

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Family Abuse Integrated Response (F.A.I.R.) Program commenced in the Swan Hill Police Response zone on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2002. The F.A.I.R. program is a joint initiative and community partnership between Swan Hill police and Mallee Domestic Violence Service (M.D.V.S.)

## **AIM**

The aim of the program is to reduce the incidence of family violence by providing immediate follow-up support to victims of family violence.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- Reduce the number of unsuccessful intervention order (IVO) applications.
- Reduce the incidence of family violence.
- Reduce the number of repeat police attendance at family violence incidents.
- Provide immediate information, assistance and referral to victims of family violence.
- Improve the service delivery of both Swan Hill police and MDVS to victims of family violence.

## **OVERVIEW**

F.A.I.R. operates by police taking an active role in identifying victims of family violence and following through with referrals to M.D.V.S. Police also ensure that appropriate legal action is initiated through applications for IVO's and prosecution of offenders. MDVS provides support and assistance to victims. The co-operative efforts of police and MDVS workers ensures that victims are provided with appropriate information, support, referrals and assistance, thereby reducing further incidents of violence.

## **HOW DID F.A.I.R. START**

In March of 2002 M.D.V.S. and Swan Hill Police Prosecutions Unit met. According to Police, in February 2002 at Swan Hill Magistrates Court, on one sitting day, six IVO applications were struck out due to the aggrieved family member (AFM) failing to appear to give evidence in support of the application. Although police were concerned about wasting valuable time and resources when police applications were struck out, the primary concern was the fact that AFM's were left without any legal protection against further abuse. MDVS informed police about a number of reasons for AFM's non-appearance at court. It was decided that by offering a formal referral for AFM's to the MDVS appropriate support would be put in place for court appearances. A formal partnership between Swan Hill Police and MDVS was formed.

## **HOW DOES F.A.I.R. WORK**

Through consultation, police and MDVS developed a number of protocols and procedures to implement the program. These include:

- Official protocol relating to crisis callout for oncall worker and non crisis referral (attached)
- Official protocol for passing on messages to clients in crisis accommodation (attached)
- Referral form- attached to family violence incident report (attached)
- Information kit for police to distribute to AFM's- MDVS service brochure, What is Family Violence? & Applying for an intervention order (legal aid publication)
- Monthly meetings between MDVS, Police Family Violence Liaison Officer (FVLO) and Prosecutor. The purpose is to review the program and to streamline or improve the service delivery of the program.
- Flow chart developed for Police members Re: response to family violence incidents
- Development of FAIR action report- to be completed by attending member and forwarded to supervisor.(attached)

## **FLOW ON OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT**

- MDVS, Police Prosecutor & Family Violence Unit Vic Police provided workshops to police members re: effects of DV, evidence gathering.
- Through consultation with MDVS support worker and AFM Police Prosecutor “tailor’s” an IVO to meet the needs of AFM.
- Police conducted training sessions for MDVS workers on family violence law and Police policies and procedures so those workers are familiar with Police and Court requirements.
- Designated interview room at the Police station for worker and AFM to meet privately.

## **BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAM**

The program so far has identified a number of benefits to Victims, Police, MDVS and also Swan Hill Magistrates Court. There has been a reduction in repeat attendance by Police at family violence incidences and an increase in the successful applications for IVO’s. In addition, victims are being provided with more support and assistance to better enable them to respond to or minimise the risk of being involved with further incidences of family violence. Specific benefits include:

### **VICTIM**

- Information and referral available immediately from Police
- Assistance and support available immediately from MDVS
- Crisis accommodation available through MDVS if unsafe for AFM’s to return to the home.
- Immediate relief from situation.
- Clarification of IVO
- Court support
- Ongoing support and assistance from MDVS

### **POLICE**

- 24 hour callout availability of MDVS
- Less time spent at family violence incidents and police stations supporting victims and arranging assistance=more time to spend on required paperwork and tasks, i.e. Complaint & Warrant, Interim IVO, arrest and processing of offender.
- Reduced repeat attendance at family violence incidents.
- Reduced repeat applications for IVO’s (after initial applications were struck out).
- Requirement for Police to attend court for IVO Applications has been reduced.
- Requirement for Police complainant or Prosecutor to spend time explaining the IVO process to AFM reduced or eliminated.
- Greater customer satisfaction reduction in complaints.

