

Child and Family Services Workforce Capability Framework

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview of the framework

The child and family services sector delivers a range of services to meet the wellbeing, health and safety needs of children, young people and families. These services intersect with other sectors including community housing, homelessness, and disability, and with other service provision in family violence, mental health, and alcohol and other drugs. The rapidly evolving nature of this sector requires an adaptable workforce with capabilities that align with new and ongoing reforms. It also requires an evidence-informed approach to service delivery. Practitioners will need the skills necessary to thrive in:

- Direct practice
- Partnerships and collaboration to provide wrap-around services to clients
- Service delivery and improvement
- Contributing to better outcomes for clients.

There has been extensive and ongoing reform in the child and family services sector with significant impacts on direct practice. Reforms include the Victorian government's commitment to Aboriginal self-determination, the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), family violence related reforms such as the establishment of the Orange Door hubs, introduction of child information sharing legislation and the development of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM).

To support the sector to meet the demands of this complex environment and the needs of families experiencing vulnerability, the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (the Centre) has worked in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA) and the Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) to develop this workforce capability framework. Modelled on DHHS's Housing Practice Capability Framework, amongst others, the workforce capability frameworks developed by the three sector peaks support consistency across the community services sector, which will assist the identification of the core, shared and unique capabilities across workforces and provide evidence of any new, unmet capabilities within or across workforces.

The framework aligns with the Child and Family Services Sector Industry Plan 2018-21 and the broader 10-Year Community Services Industry Plan (VCOSS). The framework reflects our sector's commitment to uphold the rights of Aboriginal children, young people and families; provide access to culturally safe services; work collaboratively with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) in ways that support *Wungurilwil Gapgapduir* and self-determination; and recognise the ongoing impact of colonisation and intergenerational trauma on Aboriginal communities.

The capability framework is intended to support the child and family services workforce to deliver ongoing reforms and to continue to refine practice accordingly. By identifying required workforce development education and/or training needs, the framework will assist our workforce to operate at a high standard while focusing on outcomes.

1.2 Design principles

The Centre has developed the framework in collaboration with the CHIA and CHP for the purposes of streamlining practice across the community services sector and based on the following design principles:¹

1. **Tailored** – the framework outlines capabilities specific to the role of practitioners working in child and family services, while also maintaining relevance for staff working across sectors.
2. **Current and future work** – the framework describes the capabilities required to complete the work of child and family services practitioners today and over the next two to three years.
3. **Contemporary practice** – the framework describes the capabilities required to conduct work in line with contemporary and ‘gold-standard’ practice.
4. **Best interests case practice model** – incorporates capabilities and behaviours necessary for staff to operate in line with the ‘best interests’ case practice model arising from the *Children, Youth and Families Act (2005)* and the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005)*.² This includes the best interests of Aboriginal children and young people as specified in the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle and cultural rights in the CYFA.
5. **Aligned with reforms across the community services sector** – the capabilities identified are reflective of those needed to deliver ongoing reforms across the community services sector.

1.3 Purpose of the framework

The child and family services workforce is diverse, representing a wide range of roles and occupations. The workforce provides services to children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability and hardship, including services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. These services include supports for families experiencing family violence, drug and alcohol issues, disability, mental health concerns and supports for young people in the youth justice system. The workforce can be broadly categorised into the following:³

¹ Based on Nous Group, 2018, Housing Practice Capability Framework, Department of Health and Human Services.

² Miller, R. (2012). *Best Interests Case Practice Model Summary Guide*, accessed April 2019: <http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/Best%20interests%20case%20practice%20model%20summary%20guide%202012%203002.pdf>

³ DHHS (2017). Community Sector Workforce Capability Framework: Tool Kit.

Level	Role	Description	Example
Level 1	Practitioner	People working at this level do not supervise the work of others; they work under the direction of others and apply their skills to meet established targets or outputs.	Youth worker, child and family worker, support worker, intake officer, case worker, residential care worker, direct care professional
Level 2	Advanced practitioner	People working at this level have well developed skills; they may take limited responsibility for the work of others.	Case manager, social worker, clinical supervisor, family counsellor, psychologist, men's behaviour change practitioner, family therapist
Level 3	Manager and lead practitioner	People working at this level take a leadership role; they may supervise the work of others and/or provide leadership through their technical or specialist skills.	Team leader, business manager, manager community relations, manager clinical services, research and evaluation specialists
Level 4	CEO and Executive	People at this level will guide and steer the organisation and take responsibility for a range of programs and services.	Chief Executive Officer, Regional Manager, Area Manager, Director of Client Services, member of senior management group.

