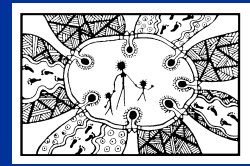




Responding effectively to women, children and young people: What Family Services and Family Violence Services bring to each other.

Joanna Bock, Regional Director, BSV
Julie Boffa, Project Manger, NEMC&FSA at CPS



The Partnerships

N.I.F.V.S:

- Anglicare Victoria
- Berry Street Victoria
- Elizabeth Hoffman House
- Women's Health In the North
- Georgina's
- Mary Andersen
- Community Health Services
- DHS

N.E.M.C.&F.S Alliance:

- Anglicare Victoria
- Berry Street Victoria
- Children's Protection Society
- DHS
- Darebin Council
- EMC-Brotherhood of St.L.
- Kildonan Uniting Care
- North Yarra CHS
- VACCA
- Yarra City Council

Family Violence Reform

Reforms stemmed from a whole of government policy commitment of the *Women's Safety Strategy* [2002] to develop the first integrated and consistent system for addressing family violence in Victoria.

Reforming the Family Violence System in Victoria: a report developed by the Statewide Committee to Reduce Family Violence was released in 2005 and the Government's commitment to addressing Family Violence is outlined in *A Fairer Victoria* [2005 & 2006]

Guiding Integrated Family Violence Service Reform 2006 – 2009 is the key DHS policy document

Family Services Reform



Key documents include:

- **A Strategic Framework for Family Services, 2002**
- **Putting Victoria's Children First, 2003**
- **Protecting Children: Child Protection Outcomes Project, 2003**
- **Family Support Innovations Projects, 2003**
- **Protecting Children: ten priorities, 2004**
- **Fairer Victoria, 2005 & 2006**
- **Protecting Children: Next Steps, 2005**
- **Children Youth and Families Act, 2005**
- **Strategic Framework for Family Services 2007**

Key aims for Integrated Family Violence Services

- Increased safety for women and children
- Improved accountability for men
- Support for women to have control and agency over their lives and future.

What this means:



- Improved judicial responses for women that provide enduring access to choice and opportunity
- Children are recognised as having independent rights to safety
- Men require service responses that address issues of accountability
- An integrated service system will reflect an understanding of the gendered nature and the consequences of power imbalance in family violence

The key aims for redeveloped Family Services:

- Divert a significant proportion of families currently reported to child protection services into earlier intervention and community based support services
- Minimise continuing reports and the progression of families into the Child Protection system
- Provide improved service capacity and responses for families with complex needs

What this means:



- A focus on the child – the child is now the client
- Greater capacity to work with higher levels of assessed risk
- A need to work collaboratively with universal and specialist services to deliver coordinated and meaningful responses to families
- An understanding of the impact of cumulative harm upon children

FVS

FVS/FS

FS

Crisis intervention
Police collaboration
Legal advocacy
Housing support
Refuge referrals
After Hours capacity
Single issue response
Working with women

Voluntary engagement
Case Management
Working with children
Material aid
Group work
Counselling
Community Education

Assertive outreach
In home support
Parenting education & support
Multi-presentational response
Social networks
Family focused & working with men

Opportunities for women and children:



- **Community education that empowers women and children**
- **Naming Family Violence**
- **Earlier intervention for women and children**
- **Improved responses and choices for women**
- **Sector commitment to working with families at greater risk of entering the Child Protection system**
- **Better informed workforce**
- **Consistent responses under a Common Risk Assessment tool and Best Interests Framework**
- **Common Outcome measurements**
- **Focus, legitimacy and recognition from both sectors**

What is Child FIRST?

Child and **F**amily **I**nformation **R**eferral and **S**upport **T**eams

A central well publicised entry point to all DHS funded Family Services in the catchment

Alongside partner Family Service agencies, coordinates:

- Family Service allocations across the catchment
- Prioritising services on the basis of needs
- Responses to children with significant concerns about wellbeing
- Relationships with wider service networks
- Catchment capacity and service data

North East Metro Child & Family Service Alliance

Core membership across catchment

- Child FIRST & Family Services agencies
- Child Protection
- DHS partnerships

Roles for vulnerable children and families

- Service delivery
- Service coordination
- Planning

Mission

- *To develop an integrated system of care for vulnerable children, youth and families*

