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| Information Sharing Schemes and the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) |
| Factsheet on secondary consultations and referrals for health workforces |
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Purpose

This factsheet provides advice for healthcare workers about family violence secondary consultations and referrals. It has been developed in response to advice from the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor to provide specific guidance about secondary consultation and referrals to health workforces (*Monitoring Victoria’s family violence reforms – Early identification of family violence within universal services - May 2022)*.

Guidance and advice provided in this factsheet is a summary of information included in MARAM Practice Guide - *Responsibility 5: Secondary consultation and referral, including for comprehensive family violence assessment and management response <https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources/responsibility-5>*

# Secondary consultations and referrals

A family violence secondary consultation (secondary consultation) is when a healthcare worker seeks advice and guidance from a specialist family violence service, or any other service, to assist how they, or their organisation, respond to a person experiencing family violence (also known as a victim survivor). Secondary consultations provide valuable family violence expertise and support to healthcare workers in assessing and managing family violence risk. A secondary consultation may lead to a referral for a victim survivor for comprehensive risk assessment and risk management, or a referral to receive further support or services.

# How a secondary consultation can assist you

A secondary consultation can assist you as a healthcare worker to:

* engage effectively and safely with a person experiencing family violence
* determine the level of riskto a person
* determineactions in line with the level of risk
* support you to share information as needed
* support you to make a referral or determine whether a referral and what kind of referral might be helpful
* understand what family violence services and other services can offer a person experiencing family violence
* assist you in making a safety plan with a person experiencing violence
* support you to work with another organisation (when needed) to monitor family violence risk to a person if their situation changes and the risk becomes higher or lower
* provide you with knowledge about support for diverse communities and assist with responses required to address a person’s unique or diverse needs and barriers they may face
* advise on services that provide culturally safe services or support, such as a service that provides a cultural safety advisor for people experiencing violence who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (referred to as Aboriginal people in this factsheet), or community specific services such as ethno-specific, LGBTQI+, and disability services
* understand how family violence may present in different communities
* establish and build relationships across organisations
* give you advice about holding a multi-agency meeting where needed to coordinate support and ongoing risk assessment for a person experiencing family violence
* assist your risk assessment, support you to share information about the behaviour of a person using violence, and help you confirm the identity of a person using violence when you are uncertain
* assist you to identify people who use violence, including in situations when you are concerned a person is using violence, but they are presenting as a person experiencing violence
* ensure an integrated and coordinated response to family violence.

# Who you can seek a secondary consultation with

You can seek a secondary consultation with:

* someone in your organisation – there may be a family violence expert in your organisation - check your organisational policies and follow your organisations secondary consultation procedures
* a specialist family violence service to:
* understand the level of risk, seek expert advice and guidance, and seek a comprehensive risk assessment
* assist you to consider risk through an intersectional lens – applying an intersectional lens means to understand a persons multi-layered identity, life experience, their experience of inequality and oppression, and factoring this into your risk assessment
* help you determine actions in line with the level of risk, and whether a referral is needed
* a mainstream, universal, or other specialist service, such as (but not limited to); other healthcare workers, teachers, general practitioners, alcohol and other drug workers, mental health professionals, social workers, maternal child and health nurses, childcare workers, a child and family service, a service that supports young people or older people, a legal service, or any service that can help provide a collaborative response to a person experiencing family violence
* a service that provides culturally safe family violence support to Aboriginal people experiencing violence
* a specialist family violence service with expert knowledge of culturally, linguistically, and faith diverse communities, LGBTQI+ communities, or services that specialise in supporting women with a disability.

Health services and hospital staff can seek a secondary consultation with the social work team or a manager as per the Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence initiative - <https://www.thewomens.org.au/health-professionals/clinical-resources/strengthening-hospitals-response-to-family-violence/>

Healthcare workers in alcohol and other drug services and designated mental health services can seek a secondary consultation with a Specialist Family Violence Advisor - as per the Specialist Family Violence Advisor capacity building program in mental health and alcohol and other drugs services in Victoria - <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/specialist-family-violence-advisor-guidelines-and-reporting-template>

**The Orange Door** is often the best point of first contact for a secondary consultation. The Orange Door provides support for adults, children and young people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence, and families who need extra support with the care of children. It also provides support to people who use violence. Tailored support is for Aboriginal people is also provided.

