



Support & Safety Hub

Interim Operational Guidance to the interface between Support and Safety Hubs and Community Operations and Victims Support Agency

May 2018

Aboriginal acknowledgement

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Victorian Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely. We acknowledge and respect that Aboriginal communities are steeped in traditions and customs built on an incredibly disciplined social and cultural order. This social and cultural order has sustained up to 50,000 years of existence. We acknowledge the ongoing leadership role of the Aboriginal community in addressing and preventing family violence and join with our First Peoples to eliminate family violence from all communities.

The Orange Door

The Orange Door The public branding of the Support and Safety Hubs is The Orange Door. 'The Orange Door' and 'Support and Safety Hub' terms are used interchangeably across policy and communication materials.

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Preamble

The public branding of the Support and Safety Hubs is The Orange Door. The Orange Door and Support and Safety Hub terms are used interchangeably across policy and communication materials.

This operational guidance (guidance) was developed by Family Safety Victoria (FSV) and Community Operations and Victims Support Agency (COVSA) to support the relationship between the Support and Safety Hubs (Hubs) and COVSA from the establishment of Hubs operations.

The intent of the guidance is to ensure practical supports are in place for COVSA and Hub workers, and that there is a shared understanding of roles and expectations from establishment.

The guidance has been developed in the context of the first six months of the commencement of the Hubs, with the expectation that key learnings will provide the opportunity to further inform how COVSA and Hubs work together to ensure that women, children, and young people are safe, and that perpetrators are kept in view.

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Terminology

Affected Family Member

An affected family member is the individual who is deemed to be affected by events occurring during the family violence incident.

Central Information Point

The Central Information Point (CIP) was recommended by the Royal Commission into Family Violence (RCFV) to provide timely information to support effective risk assessment and management. Support and Safety Hubs (Hubs) workers will be able to request a CIP report about an individual that they hold a reasonable belief is perpetrating or at risk of perpetrating family violence. The CIP will bring together the most critical information about adult perpetrators (male or female) who have been referred to the Hub directly and who are believed to be perpetrating family violence against another individual who has been referred to the Hubs (including against children). The CIP will be in a pilot phase at the commencement of Hubs operations, with its capability building incrementally over time. COVSA/Victims of Crime Helpline will not have direct access to CIP reports.

Perpetrator

This is the term used in state and national policy to describe people who use violence. The aim in using this term is to ensure safety, accountability, and end the individual's use of violence. This term is not limited to people who have been accused or convicted of criminal offences. This term is not meant to define the perpetrator for life: the aim is to end the individual's use of violence. In this document the term perpetrator is used to describe people who use family violence.

The Orange Door

Support and Safety Hubs will be branded as The Orange Door.

Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal

The Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT) is established by the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996*. The Tribunal hears and determines applications for financial assistance made by victims of violent crime committed in Victoria, and assists victims of crime in their recovery by paying for expenses that they have incurred, or are likely to incur in the future, as a direct result of the crime. It is also intended to be a forum for applicants to relate their experience as victims of crime.

Introduction

The Victorian Government has committed to implementing all 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence and to delivering on the vision described in *Roadmap for Reform: Strong families, Safe children*.

A key recommendation of the Royal Commission and the Roadmap for Reform was to establish a network of Support and Safety Hubs (Hubs) across Victoria to provide a new way for women, children and young people experiencing family violence, and families in need of support with the care, development and wellbeing of children and young people, to access coordinated support from community, health and justice services.

Hubs will be accessible, safe and welcoming to people, providing quick and simple access to the support and safety they need. The Hubs will also focus on perpetrators of family violence, to keep them in view and connect them to services that assist in holding them accountable for their actions and changing their behaviour.

Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change released in November 2016, sets out the Victorian Government's commitment to establish a network of Support and Safety Hubs across all 17 Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) areas by 2021. The Hubs will be central to Victoria's approach to addressing both family violence and ensuring child safety and wellbeing. The Hubs will also form a critical part of the broader service system response.

