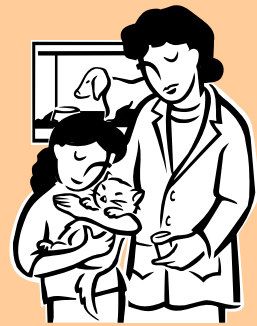


Responding to children affected by family violence – opportunities for collaboration

Professor Cathy Humphreys
University of Melbourne

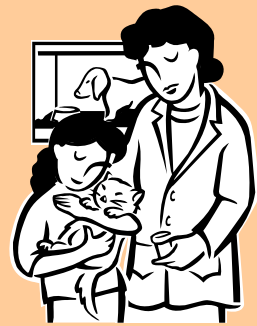
The role of the Social Movement



To hold traumatic reality in consciousness requires a social context that affirms and protects the victim and that joins victim and witness in common alliance. For the individual victim, this social context is created by relationships with friends, lovers and family. For the larger society, the social context is created by political movements that give voice to the disempowered (Herman, 1992, p.9).



Overview



- Definitions and prevalence
- What is involved in the new reform initiative for family violence?
- Measures and the challenges – can we keep more women and children safely in their homes?
- What do we mean by integration?



Definition of family violence

Family violence is an issue focused around a wide range of

physical,
emotional,
psychological and
economic abuses

that occur within families, intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities.

(Indigenous Family Violence Task Force Final Report, 2003)



Return to the dominant pattern

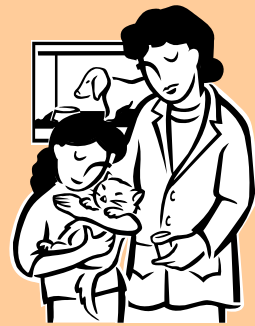
- British Crime Survey (2004)
 - Reported being subjected to DV in the past year
 - 13% of women and 9% of men
 - Subjected to 4 or more incidents
 - 89% were women
 - Of all incidents
 - 81% involved violence by men against women.
 - Women were overwhelmingly the most severely injured (3 times more likely)
Fearful (3 times more likely)



Disturbing numbers of children

- ABS survey - of 5000 children surveyed
25% witnessed violence against a parent
(Indermaur, 2001) (estimate of 962,000 children under 14)
- Family violence incidents attended by
police (Victoria)
Children were present at 48% (Approx. 14,000
incidents)

Does gender matter?



Collaboration of the service system requires
a common language

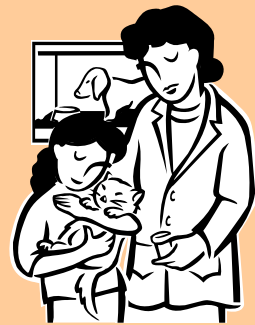
For example:

Complex needs (multi-problem
families)

OR

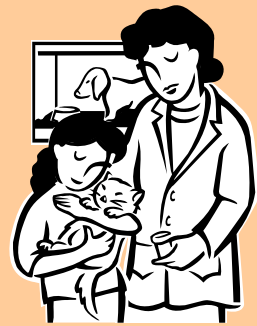
The effects of violence and abuse

Family Violence Reform Strategy



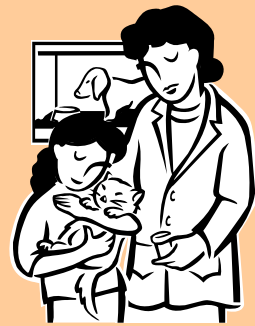
- Police Code of Practice
- Code of Practice and Guidelines for specialist family violence services for women and children
- Inter-departmental Steering Committee
- \$4.1m Indigenous family violence strategy
- Review of the Crimes (Family Violence) Act, 1987 (Development of 'holding powers')

Service Development



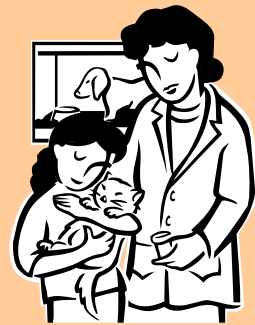
- Specialist courts responses to family violence
- \$35m includes services for women and children
- 31 men's behaviour change programs
- Risk assessment, risk management framework

Housing Reform



- Victorian Homelessness Strategy: *Taking Responsibility*
- A framework for developing best practice programs for men who use violence towards family members

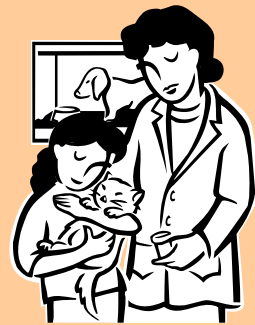
Children and Families Reform



- *Every Child, Every Chance*
- *Children, Youth and Families Act, 2005*
- *Child-Well Being and Safety Act, 2005*

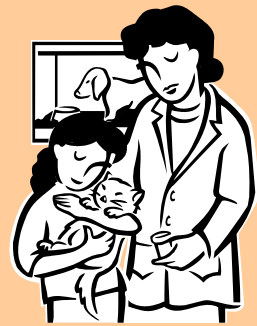
Reform to statutory child protection, family services including Child FIRST

Key principles



- Well-being (development)
- Stability
- Safety
- Respect for culture and community
- Family services, child protection, Children's Court under one legislation
- Higher levels of co-ordination between services
- Earlier intervention

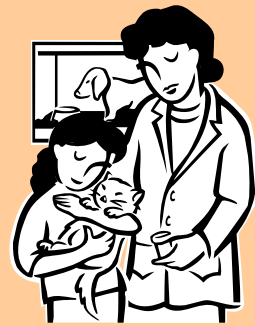
Pathways for children



- ‘ Child protection to ensure the immediate or ongoing safety of children exposed to or experiencing family violence; and
- Child FIRST to address any concerns in relation to the wellbeing of children’.