See The Orange Door website for a contact number in your area - <https://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/contact>

**Safe Steps** is also often the best point of first contact for a secondary consultation. Safe Steps operates 24 hours, seven days a week and provides support to anyone escaping or at risk of family violence - <https://www.safesteps.org.au/> Safe Steps provides telephone crisis counselling, referral, information and support, is the state-wide coordinator of the family violence accommodation register, and manages referrals to crisis accommodation and refuges.

Contact Safe Steps for a secondary consultation on **1800 015 188**.

You can identify your local specialist family violence service via the Safe and Equal website - <https://safeandequal.org.au/find-a-service/>

See the Appendix for further information and a list of some specialist family violence services.

# Referrals

Referrals connect people experiencing violence to information or services outside your, or your organisations practice area. This may be a referral for early intervention when family violence first occurs, or a referral to support stabilisation and recovery from family violence. Referrals can support a person for a range of needs such as housing, financial, advocacy services, therapeutic services, legal services, health, social, or child and family support. When you make a referral consider the persons level of distress, experience of trauma, and what other support they might need to access a service (such as an interpreter, transport, or childcare).

When you have identified a person is at **serious risk** - you should immediately notify police. When you have a identified a person is at **elevated or serious risk** – you should refer them to a specialist family violence service for comprehensive risk assessment or management and continue to engage with them and monitor their level of risk.

Work alongside the person experiencing violence when you are considering a referral or making a referral. Talk through the information you intend to share, get their views, and get their consent where possible to share information. Consider services together and make a referral together where possible.

Some referrals should be focused on **addressing immediate risk, fear, or safety**. This includes referrals or reports to:

* police
* a specialist family violence service (who may then refer the highest risk cases to a multidisciplinary Risk Assessment and Management Panel)
* if you believe a child or children are in need of protection or you have significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child or children, or an unborn child (after they are born) - you must follow your obligations to report to child protection or make a referral to Child FIRST
* a court or legal service if the person experiencing violence wants to seek legal advice or apply for an intervention order
* a targeted service specialising in supporting Aboriginal people experiencing violence, or people from diverse communities, or children, young people, or older people
* universal or mainstream services that provide advocacy, or therapeutic support for wellbeing to promote or strengthen protective factors.

# Consent

Work with the person experiencing violence and seek their consent to share their information during a secondary consultation or when making a referral where possible. As per MARAM Practice Guide - *Responsibility 5: Secondary consultation and referral, including for comprehensive family violence assessment and management response* [*https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources/responsibility-5*](https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources/responsibility-5):

* you can undertake a secondary consultation and seek guidance without sharing identifying information about the person experiencing violence
* if you think a secondary consultation might lead to a referral and you will need to share identifying information – you should seek consent from the person experiencing violence prior to undertaking the secondary consultation
* consent is not required to share information about a person using violence if it is shared according to the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme, or as authorised by other legislation
* ideally a person experiencing violence will consent to you sharing information with another service, and when needed with police or child protection – however if they do not consent – the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme permits information sharing in certain situations.

Consent from a person experiencing violence is required to share information ‘...unless information sharing is necessary to lessen or prevent a serious threat to an individual’s life, health, safety or welfare...(and) …will not be required if a child’s safety is at risk…’ (Ministerial Guidelines – Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines – Guidance for Information Sharing Entities - <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-information-sharing-scheme>).