In 2015, DHHS commissioned the Centre to undertake a Family Services Workforce Survey. This survey found that of the 615 respondents, the majority (just under 60 per cent), were working in direct case management roles defined as case work, direct care, case management or case planning. A further 20 per cent were working as coordinators, team leaders, or practice leaders.⁴ The capabilities outlined in this framework relate to service professionals working in direct service roles in levels 1 to 3.

Organisations can use the framework to:

- Clarify the expectations of staff working in direct practice
- Support the recruitment of new staff by articulating required knowledge and skills
- Design learning and development programs to develop or enhance required capabilities
- Inform learning and development plans for new staff
- Select suitable learning and development programs for new and existing staff to attend
- Identify the strengths or performance of an individual or a team, to enable the sharing of good practice across areas and divisions.⁵

⁴ DHHS (2017). Family Services Workforce Survey Report.

⁵ Nous Group, 2018, Housing Practice Capability Framework, Department of Health and Human Services.

2 Child and Family Services Workforce Capability Framework

For staff to operate effectively within the child and family services sector they will need to:

1. Understand the contemporary community services context, operating in a way that is evidence-informed and outcomes-focused
2. Understand the unique needs of children, young people and families through trauma-informed practice
3. Work collaboratively with clients and other professionals to devise solutions
4. Deliver services
5. Manage self
6. Demonstrate a commitment to culturally responsive services and culturally safe service provision.

Figure 1 outlines these domains and associated capabilities.

Figure 1 | Domains and supporting capabilities⁶

Understands the contemporary family and community services context	Understands clients and their needs	Determines evidence-informed solutions	Delivers services	Manages self
Knows and applies the rules and commitments under which we operate	Listens actively	Investigates and solves problems collaboratively	Uses internal systems and processes	Manages time effectively
Has an awareness of relevant services and referral pathways for clients	Communicates appropriately	Makes decisions appropriately	Employs the principles of evidence-informed practice (EIP)	Is adaptable and flexible
Establishes and maintains relationships with relevant service providers and community organisations	Apply the principles of trauma informed, strengths-based practice		Is responsive to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse clients Is responsive to the cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients	Demonstrates resilience and self-care

⁶ Nous Group, 2018, Housing Practice Capability Framework, Department of Health and Human Services.

Each capability is outlined in the following section with indicative proficiencies described at three levels:⁷

1. **Foundational:** defines the baseline level of capability of child and family welfare staff, and may describe those new to the sector or operating in foundational roles
2. **Emergent:** defines the standard expected of skilled child and family welfare practitioners
3. **Leading:** defines the standard expected of 'leading practice' child and family welfare practitioners who integrate new policies and processes into their work practices, retain 'currency' in their skills and pursue continuous improvement.

Each level of proficiency assumes competence at the preceding level. Further, each role may require capabilities at different levels, depending on the nature of the work.

2.1 Understand the contemporary family and community services context

To be able to competently meet the needs of clients and work towards the achievement of outcomes, practitioners working in the child and family services sector will need to:

- Know and apply the rules (legislation, standards) and commitments (policy, ethical) under which they operate
- Be aware of services available and referral pathways
- Establish and maintain relationships with relevant service providers and community organisations.

⁷ Nous Group, 2018, Housing Practice Capability Framework, Department of Health and Human Services.

2.1.1 Knows and applies the rules and commitments under which we operate

Practitioners need a deep understanding of the rules and legislation governing their work and of the policy and system context of community services. They will be familiar with and understand the legislation, policies and internal/external operational guidelines when designing an approach with individuals or groups. They may be eligible for membership of professional bodies/codes.