### **MDVS**

- Lines of communication between MDVS and Vic Police are more open.
- MDVS and Vic Police work together for the best outcome of AFM
- MDVS workers have greater understanding of Police Procedures, evidence gathering etc which results in better explanations to clients.
- Greater client satisfaction.

### **SWAN HILL MAGISTRATES’ COURT**

- Reduction in repeat applications = increase court time.
- Reduction in adjournments to arrange for the AFM and/or Police to come to court = increased court time
- Reduction in applications to registrar due to dissatisfaction with Police = reduction in paperwork for Registrar and increased court time.

- Requirement for Magistrate and Registrar to explain the IVO Application process to AFM's reduced = increased court time

### **EVAULATION**

The program was piloted for a period of 4 months. During that time MDVS workers verbally surveyed referred clients to the service. Workers explained to clients about the project and asked clients for feedback regarding Police responses, MDVS workers responses, what was done well, what could be improved etc. Once a month MDVS, FVLO, District Inspector and Prosecutor met to discuss project e.g. streamline processes, comparison of statistics, feedback from clients' etc.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The Mallee Domestic Violence Service is a 24-hour crisis care service. The Swan Hill service is an outreach service, which offers assistance to women and women with children who are in crisis as a result of domestic violence. The service is able to provide crisis accommodation, counselling, advocacy, information, referrals, support and assistance to women and women with children.

The program was name the Family Abuse Integrated Response, abuse replacing violence as it was felt that the work "violence" indicates physical abuse, were as the word "abuse" identifies emotional, verbal, social and economic or financial abuse.

### **CONCLUSION**

F.A.I.R. is a simple but effective program that relies on co-operation and partnerships that address a significant crime problem within our community. F.A.I.R. is a step in the right direction using local resources, and local initiative to solve local crime and safety problems. The F.A.I.R. Program was nominated for the Community safety- Crime Prevention Awards 2002 in the category of Crime and Violence Prevention in Rural and Regional Victoria. The purpose of the Crime Prevention Awards is to find best practice examples of local crime and violence prevention initiatives, and acknowledge and reward those which have made a significant contribution to community safety and the prevention of crime and violence. The F.A.I.R. Program was successful in receiving a certificate of merit in the nominated category.



#### MILDURA OFFICE

*All Correspondence*

PO Box 1373, Mildura, 3502  
Suite 2, 144-146 Lime Ave, Mildura,

Tel: (03) 5021 2130 ✉ Fax: (03) 5022 2216  
Email: [info@msau-mdvs.org.au](mailto:info@msau-mdvs.org.au)

#### SWAN HILL OFFICE

*All Correspondence*

PO Box 1641, Swan Hill, 3585  
14 Beveridge St, Swan Hill

Tel: (03) 5033 1899 ✉ Fax: (03) 5032 4511  
Email: [mdvssh@inet.net.au](mailto:mdvssh@inet.net.au)

Website: [www.msau-mdvs.org.au](http://www.msau-mdvs.org.au)

### **AGREED PROTOCOL BETWEEN SWAN HILL POLICE MEMBERS AND MALLEE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES IN REGARDS TO REFERRAL OF AGGRIEVED FAMILY MEMBERS TO MALLEE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES**

The Swan Hill Police Member's and the Mallee Domestic Violence Services (MDVS), to establish and provide guidance to police members and MDVS staff, when a person is in crisis as a result of domestic violence, have agreed to this protocol.

1. A Police Officer will speak to the Aggrieved Family Member (AFM)
2. The Police Officer will inform the AFM of services offered by the MDVS.
3. The Police Officer will ask the AFM if she requires a worker from the MDVS to attend the Swan Hill Police Station and support her.
4. If the AFM requests immediate support from the MDVS, a Police Officer, on behalf of the AFM will contact the MDVS. *If the AFM does not request immediate support, but requests follow up support from the MDVS, the Police Officer will follow the referral protocol for the fax referral service.*
5. The worker from the MDVS, upon receiving the phone call from the police member, will ask for the AFM's name, date of birth and details
6. The MDVS worker will ask to speak to the AFM to verify her request for support.
7. The MDVS worker will provide the Police Officer with an ETA at the Police Station.
8. The MDVS worker will attend the Police Station and support the AFM.

