



Intersectionality (A Core Concept)

This resource is Part 1 of a series of tip sheets on working with children and young people from diverse backgrounds. These tip sheets aim to assist in building the capacity of workforces to apply an intersectional lens when working with children and young people from diverse backgrounds, and in the assessment and management of family violence and child wellbeing issues.

An intersectional approach can be used to assist professionals to consider how a child or young person's unique and individual identities and experiences can interact and shape their experiences of and responses to, trauma and other adverse experiences.

Adopting an intersectional approach allows for professionals to identify barriers to safety and the accessibility of services that individuals may experience due to discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of their identity. An intersectional approach allows for professionals to provide responsive and appropriate services, and work towards creating and sustaining a service system that is inclusive, safe, responsive, and accountable for all.¹



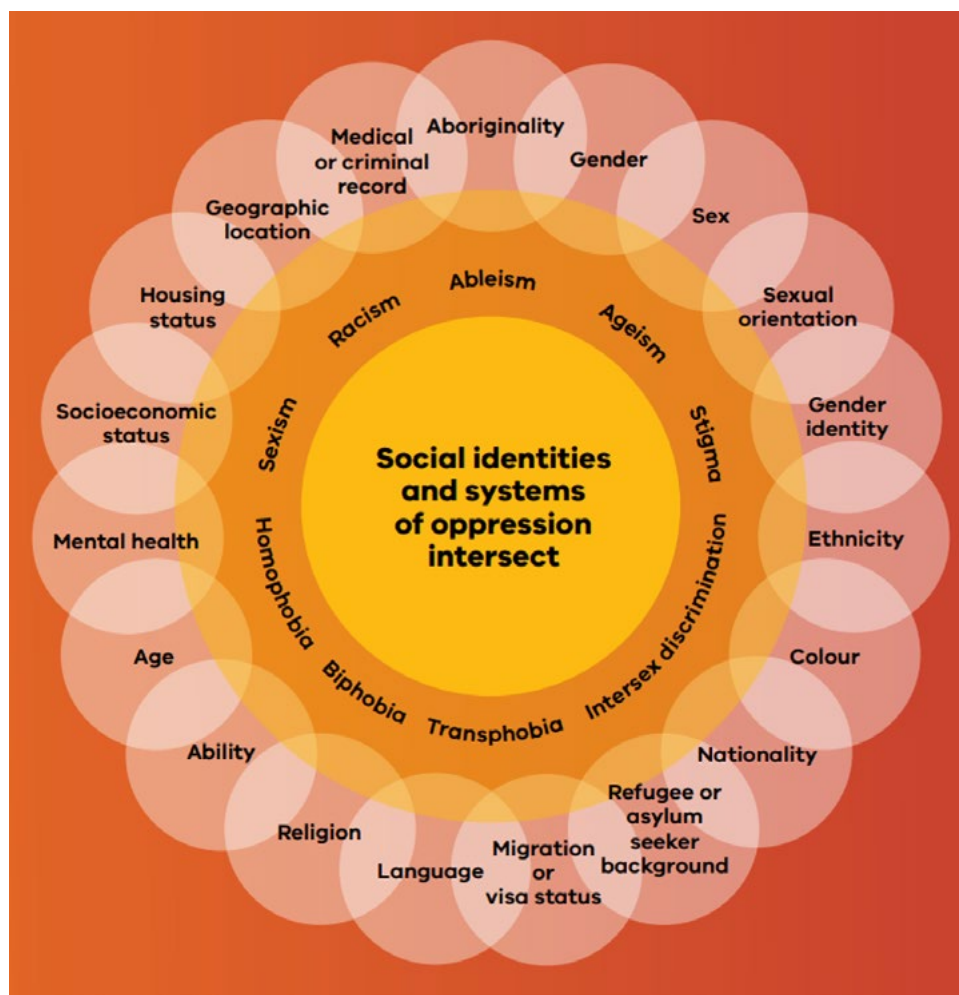
1. State of Victoria 2021a.

Understanding Intersectionality

Coined by legal scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, intersectionality refers to different aspects of a person's identity which can contribute to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation.² It is the idea that multiple identities intersect, such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, religion, class, socioeconomic status, gender identity, ability, or age, which can create systems of disadvantage for individuals and/or groups.

The intersection wheel³ is a visual representation of the interplay between someone's identity and the systems of oppression they may experience.