Table 1 | Knows and applies the rules and commitments under which we operate – proficiency levels

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is knowledgeable about relevant legislation, policies and guidelines that relate to engaging with children, young people and families experiencing vulnerabilities • Is knowledgeable about legislation, policies and guidelines relevant to engaging with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island children and young people • Identifies gaps in knowledge and can locate relevant information or guidance • Has a clear understanding of internal policies and procedures and how they affect client engagement • Identifies when it is necessary to report under mandatory reporting legislation as per <i>Children Youth and Families Act 2005</i> • Understands relevant legislation and policy frameworks, including obligations under Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) framework and Child Information Sharing Scheme (CIS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a sound understanding of legislation, policies and guidelines and applies them including in exceptional circumstances (with supervision where required) • Has a good understanding of complex sector guidelines and confidently applies discretion appropriately to achieve their intent • Confidently reports when necessary under mandatory reporting legislation as per <i>Children Youth and Families Act 2005</i> • Confidently uses the MARAM framework and CIS requirements to assess child and family risk, keep perpetrators accountable and work collaboratively with other sector organisations/agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possesses detailed subject matter expertise on all sector policies, guidelines and relevant legislation. Draws on this detailed knowledge to deliver evidence-informed solutions to complex problems. • Provides guidance to staff on matters of legislation, policy and guidelines, particularly in complex and ambiguous circumstances • Acts effectively as a point of contact for stakeholder management when complex legal, risk and information sharing matters arise • Manages and oversees complex cases with relation to CIS, MARAM and mandatory reporting obligations

2.1.2 Has an awareness of relevant services and referral pathways for clients

Practitioners require a sound understanding of the intersectional nature of the vulnerabilities faced by children, young people and families. To meet these complex, multidimensional needs, they need comprehensive knowledge and awareness of the scope of their roles and available options in the child and family services sector and in related sectors including housing, homelessness and disability.

Table 2 | Has an awareness of services available and referral pathways for clients – proficiency levels

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an awareness and understanding of local community supports and referral pathways • Demonstrates an understanding of referral processes and can support clients accordingly • Explores referral options through a person-centred lens, ensuring they align with client values, needs and interest areas • Engages with local ACCOs for Aboriginal children and young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates strong familiarity with relevant local community organisations providing referral opportunities • Demonstrates strong understanding of referral processes and writes referrals collaboratively with clients • Determines referral options collaboratively with clients through a person-centred lens, ensuring they align with client values, needs and interest areas • Engages with local ACCOs for Aboriginal children and young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draws on knowledge of available services and referral options, thinking creatively by including online and available technological solutions • Supports other practitioners to determine relevant options and write referrals • Shares best practice in sourcing and referring clients state-wide • Facilitates links with and engages with relevant stakeholders across the community services sector e.g. mental health, disability, housing • Engages with local ACCOs for Aboriginal children and young people

2.1.3 Establishes and maintains relationships with relevant service providers and community organisations

Achieving better outcomes for children, young people and families requires an integrated service system, including an understanding of relevant supports across sectors (disability, housing, mental health, homelessness etc.).⁸

To make sure clients receive integrated, wrap-around supports, practitioners need to establish and maintain relationships with individuals and organisations across the health and human services system (government and non-government services). This will position practitioners to refer clients to complementary services and, where required, work collaboratively with other providers to deliver integrated, wrap-around/complementary supports as needed.

Practitioners can identify when a client requires a service outside of their organisational scope and to support referrals to other service providers and community supports while keeping the client at the centre of all decision-making.

⁸ DHHS, 2018 Roadmap for reform: children and families progress and directions 2018, accessed April 2019: https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/201805/Roadmap%20for%20Reform%20children%20and%20families%20May%202018_0.pdf

Table 3 | Establishes and maintains relationships with relevant service providers and community organisations - proficiency levels

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops relationships with relevant government and non-government community services and ACCOs • Proactively and appropriately shares information with internal staff for the benefit of all clients approaching the service • Participates in multi-service discussions about client support, sharing relevant information to enhance wrap-around service delivery • Understands how to manage conflict in professional relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies gaps in services accessed by a client and contributes to the development of relationships with additional service providers to bridge this gap • Develops close working relationships with local services and relevant community supports to streamline referral processes • Actively participates in case conferences as required to enable coordination between services • Understands the legislation and operational policies and guidelines for information sharing and follows these within the limitations for the benefits of clients, including safety planning • Manages conflict effectively with other professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops strong working relationships with internal staff and external services, representing the organisation at relevant inter-agency meetings • Provides mentoring and guidance on evidence-informed practice for working with children, young people and families across sectors • Takes a lead role to coordinate services across providers through relationship building and proactive information sharing for the benefit of clients and assets • Provides guidance on effective conflict resolution and decision making with other professionals

2.2 Understands clients and their needs

Child and family welfare practitioners have a broad mandate to service clients by taking an evidence-informed, outcomes-focused approach.⁹ To do this successfully, they must possess skills in authentic engagement and relationship building to understand clients and their needs. Practitioners successful in this domain will:

- Apply client-centred practice
- Listen actively
- Apply the principles of trauma-informed, strengths-based practice.