For further advice and guidance about consent and information sharing, check your organisational policies, seek advice from your organisation, and see:

* Factsheet for health workforces - Information Sharing Schemes and the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM)[*https://www.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/family-violence-multi-agency-risk-assessment-and-management-framework*](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/family-violence-multi-agency-risk-assessment-and-management-framework)
* Ministerial Guidelines – Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines – Guidance for Information Sharing Entities - <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-information-sharing-scheme>)
* MARAM Practice Guide – *Responsibility 6: Contribute to information sharing with other service (as authorised by legislation)* - <https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources/responsibility-6>

# Further information

See MARAM Practice Guide - *Responsibility 5: Secondary consultation and referral, including for comprehensive family violence assessment and management response* [*https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources/responsibility-5*](https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources/responsibility-5)for detailed information about secondary consultations and referrals. This includes further information about how to enable a successful referral, referral processes, what information to include in a referral, which organisations referrals can be made to, good referral practices between services, consent or views on secondary consultations and referrals, and record keeping.

Resources to assist organisations and workers implement MARAM are available at <https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources>

For further information about training and resources available to support health workforces, please email: [infosharing@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:infosharing@health.vic.gov.au)

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# Appendix – Some specialist family violence services

### The Orange Door

* A service for adults, children and young people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence and families who need extra support with the care of children - [www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au](http://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au)
* The Orange Door brings together practitioners from specialist family violence services, family services, including Child FIRST, Aboriginal services, and services for people who use violence. The Orange Door can also connect people to services which can provide financial, legal, health, substance misuse, housing, employment, or education support.​
* The service supports people in multicultural communities and people of any migration status. People who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander can choose to be supported by an Aboriginal practitioner or be referred to an Aboriginal service.​
* The Orange Door operates Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm and is closed on public holidays.
* **Website:** <https://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/find-a-service-near-you>

### Safe Steps

* Provides support to anyone escaping or at risk of family violence.
* Provides telephone crisis counselling, referral, information, and support.
* Coordinates the family violence accommodation register and manages referrals to crisis accommodation and refuges.
* **Call: 1800 015 188** - 24 hours a day, seven days a week including public holidays.
* **Website**: <https://www.safesteps.org.au/>

### National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence hotline

* A national service providing domestic, family, and sexual violence counselling, information, and support services.
* **Call: 1800 RESPECT** (1800 737 732) - 24-hour phone and online counselling service.
* **Website:** <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>

### No to Violence

* Specialises in effective evidence informed engagement with men who use violence, and its primary concern is the safety of women and children.
* Operates the Men’s Referral Service – a men’s family violence telephone counselling, information, and referral service.
* **Call: 1300 766 491** between 8.00am -9.00pm Monday to Friday and 9.00am – 6.00pm on weekends.
* **Website**: https://ntv.org.au/

### Rainbow Door

* A specialist LGBTIQA+ helpline providing information, support, and referral to all LGBTIQA+ Victorians, their friends and family.
* **Call: 1800 729 367** between 10.00am to 5.00pm, seven days a week.
* **Website:** <https://www.rainbowdoor.org.au/>

### InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence

* Provides support, services and programs and responses to family violence in migrant and refugee communities.
* **Call: 1800 755 988**, Monday to Friday between 9:30am – 4:30pm.
* **Website:** <https://intouch.org.au/>

### Victims of Crime

* Provides support and advice to anyone experiencing family violence in Victoria, provides advice about reporting a crime, finding services that can help, getting information about the court process, and getting help applying for compensation and financial assistance. Victims of Crime provides the Victims Assistance Program, a primary support service for men affected by family violence.
* **Call: 1800 819 817** between 8:00am – 11:00pm, seven days a week.
* **Website:** <https://www.victimsofcrime.vic.gov.au/>

### Djirra

* Preventing and addressing family violence by providing programs and supporting Aboriginal women’s journey to safety and wellbeing. Djirra provides community education and early intervention and prevention programs, as well as personalised support from senior support workers, connections to lawyers, and to services.
* **Call: 1800 105 303**
* **Website:** <https://djirra.org.au/>

### Elizabeth Morgan House Aboriginal Women’s Service

* Provides a culturally safe and holistic family violence support, advice, and assistance to Aboriginal women and their children, parents of Aboriginal children, as well as partners and ex-partners of Aboriginal people.
* **Call: 9403 9400** – Monday to Thursday 9.00am to 5.00pm, Friday 9.00am – 4.00pm
* **Website**: <https://www.emhaws.org.au/>