

An Information Sheet to Support the Implementation of the Victorian Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) and Information Sharing Schemes

Working collaboratively with other professionals to improve the wellbeing and safety of common clients, especially children, young people and their families

The Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS), Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) and the Family Violence Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) framework aim to create a significant cultural shift in information sharing practice to improve family violence risk assessment and management and to support child wellbeing and safety. The reforms identify child and family services and other prescribed or Framework organisations from allied service sectors as having responsibility for the wellbeing and safety of children, young people and their families.

Importantly, the introduction of CISS, FVISS and MARAM encourages child and family service providers and allied service providers who are 'prescribed' or Framework organisations to work collaboratively with each other to improve the safety and wellbeing of common clients or clients who need additional specialist support. Working collaboratively with other practitioners requires clear and purposeful communication and a regard for building and maintaining trust in relationships with clients.

This information sheet aims to support practitioners to work more collaboratively with other sectors to improve the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and their families.

Question:	Practice Considerations
1. Why is it important for agencies to work collaboratively and share information?	Information sharing is a key enabler of collaborative practice. No single institution collects all the necessary information or has all the appropriate tools to adequately protect children, young people and their families from harm. Appropriate and timely sharing of information amongst prescribed services and agencies is essential to promote the wellbeing and safety of children and young people and to identify, prevent and respond to child abuse and family violence.
2. What does it mean to work collaboratively?	Working collaboratively with other professionals, especially when implementing MARAM and the Information Sharing schemes, means that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> professionals have a shared understanding of family violence, risk and wellbeing concerns; they use common tools and language (as per the MARAM Framework) to consider a child or young person's wellbeing, working closely with them, their parent/caregiver and other professionals, supporting them where appropriate professionals work together, including co-ordinated or collaborative work between child and adult services, to understand and respond to the wellbeing risks and vulnerabilities experienced by children and family members professionals work together to hold perpetrators of family violence accountable for their use of violence and for the impact on children and affected parents.

Question:	Practice Considerations
<p>3. What does good collaborative practice look like?</p>	<p>Research show there are several key elements of good collaborative practice.</p> <p><i>Effective Leadership:</i> Timely and appropriate information sharing is more likely to occur with effective leadership and management to support and drive culture change. This includes clear organisational direction that supports workers to prioritise the wellbeing and safety of children and young people.</p> <p><i>Trust between organisations:</i> Professionals need to become familiar with the work of other organisations and their practitioners to build trust. Collaborative forums, staff presentations, secondments and protocol development such as Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) can help build trust between organisations and workers, respecting different areas of professional expertise.</p> <p><i>Enabling guidance to clarify when and how to share information:</i> Individual organisations are required to have policies and clear guidance that enable collaboration through information sharing, including through FVISS and CISS and other privacy legislation.</p> <p><i>Seeking the views and wishes of clients regarding sharing their information:</i> The legislative principles behind MARAM and the information sharing schemes require agencies to maintain respectful, sensitive and safe engagement with children and their families. Providing children and their families with opportunities to express their views and wishes prior to sharing sensitive information with another organisation is an important part of the reforms.</p> <p><i>Pro-active, rather than reactive, information sharing:</i> Pro-active sharing among organisations can assist in identifying early intervention activities to support children and young people. Pro-active sharing is especially important if workers identify any level of family violence risk, child abuse or neglect.</p>

Remember:

- Building relationships strengthens knowledge of local services that hold relevant information about children, young people and families.
- Being aware of organisational policy and procedure can help to make sure that legislative requirements are met and good practice is achieved.
- Considering the views and wishes of clients if safe, appropriate and reasonable to do so, including children and young people, when working collaboratively with other service providers, is an important part of the reforms.

For more information about the Information Sharing Reforms and MARAM, along with training opportunities go to: www.vic.gov.au/information-sharing-schemes-and-the-maram-framework