

FAMILY VIOLENCE SUPPORT

QUALITY AREA 2 | ELAA version 1.3



PURPOSE

This policy is to support staff at Somerville Kindergarten to

- identify and respond to family violence
- understand and fulfill their service's responsibilities under the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM), and
- explain the supports available for children, parents, and staff experiencing family violence.



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Somerville Kindergarten is committed to:

- zero tolerance to family violence
- promoting collaborative, multi-agency practice and information sharing
- promoting a shared understanding of family violence across the community, including Aboriginal and diverse communities
- providing a culturally safe response, recognising victim survivors as the expert in their own experience and including and supporting them to make decisions about their own safety and wellbeing.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Somerville Kindergarten.

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Fulfilling legal obligations, including mandatory reporting and duty of care obligations (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) (<i>refer to Attachment 1</i>)	R	R	R		R
Undertaking child safety reviews and developing an action plan to maintain Child Safe Standards (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) at Somerville Kindergarten	R	√	√		√
Creating a culturally safe environment (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) for safe disclosure of family violence and respond to	√	√	√		

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disclosures sensitively, with empathy and without judgement					
Ensuring all staff understand their responsibilities for the wellbeing and safety of the children at Somerville Kindergarten and for MARAM Responsibility 1 and contributing to MARAM Responsibilities 2, 5, 6, 9 and 10	R	R	√		√
Identify 2 to 3 staff members to be MARAM nominated staff with responsibilities for screening for family violence, safety planning and providing ongoing support	R	R			
Ensuring MARAM nominated staff complete relevant department training	R	R			
Ensuring that MARAM nominated staff understand their responsibilities and are supported for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> screening for family violence making basic safety plans making referrals to specialist services and collaborating to provide ongoing support to the child, young person or their family making and responding to FVISS and CISS requests. 	R	R			
Following processes in identifying family violence (<i>refer to Attachment 2</i>)	R	R	R		R
Ensuring the staff onboarding processes is updated and that staff are aware of their responsibilities and trained, as required	R	R			
MARAM nominated staff					
Attending MARAM training for nominated staff – refer to Training for the information sharing and MARAM reforms , under ‘Education workforces’		√	√		
Using the Family violence screening tool if they have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> received a disclosure of family violence observed signs of trauma that may indicate a child is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing family violence, observed family violence risk factors observed narratives or behaviours that indicate family violence completed or received a completed Family violence identification tool and/or Family violence screening tool from a colleague (<i>refer to Attachment 3</i>) 		√	√		
Following the instructions in the Family violence screening tool to respond to family violence in accordance with the Four Critical Actions , including by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing a safety plan using the Family violence basic safety plan template (<i>refer to Attachment 4</i>) after completing a Family violence screening tool (<i>refer to Attachment 3</i>) that identifies current family violence and if the child, young person and/or adult victim survivor parent or carer is open to receiving support making and responding to FVISS and CISS requests 		√	√		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> making referrals to specialist services (<i>refer to Sources</i>) and collaborating to provide ongoing support to the child, young person or their family working with other staff who suspect a child or young person is experiencing family violence, or who have received a disclosure from a student keeping appropriate records. 					
All Staff					
Engaging respectfully, sensitively and safely with people who may be experiencing family violence		√	√		√
Using the Family violence identification tool (<i>refer to Attachment 2</i>) to record information if they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> receive a disclosure of family violence observe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> signs of trauma that may indicate a child or young person is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing, family violence family violence risk factors narratives or behaviours that indicate family violence (<i>refer to Attachment 2</i>) 		√	√		√
Following the instructions in the Family violence identification tool to respond to family violence in accordance with the Four Critical Actions		√	√		√
Staff identified by [Service Name] to use the Information Sharing Schemes (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) can proactively share and request relevant information and must respond to requests from other information sharing entities (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) under the CISS and FVISS. Both schemes are relevant where a child is involved in a family violence context.	R	R	R		
Sharing relevant information under privacy law or other legislative authorisation (<i>refer to Privacy and Confidentiality policy</i>).	R	R	R		
Maintaining co-operative relationships with appropriate services and/or professionals in the best interests of children and their families	√	√	√		
Notifying the approved provider or person with management or control immediately on becoming aware of a concern, complaint or allegation regarding the safety, health and welfare of a child at Somerville Kindergarten		R	R	R	R
Ensuring current record keeping systems meet record keeping requirements (<i>refer to Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i>)	R	R			
Keeping up to date and complying with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy	R	√	√		√

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION



BACKGROUND

Family violence is a widespread and serious problem in Australia, which can have serious consequences for individuals, families and the community. Family violence has profoundly negative effects on children, whether they are directly targeted, witness the violence or are aware of the violence in the family. Children can suffer from a variety of physical, spiritual, emotional, mental and developmental effects as a result of family violence. Long term effects of trauma from family violence can be carried into adulthood and result in a range of detrimental emotional, mental and behavioural problems.

