

Statewide disability and family violence crisis response initiative guidelines

Version 4

Contents

Introduction	2
Section 1: Overview	3
The Family Violence Sector.....	4
Disability Services.....	5
Background.....	5
What is currently happening across sectors?.....	5
Acknowledgements.....	6
Section 2: Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative	7
Privacy.....	7
Aim of the crisis response.....	7
Who can access the crisis program?.....	8
What can be purchased using the crisis funds?.....	9
Flexible Support Packages.....	9
How to apply for disability and family violence crisis response.....	9
How to apply for Flexible Support Packages.....	11
Roles and Responsibilities of key stakeholders in the Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative.....	12
Ongoing disability support requirements.....	13
Section 3: Working Together to Support Beyond the Crisis - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities	14
Roles and responsibilities.....	14
Ongoing Disability Services.....	16
Specialist Family Violence Services.....	16

Introduction

The purpose of the *Statewide Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative* guidelines is to support both the family violence sector and the disability sector to work collaboratively to improve outcomes for women (or children) with a disability experiencing family violence. Both the family violence sector and disability services have a responsibility in supporting women (or children) with a disability experiencing family violence. The guidelines have been developed by disability services in partnership with family violence sector representatives and Women with Disabilities Victoria.

The *Statewide Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative* will assist women with a disability experiencing family violence¹ who may require **immediate** disability support to access a family violence crisis accommodation response while exploring longer term housing and support options or require immediate disability support to remain safe in the home or community. Crisis accommodation responses will vary depending upon the needs of the woman and her children and the availability of alternative accommodation options or the ability to remain safely in the home or community. An accommodation response may include a secure women's refuge, crisis-supported accommodation or it may be motel accommodation in the immediate to short term.

It is hoped that through this initiative a greater awareness is achieved by the family violence sector and the disability sector of working collaboratively to support women (or children) with disabilities experiencing family violence, as well as building each sector's capacity. The guidelines are divided into three sections:

- Section 1: Overview
- Section 2: Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative
- Section 3: Working Together to Support Beyond the Crisis - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

¹ This includes children with a disability who are escaping family violence with their mother.
Statewide Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative Guidelines

Section 1: Overview

Violence against women is today widely recognised as a global problem. It is one of the least visible but most common forms of violence, and one of the most insidious violations of human rights. It has serious impacts on the health and wellbeing of those affected, and exacts significant economic costs on communities and nations. A number of factors are known to contribute to violence against women. Research shows that the most significant determinants of violence against women are:

- The unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women
- An adherence to rigidly defined gender roles (VicHealth, 2011).

Research also shows that most violence against women is perpetrated by men who are known to them, such as a current or former intimate partner, an acquaintance or a relative (VicHealth, 2007).

Women with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to violence, especially when perpetrators are carers who are in a position of exerting control and power. Women with disabilities are also at risk of violence from people with whom they share a house or residence. It is not uncommon for women with disabilities to experience violence by more than one person in their lifetime and for the experience of violence to be a protracted and enduring feature in their lives (Salthouse & Frohmader, 2004; Women With Disabilities Australia, 2008)

Healey, Howe, Humphreys, Jennings and Julian in their July 2008 report, *Building the Evidence*, highlighted that “women with disabilities experience violence at the hands of a greater number of perpetrators. Perpetrators have been found to be family members, personal assistants, support staff, service providers, medical staff, transportation staff, foster parents and peers” (Frantz et al as cited in Healey et al, 2008, pp35). For further information on *Building the Evidence*, refer to www.safesteps.org.au (formerly Women’s Domestic Violence Crisis Service).

Critical to this initiative is defining both family violence and the meaning of family.

Family violence, as determined by the Family Violence Protection Act (2008), Section 4: *Meaning of Family* is as follows:

- (1) For the purposes of this Act, family violence is-
 - (a) behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person if that behaviour-
 - (i) is physically or sexually abusive; or
 - (ii) is emotionally or psychologically abusive; or
 - (iii) is economically abusive; or
 - (iv) is threatening; or
 - (v) is coercive; or
 - (vi) in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person; or
 - (b) behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, behaviour referred to in paragraph (a).