⁹ DHHS, 2018 *Roadmap for reform: children and families progress and directions*, accessed April 2019: https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/201805/Roadmap%20for%20Reform%20children%20and%20families%20May%202018_0.pdf

2.2.1 Applies client-centred practice

Client-centred practice is one of the three cornerstones of evidence-informed practice. It includes actively pursuing and drawing on the unique views, concerns and expectations of a person or group of people using or participating in a service.¹⁰ Through client-centred practice, practitioners tailor their approach to the specific needs of their clients. They work collaboratively and involve clients directly in the decision-making process. This enables ownership of the solution and increases the chances of achieving desired outcomes.¹¹ Practitioners incorporate a child and family lens across their work.

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducts basic information gathering into a client’s circumstances, including involvement in other services, to tailor service delivery to unique needs • Provides clients with options to address their multidimensional needs (including referrals across the community services sector) • Understands the need for cultural competency and works towards building an understanding of how to speak and work with culturally diverse clients • Provides clients with options where possible • Understands client needs/wishes and values • Uses strength-based practice • Understands the principles of client self determination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a clear understanding of a client’s background including complex needs and works collaboratively with the client to tailor activities and decisions to address those needs • Forms a holistic view of client’s needs that recognises the broad, intersecting systems affecting a client’s life. • Confidently considers situations, activities, decisions and outcomes from the perspective of how people of different ethnic, religious, or social identifications might see them¹² • Looks for opportunities to provide clients with options to make decisions and increase their sense of agency and empowerment, consistent with the principles of client self-determination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a detailed understanding of clients’ needs and draws on expertise to provide a bespoke service • Works expertly and collaboratively with clients including those with complex needs and refers to and coordinates with complementary services to provide an integrated service • Provides advice and guidance to other staff on culturally competent practice and strengths-based approaches • Consistently finds opportunities to provide clients with options to make decisions and increase their sense of agency and empowerment in the interests of client self determination

¹⁰ Moore, T., Beatson, R., Rushton, S., Powers, R., Deery, A., Arefadib, N. and West, S. (2016). *Supporting the Roadmap for Reform: Evidence-informed practice*. Accessed December 2018, <https://www.strongfamiliesafechildren.vic.gov.au/15641/documents/48196>

¹¹ Coughlin, S., Smith, S. and Fernandez, M. (2017). *Overview of Community-Based Participatory Research. Handbook of Community-Based Participatory Research*: Oxford University Press.

¹² Victorian Public Sector Commission capability descriptor of ‘cultural awareness’.

2.2.2 Listens actively

Listening is a fundamental element of effective and appropriate interpersonal communication. A person is actively listening when they are fully engaged and responding to what is being communicated.¹³ Practitioners use active listening to encourage clients to be ‘open’ about their circumstances. This allows them to quickly establish rapport with a range of clients, minimises misunderstandings and helps practitioners to resolve issues when these arise.

Table 5 Listens Actively - proficiency levels		
Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks open-ended questions that allow clients the opportunity to express themselves Works with a range of clients without making personal judgements Understands the need to express empathy to clients in difficult circumstances¹⁴ Understands the need to exercise patience when working with clients Recognises when worker safety is at risk of being compromised and active listening is no longer an appropriate course of action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates time and space for the client to speak and be heard and demonstrates non-verbally that they are listening Actively works to avoid making personal judgements about a client and to avoid acting or communicating in a manner that expresses judgement Regularly expresses genuine empathy to clients Works patiently with clients in challenging circumstances Has a clear understanding of when worker’s safety is at risk and active listening is no longer appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides guidance to other staff on expressing empathy, creating a ‘space’ for clients to speak and demonstrating patience when working with challenging or complex clients Expert at working with highly complex and challenging clients without expressing any judgement Coaches other staff on when to actively listen and when to remove oneself from a situation

¹³ Victorian Public Sector Commission capability descriptor of ‘active listening’.