The *Support and Safety Hubs: Statewide Concept* (Statewide Concept) released in July 2017 describes the intent, scope, key functions and roles of the Hubs and how the Hubs will contribute to the vision and aspirations of Victoria's Plan for Change and Roadmap for Reform. It outlines what the Hubs will deliver across the state as part of the future service system; the approach government is taking, and a number of principles for the design of the Hubs.

Family Safety Victoria (FSV) will oversee the establishment of the Hub network and provide local leadership, facilitation, oversight and infrastructure management in collaboration with Local Hub Establishment Groups and local Hub Leadership Groups who will lead the implementation and management of the Hubs in each area.

The Victorian Government has committed to the initial establishment of five launch sites in the DHHS areas of Mallee, Barwon, Bayside Peninsula, Inner Gippsland and North-East Melbourne from early 2018, with Hubs in all 17 DHHS Areas by the end of 2021.

Purpose of the operational guidance

COVSA and FSV have collaborated to develop this interim guidance for Hubs and COVSA. This will drive responsive services to people using the services and provide clarity for staff regarding their roles.

The purpose of this operational guidance (guidance) is to provide information about the operating procedures and processes to support the functions and operations of the Hubs, and to support the statewide interface between FSV, Hubs and COVSA.

This guidance will outline:

1. how COVSA and FSV (through the Hubs) will work together, including how Hubs complement existing family violence and other support services
2. processes to make referrals to the Hubs for women, children and perpetrators
3. roles, responsibilities and key contacts between COVSA and the Hubs
4. information sharing processes to support the relationship between COVSA and the Hubs.

The guidance aims to:

1. ensure that the experience of accessing the appropriate range of supports and assistance is as seamless as possible for all family violence victims and families in need of support with the care and development of children and young people
2. ensure that perpetrators are kept in view, held to account and connected to services which address their behaviour
3. ensure that there is a consistent approach by the Hubs and COVSA in the Hubs launch areas to providing support for people that access the Hubs

The guidance will help to ensure that:

1. there is clarity about L17 referral pathways and responses
2. there is a shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Hubs and COVSA
3. the Hubs and COVSA do not duplicate follow-up
4. there is comprehensive risk assessment and management based on the best information available across the system.

How this guidance relates to existing policies and practices

The guidance should be read in the context of relevant legislation in relation to family violence, and relevant organisational policy for COVSA and FSV. This guidance does not replace or override responsibilities of COVSA and the Hubs in the launch areas. The organisations will continue to operate within existing legislation and relevant policy and practice frameworks that are in place.

Commitment of participation

The guidance has been developed by FSV in consultation with COVSA. The Hubs and COVSA are committed to making support easier and safer for all victims of family violence, and families in need of support with the care and development of children and young people.

The Hubs and COVSA will continue to develop increased understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and work collaboratively to deliver effective and coordinated responses.

Review of operational guidance

This document outlines statewide requirements and provides guidance to support the commencement of Hub service delivery across the five Hub launch sites. It is recognised that this guidance needs to be developed iteratively, informed by the lessons we learn from the first six months of Hub implementation as well as further policy and practice work lead by Family Safety Victoria in partnership with key stakeholders across government and the service system.

It is intended that the next iterations of statewide guidance will be in place by the end of 2018 and will incorporate key learnings, practice innovation, IT enhancements and legislative changes, impacting on the operational arrangements between the Hubs and COVSA.

What is Family Safety Victoria

Family Safety Victoria (FSV) was established in July 2017 and is Australia's first government agency dedicated to the prevention of family violence. FSV will deliver key initiatives to help protect, support and identify risk for those impacted by family violence and hold perpetrators to account. FSV is also coordinating access to services that support vulnerable children and families.

FSV is responsible for establishing the Support and Safety Hubs, as well as:

- enhancing existing specialised services for victims of family violence including children, so that the right assistance is available at the right time
- implementing the family violence information sharing scheme (FVISS) and risk assessment and management framework, supported by a Central Information Point (CIP) connecting police, corrections, the courts, DHHS and services to keep victims safe
- delivering the 10-Year Family Violence Industry Plan and houses the new Centre for Workforce Excellence, to build workforce capacity and capability in partnership with the sector
- building an understanding to embed responsiveness to diverse communities across the family violence reforms
- leading engagement with sector, victim survivors, diverse communities and the Victorian community as a whole across all reforms and initiatives
- enhancing perpetrator responses.