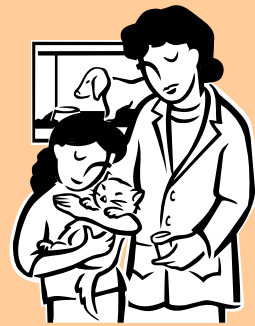


Children's Best Interests & Cumulative Harm



- Beyond the incident
- 'Cumulative harm is experienced by a child as a result of a series or pattern of harmful events and experiences that may be historical, or ongoing, with the strong possibility of the risk factors being multiple, inter-related and co-existing over critical developmental periods'

Knowledge-informed practice?

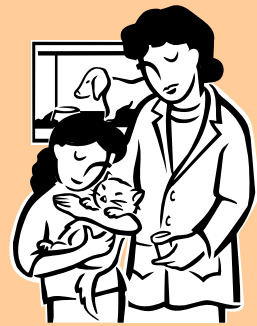


‘As the diameter of our knowledge increases, the circumference of our ignorance expands’

(stem cell researcher)

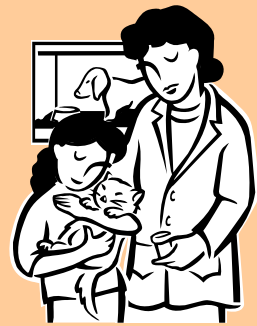


A safer system?



- **The intervention system needs to be as strong as the perpetrator** in its power and influence on outcomes for children, women, and men.
- Creating a system ‘without leaks’

'The system matters'



The most chronically violent men were not those with the highest number of lethality factors, but those men who

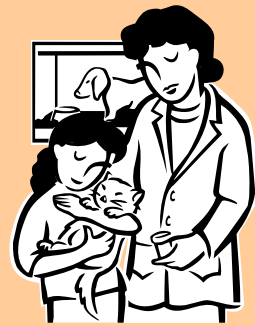
continued to 'get away with it'. (Gondolf, 2004)

The 'system' needs to be assessed as a risk factor.

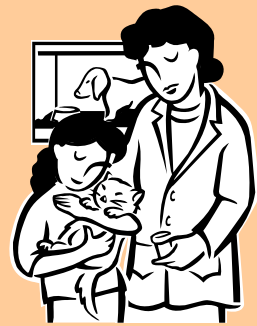
Are there consequences for continuing violence and abuse?



Can women and children stay at home?



- More than 30 years since the first refuge opened
- Time for re-thinking and re-balancing
- * New intervention orders available for police
- * Brokerage funds
- * Men's behaviour change programs
- * Advocacy, support, counselling for children and women



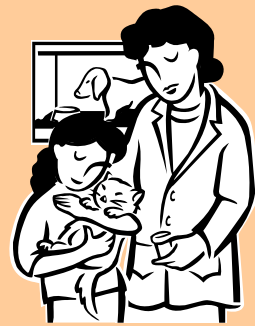
Integration

Integration refers to agencies forming shared governance arrangements

- at a strategic level and
- intensive case management based on shared protocols and
- data sharing arrangements at operational level for front line workers

(O'Brian et al., 2006)

A continuum of working

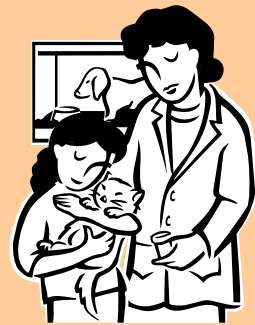


A continuum of multi-agency working occurs

- from relatively minimal co-operative relationships,
- via co-ordination of work towards a common goal,
- through to active collaboration and finally
- to integrated services



No quick fix



- A change to organisational culture
- Greater level of decision making for front-line workers
- Low level of inter-disciplinary conflict
- High levels of co-operation
- Role clarity

These effected the outcomes for children

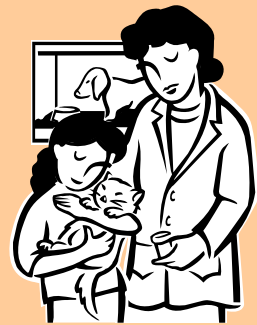


Over-arching principles for collaboration

- Safety and protection of children
- Empowerment and safety for survivors (mainly women)
- Responsibility and accountability of perpetrators (mainly men) (Burke, 1999)
- Healing in the aftermath of violence (strengthening the mother-child relationship) (Humphreys, 2006).



'Listen Louder'



Family violence thrives on isolation, secrecy and silence.

Children thrive on openness, laughter and a sense of belonging.