¹⁴ Victorian Public Sector Commission capability descriptor of ‘empathy’.

2.2.3 Applies the principles of trauma-informed, strengths-based practice

Practitioners work with a diverse range of clients whose needs are complex and multidimensional. To achieve positive outcomes, it is essential that practitioners operate in a way that is consistent with a strengths-based, trauma-informed approach. Strengths-based practice is defined as a collaborative process between service users and practitioners, which acknowledges a client’s existing strengths and resiliencies and uses these to determine outcomes.¹⁵ Trauma-informed care is a framework for working with clients, which understands and acknowledges how trauma affects people’s lives and how it may affect client behaviours and the way in which they approach a service for support.¹⁶

Table 6 Applies the Principles of Trauma-informed, Strengths-based Practice		
Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducts basic information gathering to understand an individual’s personal resources, strengths and resiliencies • Considers a client’s existing strengths and respects independence in case planning and decision making • Possesses a basic understanding of the principles of trauma-informed practice and how to employ these • Understands how to adapt practice to be responsive to the diverse cultural needs and rights of clients (including historical and gender concerns) • Understands impacts of colonisation on generations of Aboriginal peoples and implications for practice when inter-generational trauma is present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a comprehensive understanding of an individual’s personal resources, strengths and resiliencies • Uses a client’s existing strengths to determine solutions collaboratively and respectfully • Possesses a strong understanding of the principles of trauma-informed practice and knows how to apply these • Possesses a strong understanding of how to meet the diverse cultural needs and rights of clients (including historical and gender issues) • Understands impacts of colonisation on generations of Aboriginal peoples and implications for practice when inter-generational trauma is present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides guidance to other staff on strengths-based practice and trauma-informed care and practice strategies • Expert at employing strengths based and trauma informed approaches when working with highly complex and challenging clients • Expert at meeting the needs and rights of clients from diverse cultural backgrounds as well as considering historical and gender issues • Understands the impacts of colonisation on generations of Aboriginal peoples and the implications for practice when inter-generational trauma is present

¹⁵ Saleebey, D. (2009). *The strengths perspective in social work practice* (5th ed.). Boston, Mass: Pearson Education.

¹⁶ Australian Institute of Family Studies (2016). Trauma-informed care in child/family welfare services, accessed April 2019, available: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/trauma-informed-care-child-family-welfare-services/what-trauma-informed-care>

2.3 Determines evidence-informed solutions

Child and family services staff draw on the three pillars of evidence-informed practice: best available research, practice expertise and client experience and values to determine solutions in partnership with service users.¹⁷

An effective child and family services practitioner in this domain:

- investigates and solves problems collaboratively
- makes decisions appropriately.

To determine the most suitable solution and actions in partnership with a client, practitioners can define the presenting issue as a client understands it and identify possible underlying causes. Practitioners adopt a curious and inquisitive approach to understanding a client's story, circumstances and history. Practitioners are also interested in finding out more about why things are the way they are and in finding creative and innovative solutions.¹⁸ Solutions will be evidence-informed, combining the best available research, client experience and practice expertise.

¹⁷ Moore, et al (2016).

¹⁸ Victorian Community Sector personal attributes matrix 'creative and innovative'.

2.3.1 Investigates and solves problems collaboratively

Practitioners assess risks and act to mitigate identified risks, incorporate numerous factors into decisions and make robust decisions under pressure.¹⁹ They adopt a curious and inquisitive approach to understanding a client’s story, circumstances and history and are interested in finding creative and innovative solutions.²⁰

