

**IN THE MATTER OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION
INTO FAMILY VIOLENCE**

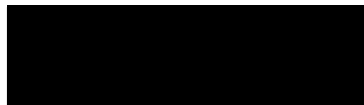
ATTACHMENT BA-9 TO STATEMENT OF BETH ALLEN

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This is the attachment marked '**BA-9**' produced and shown to **BETH ALLEN** at the time of signing her Statement on 13 July 2015.

Before me: 



**An Australian Legal Practitioner within
the meaning of the Legal Profession Uniform Law (Victoria)**

Attachment BA-9

Family violence services (including men's behaviour change services)

Date of Advice: **23 December 2014**

Advice no: **1078**

This advice is endorsed by the: Assistant Director, Child Protection, Statutory and Forensic Services Design

This Advice is current **only** if the date of Advice in this document matches the date of Advice in the online version. Check the date of Advice on line before relying on this printed copy.

Introduction and purpose

This Advice provides information regarding family violence services. It is intended to provide child protection practitioners and managers with a broad overview of the service area to guide either decision making regarding the suitability of referring their client or understanding a service with which their client has contact.

There is an emerging body of evidence to indicate that exposure to violence within the family is a significant risk factor for children. Child protection practitioners need to be alert to indicators of family violence that may exist for a child, young person and their family. Knowing the factors that allow family violence to occur and the supports available will assist you in collaboratively planning to achieve safety for the child or young person.

Specific policy context

The Victorian Government is committed to reducing family violence. In 2005 the then Victorian Government initiated major reforms of the family violence system to better provide an integrated response across community services, justice and police.

The Family Violence Protection Act 2008 furthers these reforms by broadening the definitions of family violence, and contains improvements to the justice system to better respond to family violence.

For this integrated service system to be effective, services and sectors will work in a coordinated and consistent manner in response to family violence. Effective collaboration between Child Protection and family violence and other services is vital to ensuring appropriate interventions for children experiencing family violence.

Legislation

Note: Use the Legislation link on toolbar to access full text versions of the legislation. Any sections of an Act noted in this Advice are partial references only and should not be relied on. Practitioners should refer to the Act for full details.

Information sharing

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005

Information Privacy Act 2000

Health Records Act 2001

Refer to Advice 1090 *Information sharing in child protection practice*

Standards and procedures

Service description

There is a range of services and agencies in the family violence sector that have a variety of roles and responsibilities towards victims and perpetrators of family violence.

Following is information for child protection practitioners about family violence services available to women, children and young people experiencing family violence, and for men who perpetrate family violence.

Family violence outreach services

Services provided

Outreach services will support women placed by family violence in circumstances that threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of housing.

Women may receive outreach services for an average of 12 weeks. Some women may require support over a longer period. Outreach services will also consider the needs of accompanying children when assisting women who have experienced violence. These services aim to assist women to make informed choices about their circumstances for themselves and their children to protect their safety. They also provide assistance to women and their children to remain in safe accommodation in their local community, maintaining connection with friends, family and other community support (in some cases safety imperatives may require assistance to relocate to another area.) They also aim to reduce disruption to children's lives by avoiding relation away from existing communities and school.

There are intensive case management programs in each region to provide more intensive support to women, including women with children, who face the highest levels of risk and who have the greatest complexity of associated issues.

Intensive case management will be provided to adult women who experience family violence who have complex and multiple needs and where the threat to safety is such that issues cannot be addressed through usual case management processes. Intensive case management is also provided to women who have been the subject of multiple repeat attendances by police, and where multiple agencies are likely to be involved owing to the complexity of need.

Eligibility criteria

Women experiencing issues with family violence may access family violence outreach services on a repeat and ongoing basis as required, for information, support and referral. A worker will respond and assess on a case-by-case basis as to whether a woman requires more in-depth case management with a dedicated support worker.

How to refer

Women are generally encouraged, and in some cases required, to self-refer to family violence outreach services, although practitioners may contact the service on behalf of their client to explore referral options and services provided.

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre

The Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre (Safe Steps), formally known as the women's domestic violence crisis service (WDVCS), is a state-wide, non-government organisation providing 24 hour, seven-day-a-week telephone crisis counselling, family violence risk assessment, referral, information, support, advocacy and crisis accommodation to women and children experiencing family violence.

It is the central referral agency for refugees (see below).

