

To the Secretariat

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (the Centre) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Victorian Family Violence Data Framework produced by the Crime Statistics Agency.

The Centre is the peak body for child and family services in Victoria. For over 100 years we have advocated for the rights of children and young people to be heard, to be safe, to access education and to remain connected to family, community and culture. We represent over 150 community service organisations, students and individuals throughout Victoria working across the continuum of child and family services, from prevention and early intervention to the provision of out-of-home care. Many of our member organisations work with Aboriginal children and families and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). Our members have a deep understanding of the profound and life-changing impact of family violence on children and young people.

The Centre welcomes the development of a guideline for the collection of data by Victorian family violence service providers and agencies. However, after going through the guideline we are concerned to note the lack of any reference to the collection of data about children in their own right. This is a significant and concerning gap.

We note the three areas being addressed by the framework:

- ◆ Rec 24: Improve statewide family violence data collection and research
- ◆ Rec 152: Improve the collection of Indigenous data relating to family violence
- ◆ Rec 170: Adopt a consistent and comprehensive approach to data collection on people with disabilities

Under Recommendation 24, one of the improvements identified is to address ‘recurrent data gaps’. Two cohorts for whom there are currently gaps are children who are victims of family violence and children who are both victims and users of family violence. These cohorts are largely absent from the framework other than as family members. Yet we know from Victoria Police data that in 2016/17, Victoria Police attended 76,500 incidents of family violence and children were present at 23,857 (or 31 per cent) of these.¹

Family violence service providers and agencies need to collect data that enables children to be better tracked through the system and supported. Consideration needs to be given to collecting, analysing and monitoring the following data about children and young people:

- ◆ Number, age, gender of children (0 to 17) who are exposed to family violence incidents
- ◆ Number, age, gender of children attending a refuge, transition housing or other emergency accommodation as a result of a family violence incident(s)
- ◆ Number, age, gender of children who use violence against family members
- ◆ Number of children exposed to family violence who have a disability
- ◆ Number of children exposed to family violence who live in regional or rural areas
- ◆ Number of children exposed to family violence who are refugees or from CALD backgrounds
- ◆ Number of children exposed to family violence who identify as LGBTQI
- ◆ Number of children with an ABI who are exposed to family violence incidents

¹ Victoria Police (2017) Family Violence Data Portal – Data Tables
<https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/family-violence-data-portal/family-violence-data-dashboard/victoria-police>

- ◆ Number of children with an ABI who use violence against other family members
- ◆ Length of time exposed to family violence (e.g. length of time with current/previous perpetrator)
- ◆ Length of stay in the crisis, emergency or transitional accommodation
- ◆ Whether the child is linked into a school and is attending school (number of days in a row absent; average number of days absent)
- ◆ Number of children who come into refuge or access family violence services who are not enrolled in school
- ◆ Whether the child has been assessed for educational strengths and difficulties; whether these results are understood by the child and by their caregiver; whether this information has travelled with the child to a new school
- ◆ Whether the child has accessed therapeutic or specialist services
- ◆ Whether the child has accessed appropriate cultural, disability, gender supports
- ◆ Number of children previously removed from the home prior to coming into contact with family violence services
- ◆ History of each child who comes into contact with family violence services to determine whether there is a history of any other sort of abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse.

The child must be seen as a person in their own right and their perspectives and experiences must be reflected in the family violence data. It is alarming to think that as a community we have no visibility over the true prevalence and impact of family violence on children because they are not reflected in existing data sets.

The Centre believes strongly that relevant data must be collected about each child exposed to family violence and that this data needs to be collated at a system wide and state wide level to inform policy, practice and the services available to better protect and support children.

Yours sincerely

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