A family member, as determined by the Family Violence Protection Act (2008), Section 8: *Meaning of Family Member* is as follows:

- (1) For the purposes of this Act, a family member, in relation to a person (a relevant person), means-
 - (a) a person who is, or has been, the relevant person's spouse or domestic partner; or
 - (b) a person who has, or has had, an intimate personal relationship with the relevant person; or
 - (c) a person who is, or has been, a relative of the relevant person; or

(d) a child who normally or regularly resides with the relevant person or has previously resided with the relevant person on a normal or regular basis; or

(e) a child of a person who has, or has had, an intimate personal relationship with the relevant person.

(2) For the purposes of subsections (1)(b) and (1)(e), a relationship may be an intimate personal relationship whether or not it is sexual in nature.

(3) For the purposes of this Act, a family member of a person (the relevant person) also includes any other person whom the relevant person regards or regarded as being like a family member if it is or was reasonable to regard the other person as being like a family member having regard to the circumstances of the relationship, including the following-

(a) the nature of the social and emotional ties between the relevant person and the other person;

(b) whether the relevant person and the other person live together or relate together in a home environment;

(c) the reputation of the relationship as being like family in the relevant person's and the other person's community;

(d) the cultural recognition of the relationship as being like family in the relevant person's or other person's community;

(e) the duration of the relationship between the relevant person and the other person and the frequency of contact;

(f) any financial dependence or interdependence between the relevant person or other person;

(g) any other form of dependence or interdependence between the relevant person and the other person;

(h) the provision of any responsibility or care, whether paid or unpaid, between the relevant person and the other person;

(i) the provision of sustenance or support between the relevant person and the other person.

Example: relationship between a person with a disability and the person's carer may over time have come to approximate the type of relationship that would exist between family members.

The Family Violence Sector

The Victorian Government has recognised the need for an integrated family violence service system for some time, evidenced by a growing raft of policy initiatives and funding since 2005/06. The Department of Human Services (DHHS) - through Children, Youth & Families (CY&F) and Housing & Community Building (H&CB) Divisions - funds a range of non-government agencies to provide information, support and referral, outreach support, case management, counselling, after hours responses and crisis-supported accommodation responses to women and children experiencing family violence.

The family violence sector has strong links with legal and statutory services including the police, courts, family services and child protection. The sector also works closely with other mainstream services, such as community health services, schools, housing and homelessness services.

In acknowledging the complexity of the family violence sector a Common Risk Assessment Framework (CRAF) was developed to better identify and respond to family violence and to assist in supporting women and children who are experiencing family violence. The CRAF has been developed for a range of professionals including family violence service providers, the police and the courts, all of which are key partners in the integrated family violence service system. The CRAF can also be used by professionals who work in mainstream services who

may encounter and work with people experiencing family violence. For further details about the CRAF see <http://www.tafe.swinburne.edu.au/CRAF/manual.htm>. Family violence services work with women and their children who are experiencing or escaping from family violence to gain an in depth understanding of the woman's experience of the violence, their relationship with the perpetrator, other significant family relationships and the impact of the violence on daily function, emotional and mental wellbeing. The family violence workers then make referrals where appropriate, facilitate links to, or participate as part of co-case management response with other services and provide information on a range of supports and programs which may or may not include a crisis accommodation response. See Appendix 1 for a generalised flow chart where a woman has identified as being in crisis.

Disability Services

Disability Services is a division of DHHS and is responsible for both funding Community Service Organisations as well as directly providing a range of supports and services for people in Victoria with intellectual, physical and sensory disabilities, neurological impairments and acquired brain injury. The division works in partnership with people with a disability, their families and carers and with both non-government and government service providers to enhance the wellbeing and quality of life of people with a disability. The division operates in a complex and evolving environment, informed by a range of State, national and international policy and regulatory frameworks.