Table 7 Investigates and solves problems collaboratively – proficiency levels		
Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a mindset of curiosity and an appetite to understand each client’s story and experience • Seeks advice from senior colleagues and external agencies when external data may be useful. • Can design and conduct formal conversations to obtain specific insights or pieces of information²¹ • Combines three pillars of evidence-informed practice in responding to clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathers information to develop a comprehensive understanding of an individual’s personal resources, strengths and resiliencies • Accesses relevant sector data, case files and reports through Child Information Sharing Scheme (CIS) to aid investigative research • Uses a client’s existing strengths and resiliencies to determine solutions collaboratively and respectfully • Possesses a strong understanding of the principles of trauma informed practice and knows how to employ them • Possesses a strong understanding of how to adapt to and meet the diverse cultural needs of clients (including the unique historical and gender issues that may arise) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides guidance to other staff on strengths-based practice and trauma-informed care and practice strategies • Expertly employs strengths-based and trauma-informed approaches when working with highly complex and challenging clients • Expertly meets the needs of clients from diverse cultural backgrounds as well as considering historical and gender issues

¹⁹ Nous Group, 2018, Housing Practice Capability Framework, Department of Health and Human Services.

²⁰ Victorian Community Sector personal attributes matrix ‘creative and innovative’

²¹ Victorian Community Sector personal attributes matrix ‘client/member focused’.

2.3.2 Makes decisions appropriately

Practitioners operate in an environment that is challenging and often without obvious or ideal solutions. They exercise sophisticated decision-making and use their discretion, often in time-critical situations.

Table 8 Makes decisions appropriately – proficiency levels		
Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determines a course of action when faced with a choice between feasible alternatives²² • Regularly engages in set processes and acts in accordance with the relevant risk assessment frameworks (including the MARAM where relevant) to identify risk factors to the client, community and self • Adapts processes under supervision when timeliness of a decision is critical • Identifies complex factors (such as mental illness, family violence, AOD etc.) that must be considered when making decisions about actions or solutions for clients. • Regularly seeks guidance and feedback on decisions from more experienced staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidently identifies and mitigates potential harm to the client, community and self • Comfortably exercises discretion to manage circumstances where a routine process or procedure will result in a negative outcome • Accurately accounts for complex factors (such as mental illness, family violence, AOD etc.) to ensure decision making is fair and appropriate • Makes robust, evidence- informed decisions even when under pressure • Seeks confirmation from senior staff when uncertain about a decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expertly identifies and mitigates risk towards clients, community and self while using relevant sector risk assessment frameworks (including the MARAM where relevant) • Exercises professional judgement²³ to manage circumstances where a routine process or procedure will result in a negative outcome • Provides guidance to other staff on how to accurately account for complex factors (such as mental illness, family violence, AOD etc.) to ensure decision making is fair and appropriate • Provides feedback to new staff in ambiguous or complex circumstances • Seeks support from team leaders to oversee decision making as required

²² Victorian Public Sector Commission capability descriptor of ‘decision making skills’.

²³ Victorian Public Sector Commission capability descriptor for Grade 3 ‘accountability and frameworks’.

2.4 Delivers Services

Once an appropriate course of action has been identified, child and family welfare staff must know how to deliver their service to children, young people and families in an efficient and effective way. Child and family welfare staff successful in this domain:

- use internal systems and processes
- employ the principles of evidence informed practice
- are responsive to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse clients and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients

2.4.1 Uses internal systems and processes

To work effectively, practitioners use a range of internal and external systems and processes competently. Practitioners competently access and use relevant internal databases and client information management systems as well as standard software such as Microsoft Office. They are each required to competently follow a broad range of established processes.²⁴

Table 9 Uses internal systems and processes – proficiency levels		
Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is familiar with core processes and procedures and sources procedural information where needed • Works accurately with core information communication and technology (ICT) systems • Navigates relevant internal databases and client information systems to source organisational policies, guidelines and to access relevant client files • Is able and ready to adapt practices to maximise use of digital tools and technologies • Maintains accurate electronic and paper records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes core processes in line with published procedural information • Uses discretion to adapt core procedures and processes to deliver outcomes focused, evidence informed services for clients • Demonstrated competence across issue management and risk assessment processes • Extracts data from ICT systems to support investigative research • Records high quality data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where relevant, contributes to procedural information to ensure accessibility and accuracy • Demonstrated competence across issue management processes • Guides others on issue and risk management processes • Extracts data from ICT systems to maintain understanding of relevant client engagement and guide case planning with team leaders • Initiates improvements to procedures.²⁵

²⁴ These processes include mandatory reporting, collecting and recording client feedback, case notes, referrals, risk management and safety planning.

²⁵ Victorian Public Sector Commission capability descriptor for Grade 3 ‘innovation and originality’.