Contact details

Crisis Line Phone: (03) 9373 0123 or 1800 015 188 toll free, 24 hours

Administration Phone: (03) 9377 9600

Women's refuges

Women's refuges provide safe accommodation for women and children escaping family violence. Refuges maintain confidential addresses and medium or high security which may be characterised by a range of measures intended to preserve safety for clients and workers, particularly in scenarios of extreme violence and the likelihood of pursuit and tracking by the violent partner.

Services provided

Each refuge provides supported accommodation in a graduated range of settings, including fully staffed communal care facilities (often in suburban houses), and transitional properties. Support levels become less intensive as service users progress towards the goal of independent living. A small number of refuges maintain a primary focus on service provision to certain target groups, such as Aboriginal women or those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, although women from those client groups are, of course, able to access general refuge vacancies. Refuge workers provide practical support, advocacy or referral regarding a wide range of issues including income support, legal and immigration issues, housing, child care and parenting, health, material aid, emotional support, group work and financial counselling.

In each refuge, a specialist children's support worker coordinates support plans for children who are residents of the refuge. This may include supporting the mother in her parenting role, providing information and resources to mothers and children on coping and recovery strategies, school liaison, supporting the child through any legal or protective processes, attending Child Protection case planning meetings to advocate on behalf of the child and making appropriate referrals. Child support workers also have a role in providing informal counselling and support to children, assisting them to make sense of their experiences, debrief and understand and accept the violence is not their fault. Many refuges employ bilingual and bicultural workers and can cater for special dietary, cultural or religious needs. Bilingual and bicultural workers from the immigrant women's domestic violence service (IWDVS) are available to provide ongoing cultural and linguistic support to women of CALD backgrounds and joint case management with generalist refuge workers.

Eligibility criteria

Each refuge maintains its own eligibility criteria, although broad eligibility is women and children escaping an immediate threat of family violence for whom it is unsafe to remain in the family home and who are unable to access alternative safe accommodation.

Special provision may be made to accommodate different family groupings or other special needs. A woman may seek refuge accommodation on as many separate occasions as necessary, and this is indeed a crucial factor in many women's eventual progress over time to a life free from violence. There are no general criteria regarding the age or gender of children who can be accommodated, but the viability of communal living needs to be considered. Assessments of the most appropriate arrangements are made on an individual basis, taking into consideration factors such as the type of refuge accommodation available, whether young people are

attending school, have close connections with peer networks and whether there are adult children living at home.

How to refer

Contact Safe Steps, except where local arrangements exist. In some areas, particularly in rural and remote regions, direct referral to a local refuge may be possible. Safe Steps or local family violence outreach services can assist workers to identify the most appropriate local pathway for clients who require refuge.

Referral and assessment procedures require that the woman herself speak to the Safe Steps crisis support worker regarding her situation. Phone interpreters can be arranged. This worker will discuss the woman's situation with her at length, conducting a detailed family violence assessment, and identifying necessary safety measures and appropriate accommodation options.

Safe Steps may contact suitable refuges with vacancies and outline the referral. Often, refuge staff will also speak directly to the woman. If the referral is accepted, transport to the refuge and other arrangements can be coordinated. It may be necessary for a woman to be placed in interim crisis accommodation or other short term accommodation pending the family's move to the refuge.

Access

The crisis line can be extremely busy at times, so callers may need to keep trying until they get through. Access may be easier after hours. There is also a free-call number for women in rural areas. Child protection practitioners may contact Safe Steps via their administration line for information on the service or to pass messages to women in refuge. The crisis line number should not be used for this purpose.

Safe Steps may assist women at high risk of danger into a refuge well away from their point of origin. Where it is not possible or not appropriate to gain referral into a refuge in the client's local area, dislocation from local services, networks, family, friends and other support may occur. This may also affect the continuity of Child Protection client case management. Such issues should be considered as part of the referral process.

After hours family violence crisis services

After hours responses are available to women and children experiencing family violence. Services are accessed via Safe Steps or the local police station. Services may include:

- crisis accommodation
- counselling
- outreach
- advocacy, and
- referral to appropriate services the next working day.

In Touch Inc - Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence

In Touch aims to create and improve affordable, accessible and effective options for women facing family violence, whose origins are from countries where English is not the first language, who are experiencing or escaping situations of family violence and who are residing in Victoria. In Touch provides culturally appropriate support for culturally and linguistically diverse women and children experiencing or escaping family violence. In Touch works in conjunction with refuges and associated family violence services in supporting mutual clients. In most instances, In Touch is also able to provide support to women in their language of choice. It is a free service.