When these identities combine there is a greater risk of people experiencing family violence, it is increasingly difficult to access the help that they need due to systemic barriers, and there is an increased risk of social isolation.⁴



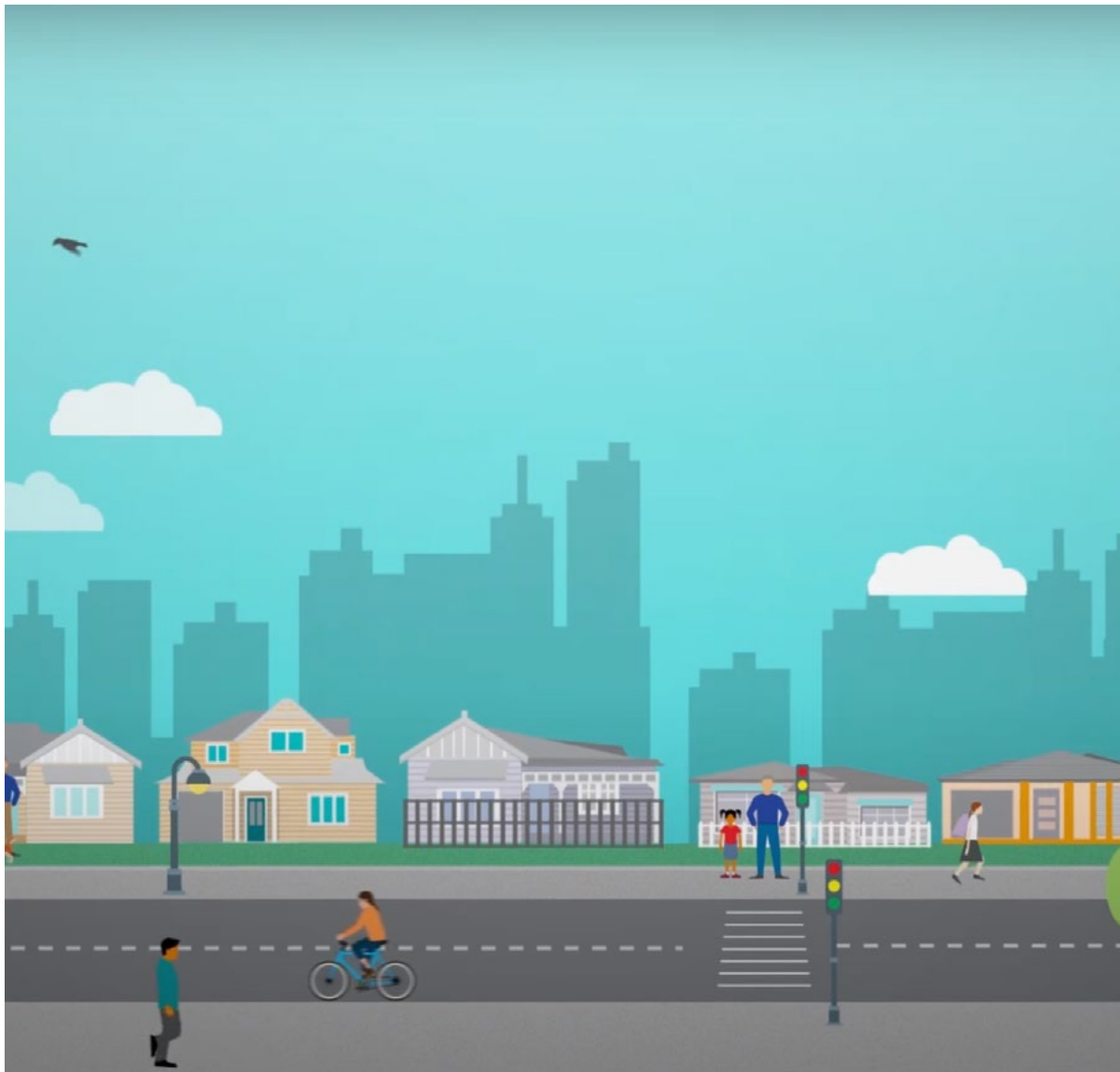
2. Crenshaw 1989.
3. State of Victoria 2018, p. 17.
4. State of Victoria 2021b.

The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework

The aim of the [Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management \(MARAM\) Framework](#) is to ensure service effectively identify, assess, and manage family violence risk.

MARAM offers support for achieving organisational alignment of policies, processes, and procedures to represent a consistent understanding of family violence, child wellbeing, and safety best practice. This means organisation which are authorised through these regulations, as well as organisations providing funded services relevant to family violence risk assessment and management, must align their policies, procedures, practice guidance and tools to MARAM.

This [video](#) provides a useful explanation of the background of the reforms.



MARAM and Intersectionality

Understanding and applying Intersectionality in their practice assists professionals to recognise how victim survivors uniquely experience family violence, the structural barriers faced to receiving a family violence service responses and how they may be specifically targeted by a person using violence. MARAM focuses on intersecting factors such as identity, systemic oppression, structural inequality, and discrimination.