Family violence differs from other forms of violence; it is generally underpinned by a pattern of coercion, control and domination by one person over another. While family violence can begin at the start of a relationship, it can also increase and change over time. There are times where there is increased risk, including pregnancy and separation (or attempted separation). Family violence is generally part of a longer-term pattern, rather than a one-off event.

The Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) is a framework describing best practice for family violence risk assessment and management, based on current evidence and research. There are 10 responsibilities underpinning MARAM. The responsibilities are shared across the service system to support consistent and collaborative practice.

Under MARAM, ECEC services have 6 responsibilities relating to 'identification and screening'. These are:

- Responsibility 1: Respectful, sensitive and safe engagement
- Responsibility 2: Identification of family violence
- Responsibility 5: Seek consultation for comprehensive risk assessment, risk management and referrals
- Responsibility 6: Contribute to information sharing with other services (as authorised by legislation) (this includes FVISS and can also include CISS)
- Responsibility 9: Contribute to coordinated risk management
- Responsibility 10: Collaborate for ongoing risk assessment and risk management.

ECEC staff are not required to undertake Responsibilities 3 and 4: Intermediate Risk Assessment and Management, and Responsibilities 7 and 8: Comprehensive Risk Assessment and Comprehensive Risk Management and Safety Planning. These responsibilities are undertaken by other services, including Child Protection, family violence specialist services and Victoria Police.

The Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) (*refer to Definitions*) has been established under Part 5A of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008, enabling relevant information to be shared between prescribed information sharing entities [ISEs] (*refer to Definitions*) to assess and manage family violence risk. The Child Information Sharing Scheme [CISS] (*refer to Definitions*), established under Part 6A of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, enables prescribed ISEs (*refer to Definitions*) to share information with each other in order to promote the wellbeing and safety of children, including in situations where family violence is suspected or established as being present. Guidelines issued under each of the information sharing schemes require ISEs (*refer to Definitions*) to refer to the MARAM Framework where family violence is present.

The Information Sharing Schemes does not change child safety obligations. It complements existing privacy laws (*refer to Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*) and will enhance the ability of early education and care services to meet child wellbeing and safety responsibilities under the Child Safe Standards (*refer to Definitions*) and comply with mandatory reporting and other reporting obligations.

The Information Sharing Schemes will enable services to request and share information and collaborate earlier and more proactively to support outcomes for children and their families and streamline their experience across services. It removes barriers for ISEs (*refer to Definitions*) to share information as they allow information to be shared before serious risk or threat occurs, allowing earlier identification of needs or issues and early support for children

and families. Furthermore, while mandatory reporting is often a one-way information exchange, CISS (*refer to Definitions*) and FVISS (*refer to Definitions*) allow ISEs (*refer to Definitions*) to request information back and have an ongoing dialogue to promote the wellbeing and safety of children and manage dynamic risks.

Child Link is a Victorian Government digital tool designed to enhance child safety and wellbeing by sharing critical information about children and their families among authorised professionals. It consolidates data from services like Maternal and Child Health, early childhood education, and schools, allowing practitioners to identify needs and vulnerabilities earlier. By facilitating informed decisions and collaboration, Child Link helps prevent harm and improve support for children. Security and privacy measures are strictly upheld, and access is limited to roles responsible for child safety, such as educators and health worker

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Child Safe Standards (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- Child Wellbeing and Safety (Information Sharing) Regulations 2018 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Family Violence Protection Act 2008
- Family Violence Protection (Information Sharing and Risk Management) Regulations 2018
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety and Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2013 (Vic)

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au



DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved provider, Nominated supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file of the PolicyWorks catalogue.

Child: a person who is under the age of 18 years (which includes infants and adolescents).

Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS): enables Information Sharing Entities (ISEs) (*refer to Definitions*) to share information to promote the wellbeing or safety of children.