Community Based Child Protection



**A Child Protection contribution to
integrated practice with Family Services**

- **Earlier intervention**
- **Supports sustained community interventions
when risk factors are present**

Located for part of week at Child FIRST

**Available to NE Family Services agencies
for consultation about risk and safety
plans**

NEMC&FS Alliance Aboriginal Best Interest Project

- Focus to cultural competence
- Aboriginal Liaison Worker based at VACCA
- Works two half days per week at Child FIRST
- Provides Indigenous consultation on all referrals
- Available for consultations and joint visits with all catchment Family Services agencies
- Facilitate Aboriginal/mainstream links

Backed by legislative reform

Child Protection and Family Services combined under single new legislation-
Children Youth and Families Act 2005

Establishes child's *Best Interests Principles* as paramount (s10). Includes:

- Widest assistance to parent and child
- Strengthen child's significant relationships
- Protect and promote Aboriginal cultural and spiritual identity
- Consider effects of cumulative patterns of harm on a child's safety and development

Ensures that services are accessible and prioritised based on need (s61b)

CYFA 2005 (cont)

Establishes *purposes* for community based child and family services (s22):

- To provide point of entry to an integrated local service network that is accessible to families and allows for early intervention and support
- Receive referrals about vulnerable children where there are significant concerns about their wellbeing
- Undertake assessment of needs and risk
- Make referrals to other agencies
- Promote and facilitate collaborative local networks to coordinate services and supports
- Provide ongoing services to support vulnerable children and families

Enables consultations by Family Services with Child Protection (s38) and capacity for information sharing without parental consent for risk assessment or to determine appropriate service (s36)

Who to refer to Child FIRST



Vulnerable children and families who require Family Services support with:

- **Parenting skills and capacity**
- **Parent-child relationships**
- **Child development**
- **Social inclusion and family and community connectedness**

What are characteristics of vulnerable children and families?

- Significant parenting problems that may be affecting the child's development
- Serious family conflict, including family breakdown
- Families under pressure due to a family member's physical or mental illness, substance abuse, disability or bereavement
- Young, isolated and/or unsupported families
- Significant social or economic disadvantage that may adversely impact on a child's care or development

Differential pathways

Concerns about children: “Can the family be supported to address the issues for their children?”	“Is there risk of significant harm to children”	Family violence: “Are the parents open to assistance and the children not at significant risk in this environment?”
Call Child FIRST Monday to Friday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm	Call Child Protection Monday to Friday 8.45 am to 5.00 pm	Call Integrated Family Violence Services Duty Intake Monday to Friday 9.00 pm to 5.00 pm
	Call the Emergency After Hours Child Protection Service (Outside regional business hours)	Call the Emergency After Hours Service (Outside regional business hours)

What works to improve safety and wellbeing for vulnerable children:

Recurring theme - Services that are:

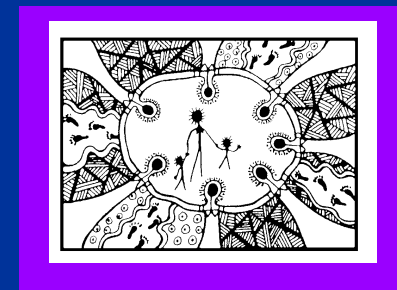
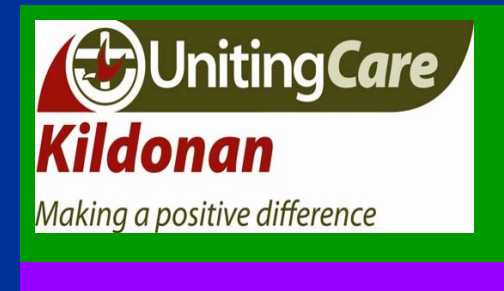
Multi- component

- One-to-one
- Groups
- Family and/or social network
- In home and/or In community

Multi-disciplinary

- Early years
- Education & employment
- Family Support
- Specialist services – mental health; drug & alcohol, family violence; disability; etc

Shared responsibility:



The way ahead



Working together in our local communities:

- Visible and accessible entry points
- Combined potential of comprehensive service range
- Strength and learning in diversity
- Responding to thinking, feeling, acting clients – safety through choice, timing and relating