Disability Services' vision is to improve the quality of life for Victorians with a disability through services that enhance independence, choice and community inclusion. This vision is realised by working collaboratively across government and the community sector to generate new approaches and achieve better outcomes and to ensure the needs of people with a disability and their families and carers are met.

Background

In August 2010 the Office of the Public Advocate released a report titled Violence against People with Cognitive Impairments. The Office of the Public Advocate highlighted that the response of service providers, notably from the disability and family violence sectors, is not well co-ordinated and is based on different understandings of violence and disability. They also noted that few examples could be found of effective cross-sectoral collaboration that works in the interests of clients (Dillon, OPA, 2010).

Stakeholders have also identified crisis responses for women (and children) with a disability experiencing family violence as an issue requiring targeted action. Disability Services acknowledges that it has an important role in supporting women with disabilities and their children who are experiencing family violence. Disability Services is committed to working in partnership with the family violence sector and the disability services sector to increase the awareness and capacity of both sectors to provide a more cohesive support system for women with a disability who are experiencing family violence.

The *Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative* is the first step in partnering the two sectors in a more formalised way. It is hoped that through this initiative a greater awareness is achieved as well as building the capacity of both sectors. Further work for the Disability Services Division includes but is not limited to:

- Joint workshops for both family violence workers and disability services workers
- Preventing violence against women with a disability
- Appropriate training to support workers from both sectors.

What is currently happening across sectors?

Work has already commenced across government and non-government agencies to identify specific actions to achieve better outcomes for people with a disability experiencing family violence, including:

- Case management funding for women and children experiencing family violence with specific funding for women from a Cultural and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background, Aboriginal women and women with a disability.

- The Strengthening Risk Management project which will develop guidelines for service providers, agencies, police and justice workers responding directly and indirectly to women, children and men who are experiencing and/or perpetrating family violence.
- The implementation of Practice Guidelines for Women’s and Children’s Family Violence Counselling and Support Programs.
- Activities to embed and extend the understanding and use of the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework (the CRAF) through promotion and access to training for services including the disability services staff and community service organisations.
- Enhanced crisis properties that are physically accessible to women with disabilities experiencing family violence.
- A forum hosted by DHS with over 30 representatives from across the disability, family violence and sexual assault sectors to engage in a strategic discussion to:
 - Clarify the major issues
 - Consider the current gaps and strengths in services, supports and responses
 - Identify key strategies to respond to these issues and improve the response for people with a disability

Acknowledgements

Disability Services Division acknowledges the significant preliminary work completed by:

- Domestic Violence Victoria
- Maroondah Halfway House/Brenda House
- Women with Disabilities Victoria
- Safe Steps Family Violence Services (formerly Women’s Domestic Violence Crisis Service)

Section 2: Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative

The establishment of this crisis response builds on work across sectors to enhance safety and wellbeing outcomes for women with a disability experiencing family violence. This initiative is being trialed on a 12 month basis and will be subject to ongoing review and a final evaluation at the end of the 12 month period to provide detailed information about its effectiveness.

The purpose of this document is to provide information and guidance to Disability Services and family violence specialist services regarding the *Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative*.

Information covered in this section:

- Privacy
- Aim of the program
- Who can access the initiative?
- What can be purchased using the crisis funds?
- How to access the disability and family violence crisis response

Privacy

Privacy and confidentiality is of the utmost importance when working with women and children experiencing family violence. The concept of privacy and confidentiality is an ethical approach to practice that is enshrined in legislation. Australian privacy laws control the way in which personal information, including sensitive information and health information, is collected, used, stored and disclosed to others. It is critical that all formal processes are followed when requesting for information (Domestic Violence Victoria, Code of Practice, www.dvvic.org.au).

For example: A woman disclosing violence needs to be supported to understand that she does not have to involve anyone she does not want involved; and that family members and other persons should not be consulted without the explicit consent of the person disclosing.

Aim of the crisis response

The *Statewide Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative* will assist women with a disability experiencing family violence² who may require **immediate** disability support to access a family violence crisis accommodation response while exploring longer term housing and support options or require immediate disability support to remain safe in the home or community. Crisis accommodation responses will vary depending upon the needs of the woman and her children and the availability of alternative accommodation options or the ability to remain safely in the home or community. An accommodation response may include a secure women's refuge, crisis-supported accommodation or it may be motel accommodation in the immediate to short term.

Short term funding will be available to meet immediate disability - related support needs where required regardless of the type of crisis accommodation response that is provided to the woman with a disability.

Note:

- Where costs are related specifically to family violence they will be met by the Family Violence sector. If costs are specific to disability support requirements they will be considered under this initiative.
- If family violence is suspected by disability services, immediate referral must be provided to a family violence agency. The Disability and Family Violence Liaison Officer in the Eastern Region will only accept requests for funding once an assessment has been made by an appropriate Specialist Family Violence Service that the woman requires immediate protection using the CRAF Comprehensive Assessment.

² This includes children with a disability who are escaping family violence with their mother.
Statewide Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative Guidelines

The crisis response initiative will:

- complement existing specialist family violence services and supports
- provide timely and appropriate disability support to women with disabilities experiencing family violence who are eligible to access the family violence crisis accommodation response
- support the specific disability needs of women experiencing family violence that enable safety in an immediate to short-term timeframe
- be accessible across Victoria
- assist the family violence worker to initiate a conversation, if appropriate, with the woman with a disability experiencing family violence about engaging with Disability Services.

Who can access the crisis program?

To access the initiative the woman or her child **must**:

1. Have been assessed as 'requires immediate protection' (CRAF, Comprehensive Assessment) and be supported by and referred by a Specialist Family Violence Service
2. Have a disability as defined by the *Disability Act 2006* (Vic). According to the Act, Disability in relation to a person means:
 - (a) a sensory, physical or neurological impairment or acquired brain injury or any combination thereof, which
 - (ii) is, or is likely to be, permanent; and
 - (iii) causes a substantially reduced capacity in at least one of the areas of self care, self-management, mobility or communication; and
 - (iv) requires significant ongoing or long term episodic support; and
 - (v) is not related to ageing; or
 - (b) an intellectual disability; or
 - (c) a developmental delay

The definition of disability does not include people who require support as a result of:

- Ageing
- Mental illness
- Drug and alcohol use
- Chronic health issues (e.g. severe asthma)
- An injury / illness that has temporarily caused the need for support unless there is a co-existing disability.

Where it is not possible to immediately determine if the woman has a disability, but it is probable that she does and there is an urgent need to respond, funding may be provided for the crisis period (up to 12 weeks).

3. Require specific disability-related support to either access a family violence crisis accommodation response or remain safely in her home or community.
4. Be a victim of family violence and not eligible for services under the *Disability Act 2006* (Vic) but who nevertheless require disability-related support to either access a family violence crisis accommodation response or remain safely in her home or community.

What can be purchased using the crisis funds?

The initiative will have a small pool of funds to support a woman's or child's immediate disability-related needs for a short period while longer term accommodation and supports are explored. The short-term crisis funding can be used for the following purposes:

- Attendant care support for disability related needs such as personal care, shopping assistance, meal preparation or support in providing care of children.
- Hire of equipment (where own equipment cannot be accessed) or linkage with the State-wide Equipment Program where appropriate
- Sign/Auslan interpreting in cases where the DHHS Interpreter service is not available through the credit line
- Transport costs related to disability

Short-term funds can be provided for up to 12 weeks to a maximum of \$9,000 per person. Requests for funds over \$9,000 will be managed on a case by case basis.

Flexible Support Packages

Individuals who require disability supports not offered through the initiative can receive assistance via Flexible Support Packages.

Flexible Support Packages are available to people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence. They deliver a personalised and holistic response to victims/survivors experiencing family violence by assisting them to access support, move out of crisis, stabilise and improve their safety, well-being and independence.

Packages can only be distributed to victims/survivors who already have a case management plan. One flexible support package will be available per case managed support period for victims/survivors per presentation. This does not preclude victims/survivors from receiving a subsequent package for future presentations, provided a new case management plan is in place.

Flexible Support Packages are available through multiple regional service providers and four state wide providers.

How to apply for disability and family violence crisis response

DURING BUSINESS HOURS

Family Violence Workers contact the East Division of the Department of Human Services (DHHS) to discuss applications to the Crisis Response Initiative:

East Division

Disability and Family Violence Liaison Officer

Disabilityfv@dhhs.vic.gov.au

(03) 9843 6304 or 0437 741 920

24 HOUR RESPONSE

Family Violence Workers contact Safe Steps Family Violence Services to discuss applications to the Disability & Family Violence Initiative:

Safe Steps Family Violence Services

(03) 9322 3555 or Toll Free 1800 015 188 (country callers)

Safe Steps is a 24hr, 7 day per week service provider. They provide telephone crisis counselling, referral, information and support and are the central contact point for women's refuges in Victoria. Safe Steps will be able to provide an initial response and decision about immediate support requirements. On the next business day the Safe Steps will make contact with the Disability and Family Violence Liaison Officer (DFVLO), East Division of DHHS to discuss applications to the Crisis Response Initiative.

Completion of the Supplementary Questionnaire

Both Safe Steps and the East Division will require a supplementary questionnaire to be completed by the Family Violence Worker. This includes the following information:

- Alpha Code
- Age
- Dependants
- Age of dependants
- Region providing crisis accommodation
- Region where applicant usually resides
- Disability information
- Assistance requested – details of what supports are required, cost & frequency
- Family violence service contact person
- Acknowledgement from the Family Violence Worker that consent has been received from the woman/client

The prompt for completing the supplementary questionnaire will be linked with the CRAF question:

Disability Yes No

If 'Yes' is ticked the Supplementary Questionnaire needs to be completed - See Appendix 3 for the Supplementary Questionnaire.

Contact with either East Division DHHS or Safe Steps Family Violence Crisis Service.

On contacting either the business hour or 24 hour numbers for the *Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative*, the family violence worker will be asked to fax/email the supplementary questionnaire to the appropriate contact for discussion and decision regarding eligibility with the DFVLO who is available to specifically support this initiative.

The supplementary questionnaire is to be submitted within 5 business days to the DFVLO. DHS will meet the costs of disability-related supports incurred during this initial period.

Consent must be provided by the woman for DHHS to record de-identified personal information for eligibility to the crisis response initiative and for reporting and evaluation of the initiative. No identifying information will be used in any reporting or evaluation documents.

If eligible for the Statewide Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative

Discussions are held between the DFVLO and the Family Violence Worker regarding the most appropriate equipment and support and where this might be sourced. This request is formalised and, if approved by the delegated East Division manager, the DFVLO provides this advice to the Family Violence Worker via email. The Family Violence worker is then able to arrange the necessary supports.

If this occurs after hours, Safe Steps will organise and implement only those supports required immediately. Safe Steps will contact the DFVLO on the next business day to discuss further supports beyond those already implemented.

Payment of Funds

The East Division is responsible for paying for supports upon invoice from the direct support agency and will organise to pay for any equipment with the relevant service.

If the use of multipurpose taxis is required, refugees will either use a pre-arranged taxi voucher system or will be reimbursed upon invoice by East Division. For a flow chart of the process see Appendix 3.

Reporting and Evaluation

East Division of DHHS in partnership with Safe Steps will collect data on the use of the *Statewide Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative*. The crisis response initiative spreadsheet will collect data such as:

- Alpha Code
- Age
- Suburb
- Dependants
- Is the person an existing client of disability services?
- The name of the agency making the referral
- Whether the referral came via Safe Steps or East Division
- The types of supports being requested
- Whether ongoing disability supports will be investigated
- Outcome of referral for ongoing disability support if appropriate

Further evaluation will be sought from women who utilise the initiative using a questionnaire to explore whether her needs, or those of her child, were met appropriately.

How to apply for Flexible Support Packages

Service providers with access to flexible support packages are detailed below. Contact should be made with the most relevant service provider once it is determined support cannot be offered through the initiative.

Flexible Support Package provider contact details

DHHS Division	Area	FV FSP Service provider	Contact
West	Wimmera South West Area	Emma House Domestic Violence Services Inc.	(03) 5561 1934
	Barwon	Bethany Community Support Inc.	(03) 5278 8122
	Central Highlands	WRISC Family Violence Support Inc.	(03) 5333 3666
	Western Melbourne	Women's Health West Inc.	(03) 9689 9588 or FSP@whwest.org.au
	Brimbank Melton	Women's Health West Inc.	(03) 9689 9588 or FSP@whwest.org.au
North	Mallee	Mallee Sexual Assault Unit Inc.	(03) 5025 5432
	Loddon	Centre for Non-Violence Inc.	(03) 5430 3000
	Hume Moreland	Kildonan Uniting Care	(03) 9302 6100
	North East Melbourne	Anglicare Victoria	(03) 8470 9999
East	Ovens Murray	Centre Against Violence Inc.	1800 806 292
	Goulburn	VincentCare Victoria	(03) 9611 9200

	Outer Eastern	Eastern Domestic Violence Service Inc.	(03) 9259 4200 or fsp@edvos.org.au
	Inner Eastern	Eastern Domestic Violence Service Inc.	(03) 9259 4200 or fsp@edvos.org.au
South	Outer Gippsland	Gippsland Lakes Community Health	(03) 5155 8300 or amberb@glch.org.au
	Inner Gippsland	Quantum Support Services Inc.	(03) 5120 2000
	Southern Melbourne	Windermere Child and Family Services Inc.	FSPapplications@windermere.org.au
	Bayside Peninsula	Salvation Army Crisis Services - Family Violence Services	(03) 9536 7729 or fspapplications@aus.salvationarmy.org
State wide	State wide	Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service	1800 105 303
	State wide	InTouch	1800 755 988
	State wide	Victorian Aids Council	(03) 9865 6700 or flexi-packages@vac.org.au
	State wide	safe steps	1800 015 188

Roles and Responsibilities of key stakeholders in the Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative

Roles and Responsibilities

East Division of DHHS (business hours)	Safe Steps (24 hours)	Family Violence Worker
Assess the request through the Supplementary Questionnaire against the funding guidelines	Preliminary assessment of the request through the Supplementary Questionnaire against the funding guidelines	Completion of the Supplementary Questionnaire with the woman or child with a disability within 5 business days in line with other support requirements
Approve/not approve requested supports and advise the Family Violence Worker via email	Approve/not approve requested supports until completion of Supplementary Questionnaire (within 5 business days)	Organise approved supports for the woman or child with a disability in line with other support requirements
Provide suggestions for appropriate direct support providers to the Family Violence Worker	Implement only those supports required immediately	Through ongoing case management with the woman or child with a disability ascertain whether they would like to pursue ongoing disability support. If so, initiate contact directly with home region (if known) or East Division DHHS if not known, for further support discussions.

Collect required information for Crisis Fund reporting	Contact East Division DHHS for approval of supports beyond those implemented for the 5 business day period	
Support the Family Violence Worker to discuss with the woman with a disability (or parent of a child with a disability) whether ongoing disability supports are required. Provide linkage details of home region to the Family Violence worker (if known). Email home region DCS manager of possible contact to be made.	Collect required information for Crisis Fund reporting to be provided to DHHS East Division on a monthly basis	
CRITICAL Home region to ensure privacy threat using CRIS alert function is flagged		

Ongoing disability support requirements

Not all women accessing the Statewide *Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative* will want to continue to engage with Disability Services nor will they require ongoing supports. For those who want to explore the possibility of ongoing supports, the Family Violence Worker will assist the person to make contact with the home Division (where known) or initially with East Division to commence conversations about any support requirements. East Division will also notify the home region to expect contact from the Family Violence Worker. See Section 3: *Working Together to Support Beyond the Crisis* for further details.

Section 3: Working Together to Support Beyond the Crisis - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Women accessing the *Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative* are some of our most vulnerable community members, Disability Services commits to working alongside the Family Violence Worker to explore ongoing supports. As with any member of the community, people with a disability have the right to access generic supports and services and should be supported to access this information and have these discussions with service providers. It is recognised that professionals from both disability and family violence sectors possess specific knowledge and expertise and when working together each will have specific role functions and some tasks will overlap requiring collaboration and consultation.

The *Statewide Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative* will provide crisis support for women with a disability or their child with a disability in the immediate to short term. The next step involves planning to ensure that the person with a disability has appropriate supports in place for beyond the crisis period.

Not all women accessing the *Statewide Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative* will want to continue to engage with Disability Services or require ongoing supports. For those who do, the family violence worker will assist the person to make contact with the home division (where this is known) or initially with East Division to commence conversations for any support requirements. East Division will notify the home division to expect contact from the Family Violence Worker.

The objective of the following listed roles and responsibilities is to provide clarity about the activities and areas of responsibility of the respective services in relation to this ongoing planning process.

Roles and responsibilities

Specialist Family Violence Services

Risk Assessment and Risk Management

Both at the time of crisis and throughout the period of supporting women with disabilities experiencing family violence it is critical that risk assessment and risk management is undertaken to manage the woman's safety. Identifying and monitoring risk factors associated with family violence are critical to safety planning and managing any potential escalation in a woman's risk of experiencing further family violence.

Information gathered by risk assessment also informs an individual case plan. A comprehensive assessment to determine support needs is also required to identify individual outcomes, ensure appropriate support is provided and referrals made to community supports. This is an ongoing process which requires regular review as risk factors and support needs often change.

Case Management/Planning

The case management relationship between the case manager and woman/child is recognised as one of collaboration. Case management is a successful model of service in providing assistance to women and children experiencing family violence. An allocated case manager forms part of the case management model and is responsible for assisting women and children from initial assessment through to exit.

Case management should be:

- Accessible (to all women and children regardless of background or circumstances);
- Confidential and safe; (physically, emotionally, culturally, socially and spiritually);
- Respectful and empowering (of women and children's history, belief systems, experience and relationships while encouraging self-determination, collaboration and informed decision making).

Case management is based on a strengths-based approach. Being strengths-based does not imply focusing on positives and ignoring concerns or fabricating strengths that do not exist. Rather, it focuses on identifying ways

to recognise and utilize genuine strengths to allow building onto existing competencies and effectively addressing concerns. Strengths-based approaches are underpinned by the principle that women and children have the resources to learn new skills and solve problems and therefore involve them in the process of discovery, learning, and coping with the challenges they may face.

Information Sharing

A key enabler of supporting woman who are experiencing family violence including risk assessment and risk management is information sharing. Information sharing in an integrated family violence system is a critical mechanism to ensure support and assistance that increases the safety of women and accountability of perpetrators is provided in a timely and effective manner. Information sharing fact sheet (Appendix 4) has been developed to provide guidance on sharing information between services in the context of family violence.

The family violence specialist services are responsible for overseeing and managing the planning for beyond the crisis support period. This includes –

- Legal issues and intervention orders
- Assessment of need and consideration of appropriate safety and housing options beyond crisis housing
- Discussion with the person and supporters to consider appropriate options
- Development of a safety and exit plan
- Ongoing risk assessment and risk management
- Timely referral to support services
- Joint case conference/meetings
- Implementation and review of planning (which may include safety, risk assessment and exit planning)
- Support for the preparation of an application to the Disability Support Register (DSR) if the need for ongoing supports is identified
- Referral to appropriate counselling and community support if required \

Disability Services

Disability Services has a role in supporting the person with a disability who is accessing a family violence crisis service by:

- Assessing the request for access to the Statewide Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative (East Division DHHS)
- Administration of program and payment of accounts (East Division DHHS)
- Undertaking a Target Group Assessment (TGA) to determine if the person has a disability in accordance with the Disability Act (2006) within 4 weeks of identification and notification that ongoing supports (ie supports beyond the 12 week crisis period) are required (home division if known or East Division if not known)
- Where required, participation in case conferences/meetings and secondary consultation to provide information regarding the disability service system and range of support options (home division if known or East Division DHHS if not known)
- Preparing, in conjunction with the specialist family violence service, a Disability Support Register (DSR) application for ongoing support when required (Home division)
- Providing updates regarding the allocation of supports (Home division) to the family violence worker
- Notifying the specialist family violence service of information or identified risk factors that may impact on a woman's safety especially where this information indicates increased risk (Home division)

Disability Services will also provide secondary consultation to specialist family violence services, disability services providers and a broad range of agencies and community service organisations in relation to the initiative and the sourcing of supports and services for women or children with disabilities who are experiencing family violence.

Ongoing Disability Services

A person with a disability, as a member of the community, can access a range of general services including community health, early childhood and education services, sport and recreation, employment, maternal and child health services and other community services. People can contact their local government or community health service to explore these options.

The Department of Health & Human Services also funds a range of specialist disability supports that are available to people with a disability and their families to help the person with a disability actively participate in the community and reach their full potential.

Supports fall into two categories short-term and ongoing supports. Short-term supports include respite services, behaviour supports, case management and therapy. Ongoing supports are individual support packages and shared supported accommodation. Specialist disability supports may be provided directly by DHHS or by Community Service Organisations funded by DHHS.

The Statewide Disability Services Intake and Response Service provides information about supports and services and can also provide assistance with planning and support to people with disabilities, their families and carers in their local area.

For more information on Disability supports you can contact your divisional Department of Health & Human Services office. Telephone: 1800 783 783 or TTY 1800 008 149 between 9.00am–5.00pm Monday to Friday. Visit: www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/disability

Specialist Family Violence Services

The aims of the Victorian Integrated Family Violence System (IFVS) response are to improve the safety of women and children; ensure that men who use violence are held accountable for their actions and to ensure communities do not tolerate family violence. In this context, Housing & Community Building Division, DHHS, funds specialist family violence services to deliver a range of responses to women and children experiencing family violence, including:

Crisis telephone and referral services (statewide) – Safe Steps Family Violence Services

Safe Steps provides support, information and referral to crisis accommodation and/or other support services for women and their children experiencing family violence 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Women's refuge services

Provide safe and secure accommodation and support to women and their children who experience family violence and are in need of relocation to enhance their safety. Services aim to assist women to address issues they face and their experience of family violence. The period of stay is usually up to six weeks with transitional support provided for up to 13 weeks

Outreach services

Provide support to women and children, where family violence places them in circumstances that threaten or adversely affect their security and/or safety. Services include case managed support to women and children and coordinated referral/advocacy to other services as required such as financial counselling, health, housing, Statutory agencies, cultural support, risk assessment and safety planning, holistic assessment, community education and advocacy.

Intensive Case Management Program

Provides more intensive support to women, and women with children, who face the highest levels of risk with corresponding high and complex needs. Includes a focus on Indigenous, CALD and women with a disability.

Responding to Risk (After Hours & Safe at Home)

This program provides case management support to women who have been referred by police, courts and other services following a family violence incident. It provides for development of a safety plan and enables the woman to work through the available responses.

These responses take into consideration the number of women for whom remaining in the family home is a safe option and who choose to do so. This involves identifying the level of risk and appropriate responses to enable women and children to remain in the home, or to relocate to suitable housing, including private rental.

There are also a range of family violence service responses funded through Children, Youth and Families including:

- Women's and Children's Counselling
- Men's family violence services, including Men's Behaviour Change programs
- Indigenous services (Time Out and Healing Services)
- Supporting regional integration, including Regional Integration Coordinators
- Supporting Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups and coordination

To receive this publication in an accessible format email [<email address>](#)

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

© State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services April 2017

Where the term 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous is retained when it is part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

ISBN/ISSN [<number>](#)

Available at [<web page address>](#)