Roles and Responsibilities

What are Support and Safety Hubs

The Hubs are a new way for women, children and young people experiencing family violence, and families who need support with the care, wellbeing and development of children and young people to access coordinated support from social, health and justice services.

The Hubs will seek to be culturally safe and respectful of Aboriginal people, meet the diverse needs of the Victorian community and be accessible for people of all ages.

The Hubs will bring together access points for family violence services, family services and perpetrator/men's services. They will bring together existing referral points for victims and perpetrators of family violence (including police L17 referral points), and children and families in need of support (Child FIRST).

The Hubs when fully established will provide:

- a more visible contact point so that people know where to go for support
- an approach across the spectrum of prevention, early intervention and response
- help for people to identify family violence and child and family safety and wellbeing issues
- advice based on the latest risk assessment tools and best available information
- specialist support and tailored advice for victims, families and children, and perpetrators
- a strong focus on perpetrator accountability
- a system-wide view of service capacity, client experience and outcomes.

The Support and Safety Hubs service model (2017) builds on the vision and aspirations as articulated in the Support and Safety Hubs State-wide Concept and provides further refinement of the scope and functionality. It details the baseline requirements, processes and operational specifications for the foundational Hubs model for the five launch areas and how this evolve over time.

The Hubs represent a shift in our approach, and are a critical part of our whole-of-system reform.

The functions of the Hubs will scale up over time and will also play a role in improving the service system because of the unique perspective they will develop on community needs, and service capacity, capability and responsiveness.

Hubs will be open during business hours 9.00am-5.00pm Monday to Friday each week (excluding public holidays). After hours services will continue to be provided by Safe Steps, the Men's Referral Service and Child Protection.

Community Operations and Victims Support Agency

COVSA, within the Department of Justice and Regulation, is the official Victorian Government Agency helping people in Victoria manage the effects of violent crime.

COVSA represents people affected by crime, coordinating a whole-of-government approach to services for victims. The agency operates the Victims of Crime Helpline, and funds statewide Victims Assistance Program (VAP) services to provide victims of crime with practical assistance, counselling and support through the justice system.

COVSA is pivotal in linking victims of crime to service systems, ensuring they receive personalised, timely and effective support to manage the effects of violent crime.

Victims of Crime Helpline

The Victims of Crime Helpline is a state-wide Department of Justice and Regulation (DJR) operated contact service. The Helpline receives electronic referrals from Victoria Police for victims of violent crime and property crime. The Helpline also receives all L17 reports for adult male Affected Family Members (AFMs), and calls from victims of crime and the general public seeking information and support.

The Helpline operates between 8am-11pm 7 days a week, including public holidays, and employs trained Victim Support Officers (VSO's). VSO's are often the first point of contact victims of crime have with the criminal justice system. When an L17 report is received, VSO's conduct a risk assessment and attempt to contact a victim of crime within 24 hours of the incident.

The Helpline provides a range of services including:

- a supportive listening environment
- timely and accurate information about services and the criminal justice system relevant to particular victim's needs; and
- referral to appropriate support services including the Victims Assistance Program.

The Helpline will provide victims of crime who identify as Aboriginal with the option of being referred to a VAP Koori Engagement Worker.

Victims Assistance Program

The VAP provides a case management service across Victoria and uses brokerage funding from DJR to provide practical support and/or therapeutic interventions, such as accommodation and counselling. VAP services operate during business hours and are not funded to provide crisis support.

Referral process/pathways between Hubs, COVSA and VAPs

Hubs will receive Police family violence referrals (L17s) for adult female and child victims of family violence, for perpetrators of family violence, as well as other professional referrals and 'self-referrals' or initial contact from family, friends and community members for people experiencing family violence, and children and families in need of support. Police family violence referrals (L17s) for adult male victims will be received by COVSA.

