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| Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework practice guidance |
| Needle Syringe Program |
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# Background

The Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) is designed to increase the safety and wellbeing of Victorians by supporting relevant services to identify, assess, and manage family violence risk effectively.

MARAM was established in law under Part 11 of the ***Family Violence Protection Act 2008*** (FVPA). This means there is a legal requirement for prescribed organisations to align their policies, procedures, practice guidance and tools to MARAM and embed the MARAM principles into practice.

Aligning to MARAM will be a gradual process, with organisations beginning from different starting points and continuing to improve over time. As such organisations work towards alignment. MARAM practice guides provide guidance in assessing and managing family violence risk. They support workers to:

* recognise a wide range of risk factors, including for children, Aboriginal people, older people, and diverse communities, across identities, families, and relationships
* keep people who use family violence (perpetrators) in view and hold them accountable for their actions and behaviours.

MARAM is being rolled out with the Child Information Sharing Scheme, and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme. Information sharing is a key enabler of the MARAM reforms, and more information is available at https://www.vic.gov.au/information-sharing-schemes-and-the-maram-framework.

# Responsibilities for Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs)

As NSPs are designed to provide an anonymous and confidential service, **there is no requirement for NSPs to formally align with MARAM**, and NSP workers are not required to attend MARAM training.

**However, it is recommended NSP workers develop an understanding of the shared definition of family violence (see below), evidence-based risk factors, and signs of family violence.** It’s important that NSP workers understand processes for making referrals to specialist family violence services, and other support services. Key considerations for NSP workers are:

* Organisations delivering an NSP service will provide support for NSP workers to assist their response to family violence. For example, NSP workers would be included in updates about how MARAM is being aligned within the broader organisation and invited to attend training about any new MARAM policies or procedures.
* If NSP workers are concerned an NSP client is experiencing family violence, they should follow their organisation’s procedures for identifying and responding to family violence risk. This may include talking to another staff member about their concerns, seeking advice from their supervisor or manager, or a person in the organisation who has family violence expertise.
* NSP workers can talk with the client they are concerned about, and, if the client agrees, they can link them to support within their service that is not specific to family violence, but may be able to lead the client to family violence support, including social work support, family support, or alcohol and drug support.
* NSP workers can provide the name of a local family violence specialist service, or a service that works with people who use violence (perpetrators of family violence) (including a contact phone number for the service, or a flyer, or a website address), for the client to contact if they wish to, or if the client requests this information.
* NSP workers can make a referral to a specialist family violence service, or any other support service if client consent is provided.

# What is family violence?

The FVPA provides a broad definition of family violence and ‘family’ or ‘family like’ relationships, as outlined below (see the MARAM practice guides: Foundation Knowledge, page 19). Family violence takes a variety of forms and occurs in a range of relationships, including and outside of intimate, domestic partners.

‘Family violence is behaviour that controls or dominates a family member and causes them to fear for their own or another person’s safety or wellbeing. It includes exposing a child to these behaviours, as well as their effects and impacts. Family violence presents across a spectrum of risk, ranging from subtle exploitation of power imbalances, through to escalating patterns of abuse over time’.

As described throughout the Foundation Knowledge Guide family violence is deeply gendered. While both men and women can be perpetrators or victim survivors of family violence, overwhelmingly, perpetrators are men, who largely perpetrate violence against women (who are their current or former partner) and children. However, family violence can occur in a range of ways across different relationship types and communities, including but not limited to the following:

Children and young people as victim survivors in their own right who have unique experiences, vulnerabilities and needs

Older peoples’ experiences of family violence, often described as elder abuse, from intimate partners, adult children or carers, or extended family members

Varying experiences of family violence for people from Aboriginal and diverse backgrounds and communities’.

The MARAM Practice Guides: Foundation Knowledge (pg19).

# MARAM resources for NSPs

Resources to assist organisations and workers to align with MARAM and gain family violence knowledge and practice skills are available at https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources. These resources include practice guides and assessment tools, and updated practice notes including practice notes on responding to family violence during coronavirus (COVID-19)).

MARAM Leading Alignment training is available for organisational leaders, CEOs, directors, or senior managers across all organisations/agencies. Enrol for Leading Alignment training delivered by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria here: <https://training.dvrcv.org.au/coursedetails/?course_id=78680&course_type=w>

To access organisational tools and video resources, go to: <https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources> and select the ‘Organisational focussed resources’ tab. Further resources and training options are being developed to assist organisations and workers to align with MARAM and embed responding to family violence in their work. These will be made available through [the website](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Camas0106%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5CXGT0I8MA%5Cthe%20department%E2%80%99s%20Providers%20website) <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/family-violence-risk-assessment-and-risk-management-framework>.

# Further information

For further information about MARAM or other training or resources email: InfoSharing@dhhs.vic.gov.au

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