MARAM creates a shared responsibility between individual professionals, services, and the wider sectors. MARAM uses an intersectional lens throughout its tools and practice guidance as a core part of risk assessment.

The MARAM Foundation Knowledge Guide highlights the importance of applying an intersectional lens in response to family violence to improve the wellbeing and safety of all clients. [Section 10.3 of the MARAM Foundation Knowledge Guide](#) outlines intersectional approaches and how to apply an intersectional lens in practice.



Intersectionality in Practice

The MARAM Foundation Knowledge Guide outlines seven different concepts for practice that professionals can use when working with clients. These concepts include person-centred approaches, intersectional approaches, and reflective practice and unconscious bias.

- **Intersectional Approach:** This approach is a way of considering a child or young person's identity and experiences, as well as giving space for the professional to reflect on their own bias in order to best be able to respond to the child or young person safely and appropriately.
- **Person-Centred Approach:** A person-centred approach gives the child or young person space to describe what they have experienced, allowing professionals to sensitively identify trauma and/or child wellbeing issues. This approach can be combined with an intersectional approach to allow professionals to validate a child or young person's experience or violence or wellbeing issues, and their ongoing impacts.
- **Reflective Practice and Unconscious Bias:** Using an intersectional lens means being aware of biases you may hold as a result of ideas, opinions, and/or stereotypes formed throughout your life. It also involves thinking about and reflecting upon your own characteristics and how these have shaped your identity, as well as what power and privilege you may hold.

What does an intersectional approach look like at a practice level?

- **Provide a tailored response** – Professionals should respond to any identified and intersecting identities and barriers that may appear in assessments and reporting and documentation to provide a respectful, safe and tailored response as identified in (Responsibility 1).
- **Consider the different aspects of a child and young person's identity** – When engaging with and supporting children and young people, it is important to use a person-centred approach which may involve providing information that is appropriate to their developmental stage, age, and intersecting identities and experiences.
- **Collaborate and coordinate with other services** – When undertaking secondary consults or referring children and young people to a specialist service, it is important to communicate what intersecting barriers they may face, along with any relevant assessments and documents.
- **Use supervision and reflective practice** – Professionals can work with managers using supervision and reflective practice to recognise the impact of their own personal values and experiences, reflect upon these values and experience, and recognise and respond to any unconscious bias that could be impacting on their practice.
- **Commit to ongoing and continuous improvement** – Developing an intersectional approach is a continuous and ongoing process which requires professionals and organisations to constantly ask questions and reflect upon the work they do. It is important that professionals and organisations are consistently reviewing policies and procedures as well as undertaking professional development to ensure that their intersectional approach remains safe and respectful.

Intersectionality in Practice (cont.)

Professionals should ask themselves the following questions to reflect on how they work with children and young people through an intersectional lens:

- What does intersectionality look like in your work?
- What is the child or young person's experience of the situation?
- What assumptions are you making in this situation?
- What power dynamics are at work here?
- Are you a representative of these power dynamics?

It is vital that workers continue to critically reflect on discrimination, bias and barriers to support working safely with victim survivors and persons using violence with an intersection analysis underpinning their work.



Further Information

TERMINOLOGY AND LANGUAGE

- **Child and Young Person** – For the purpose of this tip sheet, the term “child and young person” encompasses age groups 0-18 including newborn, infant, toddler, children, and young people. Newborn refers to time of birth through to 3 months. Infants are typically from 3 months to 18 months, toddlers from 18 months to 3 years of age, child 3 to 11 years, and young people from 12 to 18. The term child may be used to describe all ages and stages.⁵

RESOURCES

- [MARAM Practice Guides and Resources](#) (VicGov)
- [Intersectionality and MARAM in Practice Video](#) (VicGov)
- [Intersectionality: A snapshot of theory and practice](#) (CFECFW)
- [Intersectionality Matters: A guide to engaging immigrant and refugee communities to prevent violence against women](#) (Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health)
- [Intersectionality in practice](#) (inTouch)
- [Intersectionality prevention practice](#) (Safe and Equal)

REFERENCES

Crenshaw K 1989, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Anti Racist Politics*, University of Chicago Legal Forum, vol. 1, no. 8.

State of Victoria 2018, [Everybody Matters: Inclusion and Equity Statement](#), Family Safety Victoria, Melbourne.

State of Victoria 2021a, [MARAM Foundation Knowledge Guide](#), Family Safety Victoria, Melbourne.

State of Victoria 2021b, *Understanding intersectionality*, <https://www.vic.gov.au/understanding-intersectionality>.

5. State of Victoria 2021a.