Hubs are required to deliver culturally safe services and will offer Aboriginal people choice of accessing an Aboriginal service or being supported by an Aboriginal worker in the Hubs. Where an Aboriginal adult male victim of family violence directly contacts, is referred to or is identified by the Hub, (not through an L17), they will be offered the choice to access services through COVSA, the Hub or an Aboriginal service. Where agreed as part of the Koori Family Violence Police Protocols, Police family violence referrals for Aboriginal people will be received by an Aboriginal service (this is currently in place in one Hub launch area - the Mallee).

Where an adult male victim of family violence self refers to a hub or is identified as a male victim of family violence by the hub (not through an L17) they will be offered a choice to access services through COVSA, the Hub or a service that provides a specialised response to meet their needs.

The Hubs and COVSA will coordinate actions and share information where there are people and families who are referred to both services (e.g. where the Hub receives a referral for a child and/or a perpetrator and COVSA receives a referral for the victim) and in instances where there is mis-identification of the 'primary aggressor'.

A feedback loop will be established between the Hubs and that agency to provide the opportunity to identify and discuss referral responses, facilitate interagency collaboration and further develop the relationship between the Hubs and COVSA.

Information sharing between the Hubs and COVSA will be guided by relevant legislation including the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme which commenced on the 26 February 2018. Staff in both Hubs and COVSA are in the initial tranche prescribed as Information Sharing Entities (ISEs).

Referral pathways from COVSA to Hubs

The Victims of Crime Helpline receives referrals from:

- Police via L17 for family violence incidents or VpeR for non-family violence related incidents
- Hubs, government, community services
- Self-referrals.

The Victims of Crime Helpline refers people to:

- Victims Assistance Program
- Family Violence Services
- Centres Against Sexual Assault
- Legal services
- Courts and Tribunals
- Specialist services
- VicPol
- Universal Services
- Support and Safety Hubs.

Support and Safety Hubs receive referrals from:

- police via L17s for family violence incidents
- anyone (including COVSA/VAPS staff) who is concerned about the wellbeing of a child, including unborn children
- anyone (including COVSA/VAPS staff) who identifies children and families in need of support
- anyone (including COVSA/VAPS staff) seeking assistance related to perpetrators of family violence

- anyone seeking assistance for women and children experiencing family violence.

COVSA/VAPS and Hubs will work cooperatively to support children, families and individuals and to connect them to the most appropriate services.

COVSA/VAPs will transfer male perpetrators to Hubs where they are initially misclassified as male victims but COVSA or VAP assess that they are in fact perpetrators of family violence.

COVSA and Hubs will work towards Rainbow Tick accreditation within three years of Hub establishment (by 2021). COVSA are open to receiving referrals for any LGBTI people. COVSA are able to case manage LGBTI victims via VAP, and also will have MOU's in place with specialist LGBTI services.

Hubs provide support for families in all their diverse forms and welcomes people of any sex, gender or sexuality. Hubs workers will connect people to services that meet their needs. Some people may prefer to be connected to agencies that specialise in providing service to LGBTI people.

Information sharing

The effectiveness of the working relationship between the Hubs and COVSA will be underpinned by dynamic information sharing. Information to support the functions of the Hubs (such as triage, and risk and needs assessment) will rely on the sharing of information with other agencies such as COVSA, and other sources like the Central Information Point (CIP).

Sharing of information and privacy between the Hubs and COVSA will operate in accordance with a suite of relevant laws and frameworks in relation to information sharing, and will only be shared in appropriate circumstances. This includes:

- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (including the Information Privacy Principles)
- *Health Records Act 2001* (including the Health Privacy Principles)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
- Part 5A of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Part 5A) (including the Family Violence Information Sharing Regulations 2018 and Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines).

In making referrals to the Hub or COVSA, Hub workers and COVSA staff will need to share information directly between the agencies.

This will support the safety of women, children and young people, perpetrator accountability, and risk assessment and risk management.

Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme

The Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (the Scheme) has been created by the new part 5A of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*(FVPA). The Scheme authorises a select group of information sharing entities (ISEs) to share information with one another for family violence risk assessment and risk management purposes. Most workers within the Hubs, including the Senior Child Protection Practitioner, Community Based (SCPPCB), are part of this group of ISEs.

