



Support & Safety Hub

# Interim operational guidance on the interface between Support and Safety Hubs and the Men's Referral Service

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 Men's Referral Service to support the relationship between the Support and Safety Hubs (Hubs) and Men's Referral Service from the establishment of Hubs operations.

The intent of guidance is to ensure practice supports are in place for the Men's Referral Service 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 the Men's Referral Service and Hubs work together to ensure that women, children, and young people are safe, and that perpetrators are kept in view.

For queries relating to the application of this guidance, contact:

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# Background

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 mid 2018, with Hubs in all 17 DHHS Areas by the end of 2021.

## Purpose of the operational guidance

The purpose of the operational guidance (guidance) is to provide interim advice about the operating procedures and processes that will support the interface between Hubs and the Men's Referral Service (operated by No to Violence) in the first five launch site Areas. As Hubs are established, the guidance will be reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect operational and practice changes.

The guidance outlines:

- how Men's Referral Service and FSV (through the Hubs) will work together, including how Hubs complement existing family violence and other support services
- information sharing and referral processes to support the relationship between Men's Referral Service and Hubs

The guidance will ensure a consistent approach to information and referrals for perpetrators in Hub launch site Areas.

## 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 the Men's Referral Service and FSV in relation to family violence. This guidance does not replace or override responsibilities of Men's Referral Service and the Hubs in the launch site areas, which will continue to operate within existing legislation, and relevant policy and practice frameworks that are in place.

## Family Safety Victoria (FSV)

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.

## 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.

## Men's Referral Service

No to Violence is the peak body for organisations and individuals working with men to end family violence in Victoria.

No to Violence operates the Men's Referral Service, a state-wide men's family violence telephone counselling and information line, and receives Victoria Police L17 referrals for perpetrators on weekends and public holidays.

The Men's Referral Service also provide support and referrals for people seeking information on behalf of their partners, friends or family members, and workers in a range of agencies seeking assistance for their clients who are men.

## Roles and responsibilities

*Note:* Support and Safety Hubs will be open during the hours of 9am-5pm Monday to Friday, except public holidays (referred to in this operational guidance as business hours).

After-hours refers to weekends and public holidays.

### Intake and assessment – business hours

In principle, where a perpetrator lives within a catchment of a Support and Safety Hub, intake and assessment should occur through the local Hub access network (*see catchment guidance in the below box*).

### **Catchment**

Hubs will predominantly provide services for the population residing within its catchment (i.e. people living within the local DHHS administrative area of each Hub).

If a person or family who does not reside in that catchment, or someone who is transient/homeless, approaches the Hub seeking support for family violence or child safety and wellbeing issues the Hub will seek to respond to their immediate needs in relation to family violence and the safety, wellbeing and development of children. In the interests of practicality, building trust, and helping people who need it, the Hub will provide a minimum standard of service as appropriate in the circumstances. For example, if the situation is high risk and there is no other service or agency that would be responsible and/or it would be highly impractical to respond, the Hub will provide a crisis response. In other circumstances, the Hub will conduct screening, identification and triage, and then help the person or family identify a suitable service in their local area.

If professional referrals (including L17s) are sent to a Hub, but it is identified that the service response should be provided in another area (e.g. based on the person's current place of residence or they are actively engaged with a service in that area), they will be redirected. However, Hubs can accept referrals outside catchment in limited circumstances. This may be appropriate for reasons of:

- safety (e.g. if it is safer for women and children experiencing family violence to access services from that local area Hub)
- privacy (e.g. if it would better protect the client's confidentiality or privacy to access services from that local area Hub)
- accessibility (e.g. if it is easier for the client to access services at that particular Hub location because of transport connections)
- perpetrator accountability (e.g. if it would assist to ensure the perpetrator remains 'in view')

At a minimum, Hubs must support people and families to access another appropriate service that can assist. This will mean that Hubs link people to services in other areas and interstate.

When the Men's Referral Service receives a call from a perpetrator, victim survivor, friend or family member who resides in a Hub catchment, a referral will be made to the relevant local Hub once immediate safety to victim survivors has been established. This process may include the provision of Hub's details to the perpetrator, victim survivor, friend or family member.

When the Men's Referral Service receives a call from a perpetrator, victim survivor, friend or family member who resides in a non-Hub catchment, a referral will be made to existing local perpetrator intake provider once immediate safety to victim survivors has been established.

## **Intake and assessment – after hours**

### L17 referral process

The Men's Referral Service will continue to receive L17 referrals for perpetrators on weekends (12pm Friday – 5pm Sunday) and public holidays (12pm the day before – 5pm on the public holiday).

The Men's Referral Service will attempt to engage the perpetrator with a view to:

- assess the perpetrator's risk to victim survivors and to themselves
- assess current engagement with services
- assess the perpetrator's suitability to engage with specialist perpetrator services, including men's behaviour change programs or perpetrator case management.

The Men's Referral Service will record any information relating to the engagement within the L17 portal.

On Monday (or the day following a public holiday)\*, the Men's Referral Service will provide the relevant Hub with:

- a list of all L17s (by incident number) where the Men's Referral Service has engaged the perpetrator and recorded information within the L17 portal
- a list of all L17s (by incident number) where the Men's Referral Service has not engaged the perpetrator.

\*Process should be completed by 10pm Monday or 10pm the day following a public holiday.