2.4.2 Employs the principles of evidence-informed practice

To work towards outcomes that are evidence informed, practitioners must draw together the best available research, client feedback and practice expertise when finding and determining solutions.²⁶ To do this requires a range of skills and attributes including the ability to work collaboratively with clients, rather than insisting on a particular course of action.

Table 10 Employs the principles of evidence informed practice – proficiency levels		
Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the three cornerstones of evidence-informed practice (EIP) and how they can be employed to enhance client outcomes²⁷ • Applies an evidence-informed practice lens which recognises personal values, ideals and assumptions that may impact practice • Delivers evidence-informed interventions <i>with</i> rather than <i>for</i> clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possesses a comprehensive understanding of EIP and actively uses the three cornerstones of EIP in practice • Actively integrates an evidence-informed practice framework, ensuring personal values, ideals and assumptions do not impinge on practice • Confidently delivers evidence-informed interventions <i>with</i> rather than <i>for</i> clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possesses expert understanding of EIP and guides practitioners on its usage in practice • Ensures internal services are guided and underpinned by the principles of EIP • Actively researches and keeps abreast of relevant best practice and programs and integrates them into service delivery where possible

²⁶ Delivers evidence-informed interventions *with* rather than *for* clients.

²⁷ See definition of EIP in Moore, et al.

2.4.3 Is responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients

All practitioners, **regardless of tier and proficiency level (foundational, emergent or leading)**, need to have the following capabilities:

- Recognise and understand the principles behind Aboriginal self-determination as the foundation to achieving better health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal communities
- Understand the impacts of colonisation on generations of Aboriginal peoples and the implications for practice when inter-generational trauma is present
- Adopt practices, policies and processes that support and foster a culturally safe environment for clients and staff.²⁸

2.4.4 Is responsive to the needs of diverse clients

Better outcomes are achieved when practitioners are responsive to the needs of the diverse client groups with whom they work. Child and family services practitioners display a strong cultural awareness²⁹ and can adapt their practice to meet the varied and complex needs of diverse clients. Practitioners are committed to inclusive practice ensuring programs are accessible and displaying a commitment to the principles of social justice and inclusion.³⁰ Practitioners understand the critical importance of self-determination for Aboriginal families and work with clients to support this.

The concepts of foundational, emergent and leading become more problematic when looking at responsiveness to the needs of diverse clients because all practitioners need to be able to create culturally safe environments. This is a core capability at every level.

Table 11 Is responsive to the needs of diverse clients– proficiency levels		
Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises when to adapt language to aid communication and alters communication style accordingly³¹ • Identifies culturally safe environments in which to engage clients for group and one-on-one sessions • Values diversity as a strength in practice • Engages in continuing professional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidently adapts language to aid communication and alters communication style accordingly • Identifies and actively creates culturally safe environments in which to engage clients for group and one-on-one sessions, • Values diversity and confidently adapts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures organisational policies and processes support, foster and respect cultural safety • Provides guidance to staff in cross-cultural engagement and inclusive practice • Facilitates the continuing professional development,

²⁸ See the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety framework: For the Victorian health, human and community services sector: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/201906/Part%201-Aboriginal%20and%20Torres%20Strait%20Islander%20cultural%20safety%20framework-20190620.pdf>

²⁹ Victorian Community Sector personal attributes matrix ‘culturally aware’.

³⁰ Victorian Community Sector personal attributes matrix ‘inclusive’.

³¹ Victorian Community Sector personal attributes matrix ‘culturally aware’.

<p>development to enhance knowledge and skills when working with diverse clients</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes the volunteer carer workforce in decisions to be made about children, young people and families 	<p>practice to support diverse clients</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respects and understands the work undertaken by the volunteer carer workforce 	<p>including cultural competency, of staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates training and the tailored supports required for volunteer carers
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2.5 Manages self

The work of child and family services staff can be highly challenging and demanding given their ongoing exposure to clients experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage and complex challenges. In this context, staff must manage numerous competing priorities, deliver time-critical actions in often difficult circumstances and ensure that they can continue to produce high quality work in an emotionally taxing environment. Child and family services staff successful in this domain:

- Manage time effectively
- Are adaptable and flexible
- Demonstrate resilience and self-care.