In addition, the legislation removes the requirement that a serious, imminent threat to an individual must be present before information can be legally shared. This applies generally, and not just in the context of family violence.

The legislation also enables the established Central Information Point (CIP) to be an effective and timely conduit of information sharing for Hub practitioners.

The Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines can be viewed at:

<https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/family-safety-victoria/information-sharing-and-risk-management.html>

Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework

A new Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework will be developed and implemented in line with Recommendation 1 of the RCFV. It will address issues and gaps in the current Framework that were identified by the RCFV, the Coronial Inquest into the death of Luke Geoffrey Batty and the 2016 Monash University Review of the Family Violence Risk Assessment & Risk management Framework (CRAF).

The new Framework will allow greater awareness of assessment and management practice and information sharing, including in multi-agency environments, to better protect victims and hold perpetrators in view and to account. It will ensure:

- all parts of the service system have a shared understanding of family violence risk
- workers have the skills and a framework to guide appropriate action
- there is a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities and minimum standards of practice for the system to share information, coordinate and implement safety and accountability planning.

The Hubs will use an interim common risk assessment tool (ICRAT) initially until the updated framework is available. COVSA will continue to use CRAF until the updated Framework is available.

A Central Information Point to provide access to critical perpetrator information

The establishment of CIP allows for more effective and timely access to information about perpetrators of family violence.

The CIP will produce reports for frontline workers that bring together the most critical information about perpetrators from information held by Courts, Corrections, Victoria Police and the DHHS. This will make it easier for family violence professionals to assess the risk perpetrators pose to women and children and provide timely support.

COVSA will not have direct access to the CIP at start up. For example, if a COVSA worker is concerned that a perpetrator has been misclassified as a male victim, the worker can seek further information from a Hub worker. The CIP will be refined through continuous iteration over the first two years of operation, then scaled up and rolled out to other services including the COVSA.

Staff in both the Hubs and COVSA are prescribed as ISEs under the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme. Application of these regimes will depend on the particular circumstances of the individual.

Hubs will have access to the CIP to request critical information about perpetrators from Victoria Police, Courts, Corrections, and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). This will make it easier for workers to assess the risk perpetrators pose to victim survivors, and to provide timely support.

Initially, the CIP will have limited operating capacity.

Shared staff information, training and development programs regarding protocols and in correct identification of predominant aggressors

There is an opportunity for COVSA and Hubs staff to share training opportunities in legislation reform, information sharing, CIP, the new family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework and differentiating between the primary aggressor and the predominant aggressor. Joint training can provide an opportunity for staff to network and develop trust and strengthened relationships to support client work.

Clear public communications, including coordination of website content

COVSA and Hubs will update their respective websites, manuals and guidelines to reflect the arrangements agreed to in this protocol.

Shared tools, resources and training

COVSA and Hubs will work over time towards using the same risk assessment tools, referral portals and provide opportunities for joint training or sharing of expertise to support the correct identification of victims/perpetrators.

Review

This document outlines statewide requirements and provides guidance to support the commencement of Hub service delivery across the five Hub launch sites. It is recognised that this guidance needs to be developed iteratively, informed by the lessons we learn from the first six months of Hub implementation as well as further policy and practice work lead by Family Safety Victoria in partnership with key stakeholders across government and the service system.

It is intended that the next iterations of statewide guidance will be in place by the end of 2018 and will incorporate key learnings, practice innovation, IT enhancements and legislative changes, impacting on the operational arrangements between the Hubs and COVSA.

Learning and continuous improvement

The operation and practice of the Hubs will be informed by emerging needs and evidence and firmly embedded with the principle of continuous improvement. The design and implementation of the Hubs will continue to develop and be informed by community needs, co-design, and practice learnings.

Initially, existing governance arrangements within FSV and COVSA will continue to provide the forum to support and contribute to further service improvements and practice learnings from the Hubs operations, and continue to strengthen the working relationships between the Hubs and COVSA.

Disputes between COVSA and the Hubs

COVSA and Hubs Centre Managers will work proactively with each other to resolve disputes that may arise in relation to the operation of the Hubs. Every effort should be made to resolve issues informally, at a local level.