#### Informal referral process

The Men's Referral Service will receive unsolicited calls from perpetrators, or people suspected as being perpetrators, on weekends (9am-6pm) and public holidays (9am-6pm) in their capacity as a state-wide counselling and information line.

The Men's Referral Service will attempt to engage the perpetrator with a view to:

- assess the perpetrator's risk to victim survivors and to themselves
- assess current engagement with services
- assess the perpetrator's suitability to engage with specialist perpetrator services, including men's behaviour change programs or perpetrator case management.

Depending on the nature of the engagement, the Men's Referral Service will undertake one of the following actions:

- if there are immediate concerns for a person's life or safety, Victoria Police will be notified immediately
- if the perpetrator is willing to engage with services, they will be provided the details of the relevant Hub, and the perpetrators details, including any information relating to the engagement, will be provided to the relevant Hub via email\*
- if the perpetrator is not willing to engage with services, their details, including any information relating to the engagement, will be provided to the relevant Hub via email\*.

\*Process should be completed by 10pm Monday or 10pm the day following a public holiday.

The Men's Referral Service will continue to receive anonymous calls. It is acknowledged that these calls will not require a referral.

### ***In the future***

The Hubs will have a purpose-built information system, the Hubs Client Relationship Management system (CRM), to capture, store and record case information.

The roll-out of this infrastructure will form part of the phased implementation of the Hubs so that by 2021 there is a statewide Hubs CRM system. The CRM will 'go live' for the implementation of the first five launch Hubs. Following this, continuous improvements will be made to refine and increase the functionality of the CRM. Further enhancements and integration with external systems may occur over the longer term.

Consideration will be given to expanding access to some features of the CRM for core services, including the Men's Referral Service (e.g. to support provision of after-hours responses or to support the reviewing and monitoring of client outcomes).

## **Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme**

A new family violence information sharing regime has been introduced to remove existing legislative, regulatory and cultural barriers to information sharing.

Under the regime, a 'trusted zone' of government agencies and funded organisations will be able to request information from each other to help identify and manage risks for victim survivors of family violence.

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>

FSV will take a phased approach to implementing the information sharing reforms, with an initial tranche of organisations prescribed as Information Sharing Entities (ISEs) in the proposed Regulations to align with the establishment of the Hub launch sites.

All ISEs can request and share information for a family violence protection purpose. A subset of ISEs are also Risk Assessment Entities (RAEs) and may request information for a family violence assessment purpose.

As workers in a state funded specialist women's family violence service, Men's Referral Service workers are prescribed as both an ISE and RAE. Support and Safety Hub workers are also prescribed as both an ISE and RAE.

See *'Family violence information sharing guidelines: guidance for information sharing entities'* for further information.

## Information sharing principles

Information sharing between Men's Referral Service and Hubs will be guided by the principles outlined in Section 7 of the *Family Violence Protection Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2017* –

- (1) The principles set out in this section should be used for guidance in relation to the collection, use or disclosure of confidential information that is authorised or required to be collected, used or disclosed under this Part.
- (2) Information sharing entities should—
  - (a) work collaboratively to coordinate services in a manner that respects the functions and expertise of each information sharing entity; and
  - (b) give precedence to the right to be safe from family violence over the right to privacy; and
  - (c) only collect, use or disclose a person's confidential information to the extent that the collection, use or disclosure of the information is necessary—
    - (i) to assess or manage risk to the safety of a person from family violence; and
    - (ii) to hold perpetrators of family violence accountable for their actions; and
  - (d) collect, use or disclose the confidential information of a person who identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander in a manner that—
    - (i) promotes the right to self-determination and is culturally sensitive; and
    - (ii) considers the person's familial and community connections; and
  - (e) have regard to and be respectful of a person's cultural, sexual and gender identity and religious faith.
- (3) In addition to the principles set out in subsection (2), when collecting, using and disclosing confidential information relating to a child to assess any risk to the safety of the child from family violence or to protect the child from family violence, information sharing entities should—
  - (a) promote the agency of the child and other family members at risk of family violence by ensuring their wishes are taken into account having regard to the appropriateness of doing so and the child's age and maturity; and
  - (b) if the collection, use and disclosure of that information includes the confidential information of other family members at risk of family violence, take all reasonable steps to ensure the information is collected, used and disclosed in a way that—
    - (i) plans for the safety of those family members at risk of being subjected to family violence; and
    - (ii) recognises the desirability of preserving and promoting positive relationships between those family members and the child.

# Implementation

Men's Referral Service and FSV will update their respective websites, policies, manuals and guidelines to reflect the arrangements set out in this guidance.

## Review of operating 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 Men's Referral Service.

## Dispute resolution

Men's Referral Service and Hubs Centre Managers will work proactively with each other to resolve disputes that may arise in relation to the operation of the Hubs and implementation of this guidance. Every effort should be made to resolve issues informally. Where issues cannot be informally resolved, they will be referred to the FSV and Men's Referral Service representatives nominated in this guidance for resolution.

## 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 Men's Referral Service 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 Men's Referral Service.

## Representatives

For the purpose of facilitating a productive and efficient relationship, Men's Referral Service and FSV nominate the following persons as representatives for communications and any dispute resolution in relation to this operational guidance.

### **Family Safety Victoria**

Jenny Willox

Director, Family Violence Policy and Programs

### **No to Violence**

Jacqui Watt

Chief Executive Officer