

SafeStart

SafeStart: Community Partnerships for targeted reduction of child injuries

Unintentional injuries are a leading cause of death for children and are a major reason for hospital and emergency department admissions in Victoria. In Victoria an average of 126 children per day have to visit an emergency department because of an injury.

The most common location for injury is the home. These injuries vary greatly and can be caused in a variety of ways including fire, burns and scalds, poisoning, falls, poorly designed products/play equipment, drowning, cutting and piercing and choking/aspiration. However, many of these unintentional injuries are preventable.

SafeStart is a new State Government initiative funded by the Department of Human Services. It focuses on the prevention of unintentional injury in children through working with local governments and communities. The program aims to explore ways to achieve uptake and support for proven or promising interventions in a small number of specific child injury areas. As a way to build long-term local government and community level commitment and capacity to respond to unintentional injury issues, the program will test the approach of involving local communities in the management and implementation of proven interventions. Three local government demonstration sites have been established for this initiative: Shire of Yarra Ranges, City of Ballarat and City of Greater Dandenong.

SafeStart objectives

The objectives of SafeStart include:

- Improve local knowledge of risks, barriers and facilitators, and enhance local capacity to respond to injury issues.
- Make an impact on injury incidence and/or demonstrable risk for each of the priority areas.
- Build sustainable injury prevention responses at a community, service and local government level.
- Test specific interventions at local community level with focus on disadvantaged groups.
- Build injury prevention into existing programs or plans as key areas for attention eg local government public health plans or community health plans.

The priority areas will be the home and play settings that encompass a range of unintentional injury issues amongst 0–8 year olds, including unintentional poisoning, drowning, near drowning, falls and a range of outdoor recreational injuries encountered during play activity.

Local Initiatives

The Local Government demonstration sites are responsible for the appropriate management of the projects, although relevant activities may be conducted from a variety of service settings. SafeStart Project Officers have been appointed by Councils to engage the community and appropriate services in the development of an action plan to address child injuries in the home and/or play setting. Communities are supported to adapt and implement specific interventions within a best practice framework. Strategies that build injury prevention into existing programs or plans and foster

partnerships with local industry are encouraged as a means of promoting a long term focus on injury prevention within the municipalities.

A combination of approaches which include educational, environmental and legislative/policy strategies are encouraged, as research indicates that a single approach, such as education on its own, is unlikely to impact as successfully on injury outcomes as multifaceted approaches.

Support and Evaluation

The SafeStart project has a Support and Evaluation component, designed to assist and support Local Governments to undertake child injury prevention projects. The key functions of the Support and Evaluation component are to develop the full potential of local initiatives and to report on the processes and outcomes of the overall SafeStart Program.

Links with other Department of Human Services Programs

There are a number of program areas or initiatives within the Department of Human Services, through which Councils can engage communities in the SafeStart program. These include:

- Maternal and Child Health Program
- Child Care and Preschool Services
- School Nursing Program
- Primary Care Partnerships/Community Health Plans
- Municipal Public Health Plans

For specific information on the demonstration sites contact:

Shire of Yarra Ranges
1300 368 333

City of Ballarat
5320 5500

City of Greater Dandenong
9239 5153