unemployed*/Disengaged from education
Drug and/or alcohol misuse/abuse*
Mental illness/depression
Isolation
Physical harm
Emotional abuse
Property damage
Risk factors specific to children caused by perpetrator behaviours
Exposure to family violence
Sexualised behaviours towards a child by the perpetrator
Child intervention in violence
Behaviour indicating non-return of child
Undermining the child-parent relationship
Professional and statutory intervention
Risk factors specific to children’s circumstances
History of professional involvement and/or statutory intervention
Change in behaviour not explained by other circumstances
Child is a victim in other forms of harm

¹ High risk factors related to an increased risk of a victim being killed or almost killed are indicated by an *. Factors for assessing victim’s risk may relate to either adult or child victims. Additional factors for assessing children’s risk are also included. Assessed presence of risk factors of adult victims is relevant in determining risk factors present for any child. Factors relating to child’s circumstances are indicators of potential family violence risk, related to general vulnerability.

Schedule 2 – Responsibilities for risk assessment and management

Risk assessment and management responsibilities	Expectations of framework organisations and section 191 agencies
Responsibility 1: Respectful, sensitive and safe engagement	<p>Ensure staff understand the nature and dynamics of family violence, facilitate an appropriate, accessible, culturally responsive environment for safe disclosure of information by service users, and respond to disclosures sensitively.</p> <p>Ensure staff recognise that any engagement of service users who may be a perpetrator must occur safely and not collude or respond to coercive behaviours.</p>
Responsibility 2: Identification of family violence	<p>Ensure staff use information gained through engagement with service users and other providers (and in some cases, through use of screening tools to aid identification/or routine screening of all clients) to identify indicators of family violence risk and potentially affected family members.</p> <p>Ensure staff understand when it might be safe to ask questions of clients who may be a perpetrator, to assist with identification.</p>
Responsibility 3: Intermediate risk assessment	<p>Ensure staff can competently and confidently conduct intermediate risk assessment of adult and child victim survivors (using structured professional judgement and appropriate tools, including the Brief and Intermediate Assessment tools).</p> <p>Where appropriate to the role and mandate of the organisation or service, and when safe to do so; ensure staff can competently and confidently contribute to behaviour assessment through engagement with a perpetrator, including use of the Perpetrator Behaviour Assessment, and contribute to keeping them in view and accountable for their actions and behaviours.</p>
Responsibility 4: Intermediate risk management	<p>Ensure staff actively address immediate risk and safety concerns relating to adult and child victim survivors, and undertake intermediate risk management, including safety planning.</p> <p>Those working directly with perpetrators attempt intermediate risk management when safe to do so, including safety planning.</p>
Responsibility 5: Seek consultation for comprehensive risk assessment, risk management and referrals	<p>Ensure staff seek internal supervision and further consultation with family violence specialists to collaborate on risk assessment and risk management for adult and child victim survivors and perpetrators, and make active referrals for comprehensive specialist responses, if appropriate.</p>

Risk assessment and management responsibilities	Expectations of framework organisations and section 191 agencies
Responsibility 6: Contribute to information sharing with other services (as authorised by legislation)	Ensure staff proactively share information relevant to the assessment and management of family violence risk, and respond to requests to share information from other information sharing entities, under the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme, privacy law or other legislative authorisation.
Responsibility 7: Comprehensive assessment	Ensure staff in specialist family violence positions are trained to comprehensively assess the risks, needs and protective factors for adult and child victim survivors. Ensure staff who specialise in working with perpetrators are trained and equipped to undertake comprehensive risk and needs assessment to determine seriousness of risk of the perpetrator, tailored intervention and support options, and contribute to keeping them in view and accountable for their actions and behaviours. This includes an understanding of situating their own roles and responsibilities within the broader system to enable mutually reinforcing interventions over time.
Responsibility 8: Comprehensive risk management and safety planning	Ensure staff in specialist family violence positions are trained to undertake comprehensive risk management through development, monitoring and actioning of safety plans (including ongoing risk assessment), in partnership with the adult or child victim survivor and relevant support agencies. Ensure staff who specialise in working with perpetrators are trained to undertake comprehensive risk management through development, monitoring and actioning of risk management plans (including information sharing); monitoring across the service system (including justice systems); and actions to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions, through formal and informal system accountability mechanisms; and including services responses that support perpetrators' personal accountability, to accept responsibility for their actions, and work at the behaviour change process.
Responsibility 9: Contribute to coordinated risk management	Ensure staff contribute to coordinated risk management, as part of integrated, multi-disciplinary and multiagency approaches, including information sharing, referrals, action planning, coordination of responses and collaborative action acquittal.
Responsibility 10: Collaborate for ongoing risk assessment and risk management	Ensure staff are equipped to play an ongoing role in collaboratively monitoring, assessing and managing risk over time, to identify changes in assessed level of risk and ensure risk management and safety plans are responsive to changed circumstances, including escalation. Ensure safety plans are enacted.

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Address all enquiries to the Government Printer for the State of Victoria

Level 2, 1 Macarthur Street
Melbourne 3002
Victoria Australia

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**Retail &
Mail Sales**

Victoria Government Gazette

Ground Floor, Building 8,
658 Church Street,
Richmond 3121
DX 106 Melbourne



Telephone

(03) 8523 4601



Fax

(03) 9600 0478

email

gazette@bluestargroup.com.au

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