Child Protection Service (also referred to as Child Protection): The statutory child protection service provided by the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to protect children and young people at risk of abuse and neglect. This service also works closely with Family Services (including The Orange Door) to support the assessment and engagement of vulnerable children and families in community-based services

Child Safe Standards: Promotes the safety of children, prevent child abuse, and ensure organisations have effective processes in place to respond to and report all allegations of child abuse.

Culturally safe: to practice in a culturally safe way means to carry out practice in collaboration with the service user, with care and insight for their culture, while being mindful of one's own.

A culturally safe environment is one where people feel safe and where there is no challenge or need for the denial of their identity.

Duty of Care: a common law concept that refers to the responsibilities of organisations and staff to provide people with an adequate level of protection against harm and all reasonably foreseeable risks of injury. In the context of this policy, duty of care refers to the responsibility of education and care services and their staff to provide children with an adequate level of care and protection against foreseeable harm and injury.

Family violence: behaviour that occurs in family, domestic or intimate relationships that is physically or sexually abusive; emotionally or psychologically abusive; economically abusive; threatening or coercive; or is in any other way controlling that causes a person to live in fear for their safety or wellbeing or that of another person. In relation to children, family violence is also defined as behaviour by any person that causes a child to hear or witness or otherwise be exposed to the effects of the above behaviour. This definition includes violence within a broader family context, such as extended families, kinship networks and communities.

Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS): enables Information Sharing Entities (*refer to Definitions*) to share information to facilitate assessment and management of family violence risk to children and adults.

Information Sharing Entities (ISEs): are authorised to share and request relevant information under the Child Information Sharing Scheme and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (the Schemes) and required to respond to requests from other ISEs. All ISEs are mandated to respond to all requests for information.

Mandatory reporting: The legal obligation of certain professionals and community members to report when they believe, on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection from harm.

A broad range of professional groups are identified in the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 as 'mandatory reporters', including:

- all educators with post-secondary qualifications in the care, education or minding of children and employed or engaged in an education and care service or a children's service
- all proprietors, nominees of a children's service, approved providers, and nominated supervisors of an education and care service.
- educators registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT).

Orange Door: A free support network for individuals and families experiencing family violence or requiring assistance with child and family wellbeing. It offers a centralized, accessible service where people can access safety planning, risk assessments, and connections to appropriate supports, including family violence services and family support programs.

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES



SOURCES

- 1800RESPECT (24/7): www.1800respect.org.au
- Child Link: <https://www.vic.gov.au/child-link-resources>
- Child protection in early childhood (PROTECT): www.education.vic.gov.au
- Djirra: <https://djirra.org.au/>
- Family Violence Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework Practice Guides: www.vic.gov.au
- Information Sharing and Family Violence Guidance and Tools: <https://www.vic.gov.au/information-sharing-guidance-and-tools>
- InTouch: www.intouch.org.au
- MARAM training: <https://www.vic.gov.au/training-for-information-sharing-and-maram#non-accredited-maram-training>
- Men's Referral Service: www.ntv.org.au

- Respectful Relationships program: <https://www.vic.gov.au/respectful-relationships>
- Safe Steps: <https://www.safesteps.org.au/>
- Sexual Assault Crisis Line: <https://www.sacl.com.au/>
- Sexual Assault Services Victoria: <https://www.sasvic.org.au/>
- The Orange Door: <https://orangedoor.vic.gov.au>

RELATED POLICIES

- Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing
- Compliments and Complaints
- Delivery and Collection of Children
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness
- Inclusion and Equity
- Interactions with Children
- Participation of Volunteers and Students
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Staffing
- Supervision of Children



EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the approved provider will be:

- seeking feedback from early childhood teachers, educators, staff, parents/guardians, children, management and all affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness. This can be done via surveys, questionnaires and formal or informal interviews with stakeholders
- monitoring implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to the policy and procedures
- keeping up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- observing changes to the service environment e.g. increased/decreased enrolments
- revising the policy and procedures in light of the above
- notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk (*Regulation 172 (2)*).



ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Mandatory reporting
- Attachment 2: Identifying Family Violence for All Staff
- Attachment 3: Screening For Family Violence for MARAM Nominated Staff
- Attachment 4: Safety Planning for Maram Nominated Staff
- Attachment 5: Providing Ongoing Support



AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Somerville Kindergarten on October 2025

REVIEW DATE: October 2028