Services provided

In Touch provides:

- joint case management with family violence services and other relevant services in Victoria to support women and children experiencing family violence
- information, support and referral for women in crisis

- secondary consultations to service providers.

Wherever possible, In Touch will work jointly with a family violence service, either a refuge or an outreach service, to provide joint case management for the target group. In Touch will negotiate input from other services into the family violence service system, and work in conjunction with these services to provide support to the clients.

Eligibility criteria

The service is available to women facing family violence, whose origins are from countries where English is not the first language, who are experiencing or escaping situations of domestic violence and who are residing in Victoria.

How to refer

In Touch can be contacted by family violence workers or workers from other service sectors such as Child Protection, or directly by women escaping family violence. The duty worker at In Touch will explain in detail the types of support provided by In Touch staff. If the woman is assessed as eligible for In Touch support, the duty worker will make an appointment with the relevant worker for assessment and ongoing support.

Children in homelessness services resource positions

The Office of Housing (OOH) currently provides funding in each Department of Human Services division, focusing on the needs of accompanying children of OOH clients who access homelessness services. A variety of models for use of this funding exist such as:

- resource workers to provide information, training and secondary consultation on children's issues to workers in homelessness services
- brokerage funds to purchase recreation programs or counselling resources for children in homelessness services
- worker positions providing direct service and therapeutic intervention to accompanying children.

These positions are currently under review. Further information and contact details for each divisional model are available from the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) and service advisers in regional offices.

Family violence prevention and support program

This program covers a range of preventative and support services for women, children and men throughout Victoria. It includes individual or group-based support as well as telephone counselling, court support and networking support.

Direct services are available to women, children and young people experiencing family violence or to men attempting to address their violent behaviour.

Family violence counselling and support services for women and children

Counselling and support services assist women and children who may have experienced family violence or are at risk of being unsafe in the family environment. The target group includes women who are no longer in abusive relationships, those who choose to remain in an abusive relationship and those who have never called police or used family violence crisis services.

Services will have a strong focus on supporting children, with a minimum of 30% of counselling and support funds allocated specifically for the provision of services for children. Services provided include:

- individual counselling for women
- individual counselling for children
- group programs for women and children.

These services will also provide specialist consultation to assist generalist community service organisations and professionals in their work with women and children who experience family violence, and community education to improve community understanding about issues related to violence.

The Victorian Court information and welfare network

This service provides information and support for women in relation to legal processes (including seeking intervention orders) through court support, advocacy and referral.

Men's referral service

The men's referral service is a telephone counselling service staffed by volunteers which provides information and referral services for men wishing to take responsibility for their use of violence.

Contact details

Phone: (03) 9428 2899 or 1800 065 973 (for country callers) Monday–Friday 09.00 am–09.00pm

Men's behaviour change programs

These services play a key role in promoting the safety of women and children with a primary focus on men being accountable and taking responsibility for their use of violence toward family members. The purpose of these programs is to encourage the change process in men's behaviour. They provide a forum for exploring and challenging beliefs. All programs are to be members of the men's peak organisation, No To Violence (NTV) and adhere to NTV's prescribed practice standards for conducting men's behaviour change programs.

Referral into these programs can be via local referrals or service intake services based at the divisional or area level.

Men's accommodation options

The aim of these services is to hold men accountable for their use of violence against family members. They also aim to facilitate the granting of an intervention order, with exclusion provisions that allows women and children to remain in the family home, and make them safe from the occurrence or escalation of family violence through the provision of alternative accommodation options for men.

These services have links with housing providers to facilitate access to accommodation options emphasising the safety needs of women and children, and provide linkage with men's behaviour change programs and men's referral service providers through the establishment of clear referral protocols.

Women's information and referral exchange (WIRE)

WIRE is an information and referral service for women on a range of issues, including family violence. The telephone counselling service and website provide support and advice in relation to a range of issues affecting women including family violence, family life and relationships, sexual assault, legal issues, financial security and independence. The Walk In Centre (WIC) complements the telephone service by providing face-to-face information and support, seminars and free internet access for women.

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria Inc

The Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV) is a state-wide information and resource agency that provides secondary consultations, training, publications and a resource library (available by appointment) on issues pertaining to family violence and sexual assault.