The process for the fax referral service provided by the Mallee Domestic Violence Service begins when a police member has contact with an AFM because of a domestic violence incident. This may be at the Police Station or another location. The AFM does not require or request immediate crisis support from the MDVS. The AFM does, however, request follow up support from the MDVS

1. The Police Member will read the form that will be faxed to the MDVS to the AFM
2. Police Officer to complete the form with all necessary details.
3. AFM to sign their consent to the form.
4. On arrival back at their station, Police Member will fax completed form to the Mallee Domestic Violence Service- Swan Hill **5032 4511**

A Mallee Domestic Violence Service worker will, upon receiving the completed form:

1. Contact the AFM at the nominated time and phone number.
2. Speak to the AFM and offer support, information and options.



#### MILDURA OFFICE

*All Correspondence*  
PO Box 1373, Mildura, 3502  
Suite 2, 144-146 Lime Ave, Mildura,

Tel: (03) 5021 2130 ✕ Fax: (03) 5022 2216  
Email: [info@msau-mdvs.org.au](mailto:info@msau-mdvs.org.au)

#### SWAN HILL OFFICE

*All Correspondence*  
PO Box 1641, Swan Hill, 3585  
14 Beveridge St, Swan Hill

Tel: (03) 5033 1899 ✕ Fax: (03) 5032 4511  
Email: [mdvssh@iinet.net.au](mailto:mdvssh@iinet.net.au)

Website: [www.msau-mdvs.org.au](http://www.msau-mdvs.org.au)

### **AGREED PROTOCOL BETWEEN SWAN HILL POLICE MEMBERS AND MALLEE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES IN REGARDS TO OBTAINING INFORMATION OR PASSING ON MESSAGES TO MDVS CLIENTS IN REFUGE OR PROTECTIVE PLACEMENTS**

Swan Hill Police Member's and the Mallee Domestic Violence Service (MDVS), to establish and provide guidance to police members and MDVS workers when information is sought regarding a person in any MDVS refuge or protective placement, have agreed to this protocol. Both agencies agree to co-operate bearing in mind, appropriate security and confidentiality.

1. If a person makes an inquiry of police as to the whereabouts of a person for whatever reason who may be in MDVS refuge or security placement, the police may, if deemed necessary, contact MDVS on telephone 5033 1899. (24 hours)
2. For security reasons, MDVS staff on receiving a police inquiry shall record the request and will then ring back the police member to assist with the inquiry, such return call being made to the member of the nominated police station only.
3. On the return telephone call, if the person concerned is in MDVS refuge or placement, the MDVS worker will only confirm that the person is safe. By arrangement, any message to be conveyed to that person will be passed onto the person in question. It will be at the discretion of the person concerned whether she/he wishes to act on the message.
4. For any matter other than a public inquiry (IE: requirement for obtaining of statements, service of summonses etc), MDVS staff will pass on the message to the person concerned is she/he is in MDVS refuge or placement and request the person to contact the police member concerned.
5. Police are not to inform any member of the public that a person is in MDVS refuge or placement. It is sufficient to say that she/he is safe and the message passed on.
6. Police should record all requests and contact with MDVS in the telephone message book, running sheets or official diary.
7. By arrangement, police should not attend any MDVS refuge or placement unless in an emergency or on specific request of the duty worker, MDVS. Staff and clients at any MDVS refuge or placement are under instruction not to open any door to anyone.
8. Where, for whatever reason, a MDVS client is transported by police vehicle, MDVS agree to pick up all clients from the nominated police station.
9. MDVS will be responsible for transporting clients from nominated police station to MDVS refuge or placement.



## Mallee Domestic Violence Services

14 Beveridge Street Swan Hill  
PO Box 1641 Swan Hill 3585

Phone: 5033 1899

**Fax: 5032 4511**

The Mallee Domestic Violence Service offers assistance to women and women with children who are in a crisis as a result of domestic violence. You can access the Mallee Domestic Violence Service, confidentially for information on domestic violence, counselling, referrals, support, assistance and options.

If you need to talk to someone about what you are feeling or you are not sure what you want to do, you can get support from the Mallee Domestic Violence Service to explore your options.

A support worker will be available to contact you, if you wish, during business hours.

I.....request, and give  
(please print)

permission to a support worker from the Mallee Domestic Violence Service to contact me on:

Date:.....between the times  
of.....and.....(8:30am-5:00pm) on the following telephone  
number.....

Signed.....Date.....

Police member who supplied this information.

Rank and name.....

Station.....

Please fax completed form to Mallee Domestic Violence Service, Swan Hill- **5032 4511**

# Family Abuse Integrated Response