2.5.1 Manages time effectively

In a resource constrained environment, practitioners are often required to balance numerous competing priorities and deliver positive outcomes with limited capacity. To do this, they must efficiently prioritise, plan and coordinate activities and logistics.

Table 12 Manages time effectively		
Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfortably uses ICT systems and tools to manage allocation of time (e.g. internal shared calendars etc.) • Undertakes a structured process to prioritise activities • Recognises the difference between urgent and important activities and can attend to both types • Is aware of the likely duration of core tasks • Is organised and diligent in completing tasks on time • Seeks guidance on reorganising tasks when unexpected interruptions arise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritises own tasks to ensure own workload is managed as effectively as possible • Plans activities in advance to ensure deadlines are met and interdependent tasks are completed in the appropriate sequence • Completes day-to-day tasks and high priority tasks in a timely manner • Reorganises activities when unexpected interruptions arise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively manages interruptions to ensure productivity of self (and others) • Supports others to prioritise tasks to ensure workload is managed as effectively as possible • Completes high volumes of work keeping a rapid pace without sacrificing accuracy • Meets and exceeds deadlines through efficiencies

2.5.2 Is adaptable and flexible

Given the dynamic and varied responsibilities, and the often-changing circumstances of clients, practitioners must be adaptable in how they address and meet client needs and preferences. Practitioners are prepared to think flexibly and are comfortable with the knowledge that situations may change without notice. They are able to work with that uncertainty and predictability.

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an appetite to learn new skills • Demonstrates readiness to learn from others through asking questions, observation, mentoring and shadowing • Demonstrates readiness to assist or take on resolution of an urgent issue • Accepts new and different situations as a matter of course³² • Identifies opportunities to improve own efficiency³³ • Takes on board feedback from peers and manager on work practices and performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an appetite for learning new approaches (to reflect department, office or team priorities) • Reflects on own approach to inform improved practices • Suggests alternative or innovative approaches to get better outcomes for clients • Uses discretion to adapt a previously decided pathway when new information reveals an alternative, and preferred, solution • Seeks out feedback from peers and manager regarding work practices and performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates established patterns of self-reflection and of modifying own practice to integrate new approaches that achieve better outcomes for clients • Encourages others to reflect on and learn from experiences • Actively seeks out alternative pathways and solutions when conventional options are not available or in the client’s best interest • Encourages others to think ‘outside of the box’ to get better outcomes for clients or communities • Role models receiving and giving useful feedback

³² Victorian Community Sector personal attributes matrix ‘flexible’.

³³ Victorian Community Sector personal attributes matrix ‘self-disciplined’.

2.5.3 Demonstrates resilience and self-care

Practitioners must manage not only challenging events in their clients’ lives, but also the cumulative effect of ongoing, emotionally taxing work on their wellbeing. To be successful in such an environment, they bring a degree of resilience and an ability to implement self-care strategies. Resilience speaks to practitioners’ ability to maintain a positive attitude and continue to deliver consistently high-quality work despite the challenging environment.³⁴ Self-care refers to what practitioners do to maintain their own wellbeing.

Table 14 Demonstrates resilience and self-care – proficiency levels		
Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies tools and techniques for maintaining composure when dealing with challenging client interactions or exposure to vulnerability and disadvantage • Applies self-care tools and techniques for building resilience and ensuring own wellbeing • Has a clear understanding of own limitations and can identify when to seek support • Seeks support proactively • Is aware of personal reactions to clients, monitors its influence on the quality of service delivery and seeks support where required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfortably works with challenging clients in stressful environments while appropriately applying techniques for maintaining own wellbeing • Implements self-care techniques to address feelings of being overwhelmed • Employs a range of self-care tools and techniques to prevent burn-out and enable quick recovery following challenging events • Seeks support proactively • Is aware of personal triggers that may create a negative reaction towards a client and ensures that all clients receive the same level of high-quality service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is expert at utilising tools and techniques for maintaining wellbeing and self-care when dealing with extremely challenging clients and stressful environments • Role models help-seeking behaviour • Supports other staff members to manage challenging situations and contributes to the development of processes and procedures for supporting staff wellbeing within the team • Provides effective reflective practice and supervision opportunities for staff

³⁴ Victorian Community Sector personal attributes matrix ‘resilient’.