Victims' services

Victims Support Agency (VSA) is a central resource for victims of crime run by the Department of Justice. It is responsible for coordinating a whole of government approach to services for victims of crime and for representing the voice of victims within the justice system.

Individual victims of crime may have different needs requiring different responses and the VSA is pivotal in linking the service system so that victims do not need to continuously repeat their story to a range of services.

The services available to victims of crime include:

- The Victims of Crime Helpline 1800 819 817
- Victims Assistance and Counselling Program
- Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT)

Details and useful links can be found on the Victims Support Agency website – see Related content

Considerations for good practice

Note: Use the Practice Resources link on the toolbar to access further Practice Guidance and Research.

Immediate safety

The police have a significant role to play in the area of family violence as they will often be called on to intervene at a point of immediate crisis. If you believe that a client or their family is at immediate physical risk it is appropriate to contact 000 and request police attendance. Pursuant to the protocol between Victoria Police and DHS (Child Protection), Police are required to consider a report to Child Protection whenever they attend a family violence incident at which children are or may be present.

Distinct roles and expectations

When responding to family violence, Child Protection works within a defined legislative framework which carries specific legal responsibilities and authority in relation to children at immediate and substantial risk, whereas the family violence service system has developed in a broadly feminist framework. A critical aspect of service delivery for family violence services is therefore the voluntary nature of women's involvement.

Child Protection must engage with the child as well as the adults with the potential to protect (usually women) and the perpetrators of the violence (usually men). Family violence services for women do not work with male perpetrators of violence. Many offer services for children. Increasingly this service sector is offering men's behaviour change services, and there is some broadening to offer a holistic response to family violence.

There are differences in expectations and responsibilities regarding information sharing and this issue requires clarification when working with family violence services. Refer to Advice 1090 *Information sharing in Child Protection practice* – see Related links on right of screen.

Shared responsibility and achieving common outcomes

All professionals working with children and their families share the responsibility of protecting children. Understanding the role of the various services within the system will help professionals understand what form their responsibility takes and how they can work cooperatively with each other to meet this responsibility.

It is beneficial to clarify those aims held in common. Child Protection and family violence services share the aim of keeping children safe, reducing the level of family violence and responding to its impact on the children, women and men involved.

Significant complexities can arise in the service network surrounding families for whom family violence is an issue. It can be helpful to engage in dialogue with the family violence services in your area so that these complexities can be explored and clarified.

Cultural sensitivity

A person's experience of family violence, and their understanding of service system responses, may be profoundly influenced by their culture. Cultural issues should be acknowledged and sensitively addressed, but not used as an excuse for family violence.

Aboriginal issues

Family violence is an issue of serious concern to Aboriginal families and communities. Aboriginal definitions of the nature and forms of family violence are broader and more encompassing than those used in the mainstream.

Aboriginal communities are developing local responses in the context of the Indigenous family violence strategy. Consult with Department of Human Services Aboriginal family violence support workers for more information regarding local community responses.

For further information read Advice 1059, *'Responding to Aboriginal children'* – see Related links on right of screen.

Referral

Referral of individuals and families to other professionals and agencies in the service network for assistance is a core skill for Child Protection practitioners.

Refer to Advice 1042, *'Making effective referrals'* – see Related links on right of screen.

Further reading

Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management, Department of Human Services Office of Women's Policy – see External links on right of screen.

Working with families where an adult is violent, Specialist Practice Resource, Department of Human Services – see Related content.

Contact for further procedural advice

- Supervisor
- Team Manager or Practice Leader
- Lakidjeka ACSASS
- Indigenous family violence support workers
- For specific information, contact the particular services in your area

Related content and external links

Note: Advice, Protocols and Policy Documents directly related to this Advice are listed below. To access the full range of Protocols and Policy documents use the Protocol and Policy links on the Home Page.

Related Content:

1042 - Making effective referrals

1059 - Responding to Aboriginal children

1090 - Information sharing in Child Protection practice

Police Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence, 2010

Protocol between Child Protection and Victoria Police

Working with families where an adult is violent – Specialist Practice Resource

External Links:

Family Violence Protection Act 2008

Family Violence Court Division of the Magistrates Court Victoria

Living free from Violence - Upholding the right. Victoria Police strategy to reduce violence against women and children 2009-2014

Victims Support Agency

Indigenous Family Violence Strategy

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre