MARAM PRACTICE GUIDES

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

VICTORIA
State
Government

Acknowledgment of Aboriginal people and communities in Victoria

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Aboriginal people as Australia's First Peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and waterways upon which we depend. We acknowledge Victoria's Aboriginal communities and culture and pay respect to their Elders past and present.

Aboriginal culture is founded on a strong social and cultural order that has sustained up to 60,000 years of existence. Victorian Aboriginal communities and peoples are culturally diverse, with rich and varied heritages and histories pre- and post- invasion. The impacts of colonisation — while having devastating effects on the traditional life of Aboriginal Nations — have not diminished Aboriginal people's connection to country, culture or community.

The Victorian Government recognises the long-standing leadership of Aboriginal communities in Victoria to prevent and respond to family violence, supported through self-determination and self-management, to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people and families, whilst also acknowledging the devastating impacts and accumulation of trauma across generations as a result of colonisation and the dispossession of land and children.

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Accessibility

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In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW

The Victorian Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM Framework) updates and replaces the Common Risk Assessment or CRAF. This document contains a summary of the MARAM Practice Guides under the MARAM Framework.

The MARAM Framework Supporting Resource Guides contain the following three elements:

1. The *Foundation Knowledge Guide* focuses on legislation, outlining the service system, risk factors, key concepts and presentations of risk across different age groups and Aboriginal and diverse communities. This guide is required reading for all professionals from leadership and governance, management and supervision to direct practice roles.

2. The *Responsibilities for Practice Guide* reflects each of the ten responsibilities of practice set out in the MARAM Framework. The guide focuses on how to apply foundation knowledge and then build on this to provide practice guidance for safe engagement, identification of risk, levels of risk assessment and management, secondary consultation and referral, information sharing, and multi-agency and coordinated practice. Professionals' responsibilities will vary based on the nature of their role and will be informed by the contact they have with victim survivors and perpetrators.

3. The *Organisation Embedding Guide* supports organisational leaders to effectively support professionals and services to undertake their roles and responsibilities. This will link the work undertaken by professionals and services to the alignment of organisations' policies, procedures, practice guidance and tools under the MARAM Framework. It is recommended reading for professionals in leadership or management roles. (**Note**: this guide is not summarised in this document).

All MARAM tools and practice guides were developed through extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders including experts, departmental policy and practice areas, and professionals in specialist and universal services, including those specialising in working with Aboriginal communities, diverse communities, children and older people.

FOUNDATION KNOWLEDGE GUIDE

The *Foundation Knowledge Guide* provides professionals and services with information that explains key elements of the MARAM Framework, as well as additional foundational knowledge to guide all professionals in their application of the *Responsibilities for Practice Guide*.

The MARAM Framework provides evidence-based information about the impact and experience of risk for people across a range of age groups, for Aboriginal communities and diverse communities. This information builds on the findings and recommendations of Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence (the Commission) and establishes the shared responsibility across a wide range of workforces and services for consistent early identification, screening, risk assessment and management of family violence.

The MARAM Framework embeds a shared responsibility for individual professionals, and between services and whole sectors, enabling more options to be provided to victim survivors to keep them safe, and for a stronger, more collaborative system that can keep perpetrators in view and accountable for their actions and behaviours.

Professionals that do not have a specialist position are not expected to become 'experts' in relation family violence – but everyone has a role.

The MARAM Practice Guides should be used by all professionals and services in prescribed Framework organisations, as well as any professionals or services seeking to ensure their approach to family violence risk assessment and management is consistent with the approach state-wide.

A PRINCIPLES-BASED APPROACH TO PRACTICE

The MARAM Framework, the *Foundation Knowledge Guide* and *Responsibilities for Practice Guide* are underpinned by ten principles. The principles are aimed at providing professionals and services with a shared understanding of family violence, and facilitating consistent, effective and safe responses for people experiencing family violence. The principles recognise the right of all people to live free from family violence. This section explains why the principles should inform the ethical basis for professionals and services in their engagement with all services users (victim survivors or perpetrators) and includes a list of the ten principles.

The ten principles are:

1. Family violence involves a spectrum of seriousness of risk and presentations, and is unacceptable in any form, across any community or culture

2. Professionals should work collaboratively to provide coordinated and effective risk assessment and management responses, including early intervention when family violence first occurs to avoid escalation into crisis and additional harm

3. Professionals should be aware, in their risk assessment and management practice, of the drivers of family violence, predominantly gender inequality, which also intersect with other forms of structural inequality and discrimination

4. The agency, dignity and intrinsic empowerment of victim survivors must be respected by partnering with them as active decision-making participants in risk assessment and management, including being supported to access and participate in justice processes that enable fair and just outcomes
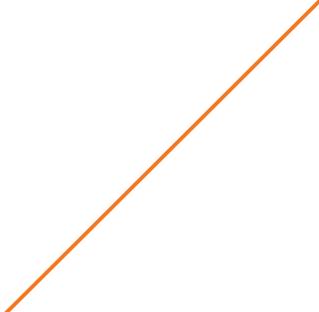
5. Family violence may have serious impacts on the current and future physical, spiritual, psychological, developmental and emotional safety and wellbeing of children, who are directly or indirectly exposed to its effects, and should be recognised as victim survivors in their own right

6. Services provided to child victim survivors should acknowledge their unique experiences, vulnerabilities and needs, including the effects of trauma and cumulative harm arising from family violence

7. Services and responses provided to people from Aboriginal communities should be culturally responsive and safe, recognising Aboriginal understanding of family violence and rights to self-determination and self-management, and take account of their experiences of colonisation, systemic violence and discrimination and recognise the ongoing and present day impacts of historical events, policies and practices

8. Services and responses provided to diverse communities and older people should be accessible, culturally responsive and safe, client-centred, inclusive and non-discriminatory

9. Perpetrators should be encouraged to acknowledge and take responsibility to end their violent, controlling and coercive behaviour, and service responses to perpetrators should be collaborative and coordinated through a system-wide approach that collectively and systematically creates opportunities for perpetrator accountability

10. Family violence used by adolescents is a distinct form of family violence and requires a different response to family violence used by adults, because of their age and the possibility that they are also victim survivors of family violence.

LEGISLATIVE, POLICY AND PRACTICE ENVIRONMENTS

The MARAM Framework is embedded in law and policy, establishing the system architecture and accountability mechanisms required for a system-wide approach to, and shared responsibility for, responding to family violence risk. This section outlines how the MARAM Framework is established at Part 11 of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) (*FVPA*), is supported by the Family Violence Information Sharing and Child Information Sharing Schemes and how it relates to other legislation like the *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* (*CYFA*).

This section also provides an overview of the MARAM Framework, and a detailed explanation of its four conceptual 'pillars' – a shared understanding of family violence, consistent and collaborative practice, responsibilities for risk assessment and management and systems, outcomes and continuous improvement.

In the 'terminology and definitions' sub-section, you will learn about the complex and evolving language to describe family violence and personal identities. The *Foundation Knowledge Guide* uses the terms victim survivor and perpetrator in recognition that these terms are most widely used in the community. The reasons for language choice are explained in detail, and definitions for commonly used words are given. An extensive list of definitions is at the end of the *Foundation Knowledge Guide*.

WHO HAS A ROLE IN THE SERVICE SYSTEM?

Family violence risk assessment and management is a shared responsibility. This section describes how professionals across a broad range of services, organisations, professions and sectors have a shared responsibility for identifying, assessing and managing family violence risk, even where it may not be core business. Together, they form the family violence service system, and are formally recognised and prescribed by regulation as 'Framework organisations'. A full list of Framework organisations is available here. The role of professionals will vary based on the nature of their organisation and the type of contact they have with people experiencing family violence.

MARAM PRACTICE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PROFESSIONALS

The MARAM Framework provides a structure of 10 responsibilities of practice for professionals and services working in organisations and sectors across the family violence service system. Each responsibility is assigned a practice 'expectation' or learning objective.

Table 1: MARAM Practice Responsibilities

Risk assessment and management responsibilities	Expectations of Framework organisations and section 191 agencies
Responsibility 1: Respectful, sensitive and safe engagement	Ensure staff understand the nature and dynamics of family violence, facilitate an appropriate, accessible, culturally responsive environment for safe disclosure of information by service users, and to respond to disclosures sensitively.
	Ensure staff recognise that any engagement of service users who may be a perpetrator must occur safely and not collude or respond to coercive behaviours.
Responsibility 2: Identification of family violence	Ensure staff use information gained through engagement with service users and other providers (and in some cases, through use of screening tools to aid identification/or routine screening of all clients) to identify indicators of family violence risk and potentially affected family members.
	Ensure staff understand when it might be safe to ask questions of clients who may be a perpetrator, to assist with identification.
Responsibility 3: Intermediate risk assessment	Ensure staff can competently and confidently conduct intermediate risk assessment of adult and child victim survivors using Structured Professional Judgement and appropriate tools, including the Brief and Intermediate Assessment tools.
	Where appropriate to the role and mandate of the organisation or service, and when safe to do so, ensure staff can competently and confidently contribute to behaviour assessment through engagement with a perpetrator, including through use of the Perpetrator Behaviour Assessment, and contribute to keeping them in view and accountable for their actions and behaviours.
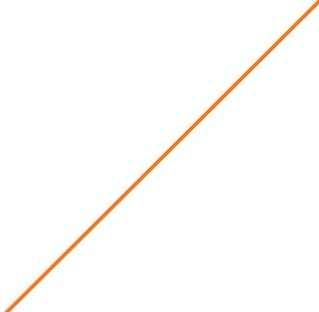
Risk assessment and management responsibilities	Expectations of Framework organisations and section 191 agencies
Responsibility 4: Intermediate risk management	Ensure staff actively address immediate risk and safety concerns relating to adult and child victim survivors, and undertake intermediate risk management, including safety planning. Those working directly with perpetrators attempt intermediate risk management when safe to do so, including safety planning.
Responsibility 5: Seek consultation for comprehensive risk assessment, risk management and referrals	Ensure staff seek internal supervision and further consult with family violence specialists to collaborate on risk assessment and risk management for adult and child victim survivors and perpetrators, and make active referrals for comprehensive specialist responses, if appropriate.
Responsibility 6: Contribute to information sharing with other services (as authorised by legislation)	Ensure staff proactively share information relevant to the assessment and management of family violence risk and respond to requests to share information from other information sharing entities under the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme, privacy law or other legislative authorisation.
Responsibility 7: Comprehensive assessment	Ensure staff in specialist family violence positions are trained to comprehensively assess the risks, needs and protective factors for adult and children victim survivors. Ensure staff who specialise in working with perpetrators are trained and equipped to undertake comprehensive risk and needs assessment to determine seriousness of risk of the perpetrator, tailored intervention and support options, and contribute to keeping them in view and accountable for their actions and behaviours. This includes an understanding of situating their own roles and responsibilities in the broader system to enable mutually reinforcing interventions over time.
Responsibility 8: Comprehensive risk management and safety planning	Ensure staff in specialist family violence positions are trained to undertake comprehensive risk management through development, monitoring and actioning of safety plans (including ongoing risk assessment), in partnership with the adult or child victim survivor and support agencies. Ensure staff who specialise in working with perpetrators are trained to undertake comprehensive risk management through development, monitoring and actioning of risk management plans (including information sharing); monitoring across the service system (including justice systems); and actions to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. This can be through formal and informal system accountability mechanisms that support perpetrators' personal accountability, to accept responsibility for their actions, and work at the behaviour change process.
Responsibility 9: Contribute to coordinated risk management	Ensure staff contribute to coordinated risk management, as part of integrated, multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approaches, including information sharing, referrals, action planning, coordination of responses and collaborative action acquittal.

Risk assessment and management responsibilities	Expectations of Framework organisations and section 191 agencies
Responsibility 10: Collaborate for ongoing risk assessment and risk management	Ensure staff are equipped to play an ongoing role in collaboratively monitoring, assessing and managing risk over time to identify changes in assessed level of risk ad ensure risk management and safety plans are responsive to changed circumstances, including escalation. Ensure safety plans are enacted.

This section outlines which professionals must be familiar with each of the *Responsibilities for Practice*, and what expectations are placed on Framework organisations relating to each responsibility. To identify the responsibilities that apply to a professional's role, consider:

... **Responsibilities 1-2**, **5-6**, and **9-10** apply to all relevant professionals and services in prescribed Framework organisations

... Some professionals also have a risk assessment role at the intermediate (**Responsibilities 3-4**) or comprehensive (**Responsibilities 7-8**) level (specialist family violence professionals only).

Organisational leaders will support professionals and services to identify which chapters within the *Responsibilities for Practice Guide* are relevant for their role and functions. Figure 1 shows how organisational leaders can support their staff to identify the roles and responsibilities of professionals and services.

Figure 1: MARAM Responsibilities Decision Guide

PROFESSIONAL ROLES (EXAMPLE)	MARAM RESPONSIBILITIES	MARAM RESOURCES	CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK

Row 1

The professional's role:

… Addresses universal needs of service-users

… Is not primarily related to a person's experience of family violence.

AND

They are in a position to identify or screen for family violence.

All staff in organisations prescribed under MARAM have the following responsibilities:

Responsibility 1: respectfully, sensitively and safely engage with clients

Responsibility 2: identify family violence

Responsibility 5: seek secondary consultation for comprehensive risk assessment, risk management and referrals

Responsibility 6: contribute to information sharing with other services (as permitted by legislation)

Responsibility 9: contribute to coordinated risk management

Responsibility 10: collaborate for ongoing risk assessment and risk management

Core Knowledge Guide

Identification and screening tool and practice guidance:

… use when family violence is suspected or identified

… use where organisational policy requires routine screening

… use with adult and child victim survivors

… use appropriate section on working with perpetrators, as relevant

Tier 4

Row 2

The professional's role:

… is associated with family violence risk but is not focussed on this risk alone.

… engages with people in crisis situations or cohorts who are at high risk of experiencing or using family violence.

… involves therapeutic intervention, a crisis service, case management support or broader needs assessment and management.

AND

They can incorporate addressing family violence risk assessment and management in to their usual work.

In addition to the above:

Responsibility 3: conduct intermediate risk assessment (using appropriate approaches, supported by appropriate tools)

Responsibility 4: conduct intermediate risk management

Victim survivor brief tool, practice guidance and risk management resources:

… use in a short-term crisis situation, or where there is a brief window for engagement

… use with adult and child victim survivors.

Victim survivor intermediate tool, practice guidance and risk management resources:

… use if engagement is short- or long-term and allows time for more detailed assessment and holistic management

… use with adult and child victim survivors.

Perpetrator behaviour assessment tool, practice guidance and risk management resources:

… use if working directly with perpetrators, where safe to do so.

Tiers 2 & 3

Some of tier 4

Row 3

The professional's role:

… is directly related to increasing victim survivor safety or addressing perpetrator risk

… includes family violence case management, crisis services or family violence therapeutic interventions or provides sustained support including safety planning and risk management.

AND

They work with victim survivors and perpetrators of family violence in a specialist capacity.*

In addition to the above:

Responsibility 7: Conduct comprehensive assessment

Responsibility 8: Conduct comprehensive, risk management and safety planning

Comprehensive victim survivor tool, practice guidance and risk management resources:

… use for comprehensive assessment conducted by a specialist practitioner

… use with adult and child victim survivors.

Comprehensive perpetrator risk assessment tool, practice guidance and risk management resources:

… use if working directly with perpetrators where safe to do so.

Tier 1

Some of tiers 2, 3 & 4

MARAM responsibilities and resources are cumulative

*Some specialists may work in environments which are predominantly at a higher tier (e.g. Capability Framework Tier 2, 3 or 4)

HOW CAN VICTIM SURVIVORS OR PERPETRATORS ACCESS OR INTERACT WITH THE SERVICE SYSTEM?

Victim survivors and perpetrators of family violence can access or interact with the family violence service system in a number of ways. This section provides in table form a list of entry points such as prescribed justice and statutory bodies or specialist family violence services and outlines the service types that relate to each entry point.

Table 2: Entry points and services

Entry points	Description of service types[1]
Specialist family violence and sexual assault services	Including men's and women's specialist family violence services, such as crisis refuge services, and services that specialise in working with Aboriginal communities, diverse communities and older people experiencing family violence. Multi-Disciplinary Centres and sexual assault support services.
The Orange Door	Including specialist family violence services for female and child victims, child and family services, perpetrator/men's services.
Victims of Crime Helpline	Including specialist family violence for male victims.
Prescribed justice and statutory bodies	Including police, courts and correctional services, services for victims of crime, Child Protection, and legal services.*
Prescribed universal services	Including education*, social/public housing services, health services*, maternal and child health services, mental health services, drug and alcohol services, disability services*, financial counselling and community-based child and family services.
Targeted community services	Are those specialist family violence services with an expert knowledge of a particular diverse community and the responses required to address the unique needs and barriers faced by this group. Targeted services may also include community specific services, such as ethno-specific, LGBTIQ and disability services that focus on primary prevention or early intervention.

1   Services denoted with an asterisk (*) have not been prescribed as Framework organisations at the time of publication, but still have a role in identifying, assessing and managing risk

ABOUT FAMILY VIOLENCE

Family violence is behaviour that controls or dominates a family member and causes them to fear for their own or another person's safety or wellbeing. It includes exposing a child to these behaviours, as well as the impact on children and other family members. The *Foundation Knowledge Guide* provides detailed information about family violence and its presentations across a spectrum of risk severity, from subtle exploitation of power imbalances, through to escalating patterns of abuse over time.

Family violence is deeply gendered, which means that while both men and women can be perpetrators or victim survivors of family violence, overwhelmingly, perpetrators are men who perpetrate violence against women and children.

This section includes the definition of family violence from the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)* (see **Section 5**) and makes clear that family violence can be a criminal offence.

The Act outlines that the definition of:

... Family violence includes behaviour by a person to a family member or person that is:

    ... is physically or sexually abusive

    ... is emotionally or psychologically abusive

    ... is economically abusive

    ... is threatening

    ... is coercive

    ... 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.

... Also includes behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of behaviour referred to in these ways

... Family is broad to include 'family-like relationships' (see **Section 8**).

The section also details:

... The prevalence and drivers of family violence

... The gendered nature of family violence, where most instances are men perpetrating violence against women and children

... The Aboriginal definition of family violence as defined in *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families*

... The family violence evidence-based risk factors (including high risk factors).

KEY CONCEPTS FOR PRACTICE

Structured Professional Judgement

The practice model of Structured Professional Judgement enables professionals to assess information to determine the level of risk. Professional judgement is applying a professional's experience, skills and knowledge to assess risk. This section explains the elements of Structured Professional Judgement and how it relates to risk assessment and management.

This section describes the elements of risk assessment and the sources of information you might use to inform a risk assessment and how to determine the level of risk. Guidance on intersectional analysis as part of professional judgement is contained in a further section.

Figure 2: Model of Structured Professional Judgement

PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS

INFORMATION SHARING

EVIDENCE-BASED RISK FACTORS

VICTIM SURVIVOR SELF-ASSESSMENT
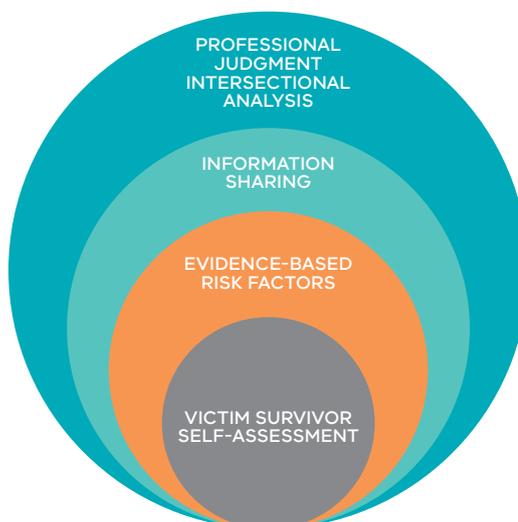
Evidence shows that adult victim survivors are often good predictors of their own level of safety and risk and that this is the most accurate assessment of their level of risk. This section includes information on how to incorporate a victim survivor's self-assessment, acknowledging that victim survivors may at times underestimate the level of risk the perpetrator poses.

Evidence based risk factors and the MARAM risk assessment tools

The family violence risk factors under the MARAM Framework, are sorted into categories to support understanding of how they are used. The risk factors are separated into the following categories:

... Those specific to an adult victim survivor's circumstances

... Those caused by perpetrator's behaviour towards an adult or child victim survivor

... Additional risk factors caused by perpetrator's behaviour specific to children, which recognises that children experience some unique risk factors, and that their risk must be assessed independently of adult victim survivors.

There is also a separate category reflecting children's circumstances that may indicate (not determine in isolation) that family violence is present or escalating, and should prompt assessment of children for their experience of family violence.

This section outlines that family violence risk assessment is used to understand the presentation of risk (what risk factors or 'behaviours' are being used by a perpetrator) and to determine level of risk. This is informed by analysing the presence and 'seriousness' of evidence-based risk factors via a risk assessment tool.

The evidence-based risk factors have been shown to be associated with family violence occurring – and some of these factors are also strongly linked to the likelihood of a victim being killed or seriously injured (serious risk factors). See Table 3 in the *Foundation Knowledge Guide* for the list of evidence-based risk factors, including serious risk factors.

Professionals use a range of tools to identify, screen and assess for family violence risk. These tools and guidance on how to use them are provided in **Responsibility 2** (identification and screening tool), **3** (brief and intermediate tools) and **7** (comprehensive tool).

Figure 3: Risk Assessment Tools

Screening (Identify if risk is present)	Intermediate Assessment (Questions about risk factors) [Brief Assessment – high risk factors only]	Questions about experience of risk for Aboriginal people	Questions about experience of risk for diverse communities
Questions relating to children			

COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT
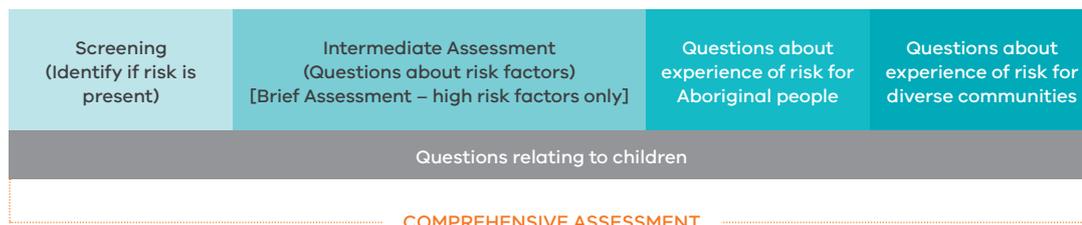
This section also describes best-practice approaches to risk assessment with a victim survivor that enable them to share their story with you.

By taking a person or victim-centred approach to risk assessment and management, listening to and believing the victim survivor you can recognise the victim survivor as experts in their own safety, with intimate knowledge of their lived experience of violence.

Person-centred approach

Your approach to engaging with victim survivors of all ages should be informed by the person's experience of the violence and the impact of the violence on their daily functioning, as well as the presence of any serious threat. This section explains what a person-centred approach looks like including providing transparent information (where age and developmental stage appropriate) so that the victim survivor can make informed choices and provide input into the risk assessment and management process.

A person-centred approach combines intersectional analysis (see **Section 9.5**) and trauma and violence-informed practice (see **Section 9.6**).

This section provides guidance on tailoring your responses to empower victim survivors to make informed choices and access services and supports they need.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality, or intersectional analysis, is a theoretical approach to recognise the interconnected nature of social categorisations, identity and experience. Intersectional analysis reflects an individual's age, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, cultural background, language, religion, visa status, class, socioeconomic status, ability (including physical, neurological, cognitive, sensory, intellectual or psychosocial impairment and/or disability) or geographic location. Gender and the drivers of family violence are critical to informing your understanding of intersectional analysis in the family violence practice context.

The *Foundation Knowledge Guide* explains intersectionality in detail, and what it means to take an intersectional approach in practice. This practice guide stresses the negative impacts and experiences of barriers and discrimination to emphasise this responsibility of professionals and services to reduce and remove structural inequalities and barriers and give guidance on tailoring responses to overcome these barriers. Professionals should also recognise the collective strengths and the social, cultural and historic contexts of Aboriginal people and people from diverse communities.

Trauma and violence-informed practice

Trauma is defined as the experience of an event which results in a reduced ability to cope or integrate ideas or emotions that are the result of that experience. Having a trauma-informed lens is essential when engaging in family violence risk assessment and management.

Trauma and violence informed practice 'expands this concept to account for the intersecting impacts of systemic and interpersonal violence and structural inequities on a person's life'.

This section describes how trauma can occur in family violence contexts and the varying ways this trauma can impact on adults and children, including cumulative impacts. Professionals should be aware of the signs and impacts of trauma when assessing and managing family violence risk.

Reflective practice and unconscious bias

Biases are learned ideas, opinions or stereotypes formed throughout an individual's personal and professional life through our understanding of culture, attitudes, values and beliefs. All people have biases and professionals should recognise their own biases in their approach to Structured Professional Judgement. This section explains how conscious or unconscious bias can impact on family violence risk assessment and management, and why it's important to reflect on how your own biases might affect your decisions and engagement with clients.

Risk Management

Risk management should focus on the safety of victim survivors and actions to hold perpetrators in view and accountable for their actions and behaviours. Risk management also includes actions to assist individuals to move forward and recover from the violence they have experienced. All prescribed organisations have some role in risk management matched to their responsibilities under the MARAM Framework. All risk management is based on risk assessment and should respond to the level of risk being experienced, as well as to the forms of violence used.

Practice guidance on risk management at different levels of practice (identification, intermediate and comprehensive), including safety planning, information sharing, secondary consultation and referral, coordinated and collaborative practice are described further in the *Responsibilities for Practice Guide* **Responsibilities 4 and 8.**

PRESENTATIONS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE ACROSS THE COMMUNITY

This section outlines in detail particular dynamics and experiences of family violence used against individuals and communities. It starts with recognition of the experience of women and women as mothers (or other carers), and children and young people, reflecting that they have the highest prevalence and impact of family violence.

The section then provides guidance on the experience and impact of risk against Aboriginal people and communities, people from diverse communities (including culturally, linguistically and faith diverse, LGBTIQ and people with disabilities) and older people.

This information is structured to describe particular experiences of risk, service access barriers and practice considerations for responding to these barriers.

Further information is then also provided in **Responsibility 7** on asking questions about forms of family violence used against Aboriginal people and people from diverse communities, and **Responsibility 8** provides additional practice guidance on responding to these forms of risk.

WORKING WITH PERPETRATORS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

It is important to be aware of the possibility that a service user may be using violence. The identification of perpetrators can be complex, and distinctions should be made between adult perpetrators and adolescents who use violence in the home. This section outlines:

... Important considerations when working with a service user who may be perpetrating violence on their family member/s

... What collusion is and how to avoid it

... The role perpetrators have to their own accountability

... What a predominant aggressor is

... Misidentification of a perpetrator.

Note, guidance on working safely with perpetrators appropriate to a professional's role and responsibilities is being developed. In 2020, practice guidance, tools and resources will be provided for professionals in key identified workforces to engage safely with a perpetrator about their behaviour and use of violence, according to their role and responsibilities, identified by their organisation, under the MARAM Framework.
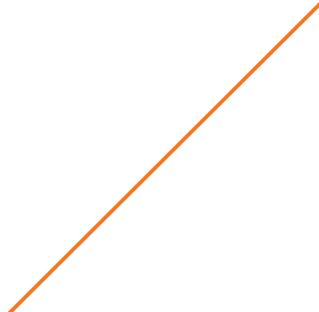
RESPONSIBILITY 1: RESPECTFUL, SENSITIVE AND SAFE ENGAGEMENT

The guide for **Responsibility 1** should be used when family violence is suspected through engagement with service users. It outlines how to create a respectful, sensitive and safe environment for adults and children who may be experiencing family violence whether or not they disclose.

All professionals should use **Responsibility 1** to understand:

... How to engage respectfully, sensitively and safely as part of Structured Professional Judgement

... How to facilitate an accessible, culturally responsive environment for safe disclosure of information

... How to respond to disclosures sensitively and prioritise the safety of victim survivors

... How to tailor engagement with adults, children and young people, including Aboriginal people and people from diverse communities

... The importance of using a person-centred approach

... Recognising and addressing barriers that impact a person's support and safety options.

All information in guidance on **Responsibility 1** is relevant for assessing family violence risk to any adult, child or young person who is a victim survivor. Guidance which refers to a perpetrator may be relevant to situations where an adolescent is using family violence. Remember that adolescents who use violence may also be a victim of violence and engagement with them should reflect this.

CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT TO ASK ABOUT FAMILY VIOLENCE

Responsibility 1 details the ways that creating a safe environment can enable a person to feel safe and respected and talk about their experiences of family violence. This involves a range of considerations, including:

... The immediate health and safety needs of each person (adult or child) who may be experiencing family violence

... The physical environment, including making the person feel safe through physical, welcoming cues and accessibility

... Communicating effectively, by actively listening with empathy and without judgement, placing responsibility with the perpetrator. Also providing any required communication supports such as communication adjustments or a professional interpreter.

... Safely and respectfully responding to the individual's culture and identity and identifying and challenging your own biases

... Always enquire about and record the language, culture and other aspects of identity of each family member. Never assume you know these, or that they will be the same for each family member.

Use guidance on **Responsibility 1** to understand what your first priorities should be, including determining if there is an immediate threat to a person's health or safety, and ensuring you do not ask questions in the presence of a perpetrator, alleged perpetrator or adolescent who may be using family violence (doing so may increase the risk to the victim survivor/s). The guide also outlines why it's important to ensure that the person can communicate comfortably and why you should ask about their identity.

You should also reflect on information provided in the *Foundation Knowledge Guide* on intersectional analysis, barriers and practice considerations for Aboriginal people and people from diverse communities, and information in the *MARAM Framework* about understanding how family violence is defined in different communities.

BUILDING RAPPORT AND TRUST

From the first moment of engagement, victim survivors will be making decisions about how much they want to disclose to you. Building rapport with victim survivors is crucial as people are more likely to disclose the full extent of the violence if they feel they will be believed, not judged and provided with support.

This section provides guidance on building rapport and trust, introducing any risk assessment in a sensitive way and providing appropriate information so the person can make informed choices.

Building rapport and trust to support engagement is the responsibility of all professionals. **Responsibility 1** outlines the elements of rapport building in more detail.

Other key elements include using intersectional, trauma-informed and person-centred practice. More information on these concepts is in the *Foundation Knowledge Guide*.

USING AN ADVOCATE OR SUPPORT PERSON

You should ask a victim survivor if they wish to have an advocate/support person with them throughout the assessment process. This section explains how to identify whether a support person is required, and how to ensure the support person is appropriate and safe. Be aware that a perpetrator may use their presence to intimidate or coerce a victim survivor, controlling the information they share. You should have a private conversation before any assessment.

DIFFERENT FACTORS THAT IMPACT SUPPORT AND SAFETY OPTIONS

Responsibility 1 outlines the different factors that might affect a victim survivor's access to support and safety options. These factors may also impact on the approach you take to create safe engagement. This section guides you to consider how discrimination, structural inequality and domination have affected Aboriginal people, people who identify as belonging to a diverse community or people from at-risk age cohorts. The section also outlines how you should have an open and respectful approach to cultural and experiential differences and tailor your engagement approach, assessment and management practice to reduce or remove barriers to engagement for people who face structural inequality and discrimination. You can find further detailed information in the *Foundation Knowledge Guide*.

RESPONDING WHEN YOU SUSPECT A SERVICE USER IS USING FAMILY VIOLENCE

Professionals across the service system will come in to contact with people, including adolescents, who they suspect may be using family violence. This section describes the tactics perpetrators use to justify, minimise or excuse their use of violence or present themselves as a victim survivor, and explains how you should respond.

This section also includes guidance on assessment or management responses for an adolescent who is using violence and that they should be informed by their individual contexts such as age, development and experience of trauma.

INFORMATION RELATING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

It is important to view and acknowledge children and young people as victim survivors in their own right and allow them to contribute to risk assessment, management and safety planning. Children and young people have unique perspectives on their own safety that can inform your risk assessment. In addition to barriers experienced by adult victim survivors, young people may experience additional barriers due to their age and developmental stage.

This section describes how all the preceding information in **Responsibility 1** relates to children and young people, and what further considerations need to be made.

Remember, experiences of family violence can create significant risks to a child or young person's social, emotional, psychological and physical health and wellbeing. Children and young people may be victim survivors of family violence whether they are targeted or not, or directly exposed or not. Impacts on children who live with family violence may be acute and chronic, immediate and cumulative, direct and indirect, seen and unseen.

In guidance on **Responsibility 1**, you will learn the different options for assessing a child or young person's risk, how to build rapport with a parent/carer (who is not a perpetrator) to support assessment of a child or young person or build rapport with the child or young person directly. The guide also explains what safe engagement with infants, children and young people looks like, and how age-appropriate play activities can be used to support engagement.

RESPONSIBILITY 2: IDENTIFICATION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE RISK

Guidance for **Responsibility 2** should be used when family violence is suspected but not yet confirmed. **Responsibility 2** will enable you to identify if family violence is present and undertake screening for an adult, child or young person to assist you to decide if further action and/or assessment is required.

All professionals should have knowledge of **Responsibility 2** to:

... Build awareness of the evidence-based family violence risk factors and explanations

... Be familiar with the questions to identify family violence, observable signs and indicators

... Use information gathered through engagement with service users and other providers via information sharing to identify signs and indicators of family violence.

Information sharing laws and practice is further described in **Responsibility 6**.

Remember, only professionals who have received training to engage with perpetrators about their use of violence should do so. It can increase risk to a victim survivor to engage with a perpetrator when not done safely.

Guidance which refers to a perpetrator in **Responsibility 2** may be relevant to situations where an adolescent is using family violence. Remember that adolescents who use violence may also be a victim of violence and engagement with them should reflect this.

IDENTIFICATION OF AND SCREENING FOR FAMILY VIOLENCE

Guidance in **Responsibility 2** describes what identifying and screening for family violence means, its purpose and how it is done. It also outlines what family violence risk factors are, and how they are used to:

... Identify if a person is experiencing family violence

... Identify the level of risk, and

... Identify the likelihood of violence re-occurring.

Identifying and screening for family violence means identifying that family violence risk factors are present. This can be done through observing signs or indicators related to a person's physical or emotional presentation, behaviour or circumstances, and/or by asking screening questions about family violence.

WHEN TO USE THE SCREENING AND IDENTIFICATION TOOL

All professionals should use the Screening and Identification Tool, either routinely, if this is part of your role, or only when indicators of family violence are identified. The purpose of the Screening and Identification Tool is to identify:

... If family violence is occurring

... The victim survivor's level of fear for themselves or another person

... The perpetrator/person using violence.

Responsibility 2 guidance outlines when the Screening and Identification Tool should be used, what to do following the outcome of the tool and what to do if someone isn't ready to respond to your questions about family violence.

USING PROMPTING QUESTIONS WITH AN ADULT TO SUPPORT SCREENING

This section provides ideas on how to use questions to introduce screening. It includes examples of questions that can support screening and build rapport.

WHY SOMEONE MIGHT NOT DISCLOSE FAMILY VIOLENCE, EVEN IF ASKED

There are many reasons why people do not feel comfortable or ready to disclose family violence such as not identifying their experience as family violence, have fears about their safety or concerns about the impacts of disclosing. This section outlines many of these reasons and some of the ways you might mitigate them.

To address barriers to disclosure and provide a safe opportunity to disclose, you can take a partnership approach, by explaining processes, active listening, normalizing anxieties and fear of disclosure, and setting realistic expectations to strengthen your rapport and engagement.

IDENTIFICATION AND SCREENING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and young people can be affected by family violence even if they do not hear or see it. You should always ask the adult/carer about what their children or young people might be experiencing or exposed to. This section provides guidance on how to observe signs or indicators (listed in **Responsibility 2**, **Appendix 1**) that suggest that a child is being exposed to family violence, and when you should screen for family violence. Further guidance on how to screen for family violence, including with a parent/carer who is not using violence or, if you have the relevant expertise and it is appropriate, safe and reasonable, directly with the child or young.

This section also provides a list of prompting questions that may relate to signs or indicators of trauma that you may have observed.

IF FAMILY VIOLENCE IS OCCURRING?

A person's responses to the screening questions should guide your next steps. **Responsibility 2** outlines what to do following the outcome of the Screening and Identification Tool. For example, if the person's responses indicate that they are experiencing family violence, reassure the person that you believe them, and let them know about the different options and services that are available. **Appendix 4** of **Responsibility 2** outlines possible response options and a basic safety plan. This section outlines what actions you can take if responses to the screening questions indicate that no family violence is occurring.

IF FAMILY VIOLENCE IS OCCURRING AND AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE IS REQUIRED

If family violence is identified and an immediate risk management response is required – that is, you have determined there is an immediate threat to a person's life, health, safety or welfare – you must contact the police or ambulance by calling 000 or contact other emergency or crisis services for assistance.

This section outlines the range of discretionary response options available to Victoria Police when responding to reports of family violence including: laying charges, issuing a Family Violence Safety Notice, applying for an intervention order, removing an individual from a property and more.

TOOLS

Responsibility 2, **Appendix 1** contains the observable signs of trauma that may indicate family violence. The document includes separate lists for adults, children and young people (Tables 1-5).

Responsibility 2, **Appendix 2** contains the Screening and Identification Tool within a table of practice guidance.

Responsibility 2, **Appendix 3** contains the Screening and Identification Tool as a standalone template. All professionals should use the Screening and Identification Tool, either applied routinely when this is a part of your professional role or service, or only when indicators of family violence are identified. Remember, all of the questions in the Screening and Identification Tool should be asked, when possible.

Responsibility 2, **Appendix 4** contains a flow diagram of response options and provides a basic safety plan.
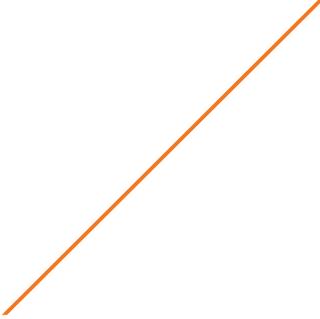
RESPONSIBILITY 3: INTERMEDIATE RISK ASSESSMENT

Professionals should refer to the *Foundation Knowledge Guide* and **Responsibilities 1 and 2** before commencing intermediate risk assessment.

Responsibility 3 should be used to guide intermediate risk assessment to assess the level or 'seriousness' of family violence risk — for either an adult or a child. This assessment may be done directly after disclosure or identification and screening (see **Responsibility 2**), or to assess changes in family violence risk over time.

Guidance in **Responsibility 3** should be used by professionals whose role is linked to but not directly focused on family violence. It supports professionals to have knowledge of: asking questions about risk factors; understanding the evidence-base of how questions link to the level of risk; using the process of Structured Professional Judgement in practice; using intersectional analysis and inclusive practice; using the Brief or Intermediate Assessment Tools; and forming a professional judgment to determine seriousness of risk.

An intermediate level risk assessment may be undertaken using either:

... The **Brief Assessment Tool** (**Responsibility 3**, **Appendix 5**) reflecting high-risk factors only.

... The **Intermediate Assessment Tool** (**Responsibility 3**, **Appendix 6**) which includes questions about a broader range of evidence-based risk factors.

Guidance which refers to a perpetrator in **Responsibility 3** may be relevant to situations where an adolescent is using family violence. Remember that adolescents who use violence may also be a victim of violence and engagement with them should reflect this.

STRUCTURED PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT IN INTERMEDIATE ASSESSMENT

Structured Professional Judgement is the practice model that underpins risk assessment and your determination of risk. An intersectional analysis lens must be applied to Structured Professional Judgement for an Intermediate Assessment. This section guides you on what this means, including understanding that a person may have experienced a range of structural inequalities, barriers and discrimination throughout their life, and the impacts of this on their experience of family violence and their access to services.

INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICE IN INTERMEDIATE ASSESSMENT

Guidance in **Responsibility 3** outlines how a person's identity (including experiences of structural inequality and discrimination) might influence how they talk about, understand or perceive their experience of family violence. Inclusive practice includes challenging your biases and engaging with victim survivors in ways that respond to their lived experiences. This section also provides guidance on using secondary consultations with support agencies to assist you to provide appropriate, accessible, and culturally responsive services to the victim survivor.

See **Responsibility 1** and the *Foundation Knowledge Guide* for more information on intersectional analysis, inclusive practice and providing a safe and accessible environment.

HOW TO USE THE INTERMEDIATE ASSESSMENT TOOL

The Intermediate Assessment Tool will be used if family violence has been confirmed either through disclosure or screening (see **Responsibility 2**). The Intermediate Assessment Tool and the Child Victim Survivor Assessment Tool (**Responsibility 3**, **Appendix 7**) are used to identify risk factors and the range of family violence behaviours being experienced, and determine the level of risk a perpetrator poses. The Intermediate Assessment Tool includes questions based on family violence risk factors, including high risk factors. This section also explains the approach to assessing an adult and/or child and young person.

WHEN TO USE THE BRIEF ASSESSMENT TOOL

The Brief Assessment Tool (**Responsibility 3**, **Appendix 5**) covers all the high-risk factors and is a sub-set of the full Intermediate Assessment Tool. High-risk factors are linked to an increased likelihood of the victim survivor being killed or seriously injured. A brief assessment will be undertaken by frontline staff and critical responders, in time-critical situations. This can be used to inform a later full intermediate assessment or comprehensive assessment.

USING PROMPTING QUESTIONS

Your objective is to encourage the victim survivor to tell their story in their own way, and you should start an assessment by providing context to why you will be asking these questions. This section of **Responsibility 3** provides a number of examples of prompting questions and tips to start an intermediate assessment conversation, build rapport, draw out important information, and explore the risk factors in more detail.

UNDERSTANDING THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND RISK LEVELS

In a full intermediate assessment, you will seek answers to all questions or as many as possible, either through a conversation or through direct questioning. Your analysis of the elements of Structured Professional Judgement and application of your professional experience, skills and knowledge are the process by which you determine the level of risk. You can also seek secondary consultation from a specialist family violence service.

This section also explains:

... What each of the levels of risk 'at risk', 'elevated risk', 'serious risk' and 'serious risk and requires immediate protection' represent

... How to determine level of risk, including understanding what high-risk factors are and how they are crucial indicators that a person is at an increased risk of serious injury or death

... Understanding the dynamic nature of risk and reviewing risk as it can change or escalate over time

... Practice considerations in determining level of risk, including a victim survivor's self-assessment, severity, frequency, and changes in frequency or severity.

INTERMEDIATE RISK ASSESSMENT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and young people affected by family violence are victim survivors in their own right, with unique experiences of family violence and its impacts. This section of the guide explains why children and young people should have their risk independently assessed and outlines unique considerations for assessing their risk. This includes information on knowing when to assess a child directly or through a parent/carer (who is not a perpetrator).

Responsibility 3 also describes the challenges and barriers to assessing risk to a child or young person through a parent/carer. Parental shame, fear of child removal or the perpetrator's undermining of the bond between mother/carer and child can all impact the parent/carer's engagement to assess the child victim survivor. There are also tips for building trust and rapport with the child or parent/carer.

This section also includes guidance on how to approach assessing a child victim survivor (either directly or indirectly) based on their developmental stage, and using a trauma-informed approach to understand the child victim survivor's experiences of family violence and its impacts.

A list of family violence risk factors for children and young people is included in the *Foundation Knowledge Guide*.

IDENTIFYING PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR VICTIM SURVIVORS

Following risk assessment, you should explore with the victim survivor what 'protective factors' are present for them (and if relevant, any children). This section described that protective factors can support mitigation of or reduce risk and promote stabilisation and recovery from violence.

This section lists common protective factors for victim survivors, both adults and children and young people. These factors can be related to: **systems intervention** – such as the perpetrator being incarcerated, **practical/environmental** – such as safe housing and financial security or **strengths-based** – like positive social and community connections. Remember that adult and child victim survivors may have different perspectives on what protective factors are present.

TOOLS

Responsibility 3, **Appendix 5** contains the Brief Assessment Tool reflecting high-risk factors only. The Brief Assessment Tool is a sub-set of the Intermediate Assessment Tool, for use by professionals providing time-critical interventions.

Responsibility 3, **Appendix 6** contains the Intermediate Assessment Tool.

Responsibility 3, **Appendix 7** contains the Child Victim Survivor Assessment Tool with questions that can be asked either of the adult victim survivor or directly of a child or young person.

Responsibility 3, **Appendix 8** contains the Intermediate Assessment Tool within a table of practice guidance about each question.

RESPONSIBILITY 4: INTERMEDIATE RISK MANAGEMENT

Guidance in **Responsibility 4** supports professionals to undertake risk management that responds to the presentation and level of family violence risk. You should use this guidance on **Responsibility 4** to develop risk management strategies after an intermediate risk assessment (**Responsibility 3**) has been completed and family violence risk has been assessed as present.

Responsibility 4 includes information about: working with victim survivors to develop an appropriate risk management response based on their unique experience; the different elements of intermediate risk management; discussing options to stay at home or leave; responding to serious and immediate risk; documenting evidence of family violence; developing risk management strategies where there are multiple victim survivors, including child victim survivors; and developing safety plans for children and young people.

Guidance which refers to a perpetrator in **Responsibility 4** may also be relevant to situations where an adolescent is using family violence. Remember that adolescents who use violence may also be a victim of violence and engagement with them should reflect this.

WHAT IS RISK MANAGEMENT?

Risk management is a coordinated set of actions aimed to enhance the safety of the victim survivor and reduce or remove the likelihood that the perpetrator will commit further violence. Intermediate risk management is focused on immediate risk management and safety planning, which is outlined in this chapter.

This section covers key intermediate risk management actions including: responding to immediate risk, safety planning, talking to victim survivors about options and connections to services and ongoing risk assessment and management.

Responsibility 4 also outlines engaging with other services to support collaborative risk management (more information available in **Responsibilities 5-6** and **9-10**).

STARTING THE CONVERSATION ABOUT RISK MANAGEMENT

Guidance in **Responsibility 4** describes how you can start a conversation about risk management and includes questions or statements you can say to begin the process. It's important that the victim survivor knows you need to work together to develop actions to support their safety.

Remember, the victim survivor is an expert in their own life experiences and provides critical insight into the perpetrator's attitude, beliefs and behaviours

RESPONDING TO IMMEDIATE RISK

This section outlines the actions you can take to respond to immediate risk, including contacting police, seeking secondary consultation or referral to a specialist family violence service, supporting an adult victim survivor to engage with legal services to make an application for an intervention order, reporting the risk posed by the perpetrator to children or young people to Child FIRST/Child Protection, or referring to a crisis or refuge response.

SAFETY PLANNING WITH AN ADULT VICTIM SURVIVOR

Safety planning is thinking about practical actions that can be undertaken by a victim survivor (and/or services) to be safer when living with family violence. Where family violence risk has been identified, all victim survivors, including children and young people, benefit from having a safety plan. **Responsibility 4**, **Appendix 9** has a template for making a safety plan.

This section explains when to do a safety plan, how to develop a safety plan with an adult victim survivor and what should be included such as emergency contacts, a safe place to go to, a safe person who can assist in an emergency and what to pack in an 'escape bag'.

SAFETY PLANNING FOR A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON

This section outlines what specific considerations need to be made for children or young people, separately to an adult victim survivor's safety planning, and describes these considerations by age and developmental levels. You should consider safety planning needs for children and young people separately to identify different experiences, risks and needs for each child or young person. If appropriate,

safe and reasonable the safety planning template for older children or young people (**Responsibility 4**, **Appendix 10**) may be used to safety plan directly with a child or young person. Otherwise, safety planning for the child or young person can be included in the adult victim survivor's safety plan.

This section also emphasises that each child's experience of risk and safety/needs is inextricably linked to that of the adult victim survivor/carer and other children in the family and the safety plan for a child or young person should be informed by the adult victim survivor's safety plan. Refer to guidance in **Responsibility 3** to determine if it is safe, appropriate and reasonable to develop a safety plan directly with a child or young person.

This section also has guidance on how to talk to a child or young person about the parent/carer who is a perpetrator, and why it's important the child knows that they are not responsible for any violence or behaviour from a perpetrator and that they will not be in trouble for telling information to the perpetrator. If you are not trained in working with children or young people, or need assistance in risk management you may wish to seek a secondary consultation with a specialist children's worker or family violence service.

SAFETY PLANNING WHERE AN ADOLESCENT IS USING FAMILY VIOLENCE

If an adolescent is using family violence, safety planning should consider the age, developmental stage and individual circumstance, and include therapeutic responses, as required. This plan will generally be shared with an adult victim survivor and should be consistent with safety planning for other family members.

This section has further guidance on what should be included in a safety plan, and options for if the adult victim survivor is remaining at home.

DISCUSSION ABOUT LEAVING OR STAYING SAFE AT HOME

Making a decision or beginning to plan to leave a relationship with a perpetrator is a high-risk time period for an escalation and/or change in the perpetrator's violence, including increased risk of the victim survivor being killed or seriously harmed.

This section describes the reasons why a victim survivor may not leave a violent relationship or may choose to remain in their home. It also includes actions to be written into the safety plan to support them if they are staying at home, like being ready to call police, planning possible escape routes, or supporting children to call for help if needed.

TALKING TO ADULT VICTIM SURVIVORS ABOUT THEIR OPTIONS

You should assist the victim survivor to identify and consider their options for support in a collaborative manner. This section provides some examples of questions you can ask to understand what actions they have taken to keep themselves safe in the past, their barriers to service access, their current needs (including legal, parenting and mental health) and informal and formal supports.

You should also assist the victim survivor to connect with relevant services and ask the victim survivor if they have any concerns about information being shared with any specific services.

Guidance on making referrals and seeking secondary consultation is outlined in **Responsibility 5**. Guidance on information sharing is outlined in **Responsibility 6**.

DOCUMENTING EVIDENCE OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

This section explains why documenting evidence of family violence is an important way to support applications for intervention orders and breaches or other justice or civil processes. It includes a list of ways the violence can be documented, if safe to do so. As documenting could increase risk if discovered by a perpetrator, discuss keeping the documenting evidence in a safe place outside of the home.

ONGOING RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Risk management includes ongoing/repeated risk assessment to identify if family violence risk has changed or escalated. This section explains how all professionals can support monitoring the safety of victim survivors through regular checking in, asking about changes in circumstances or experience of violence, or observing changes in behaviour.

It's also important that organisations share relevant information about the perpetrator's actions, behaviour and circumstances to inform updated risk management and safety plans. This is especially important when the level of risk has changed or escalated in frequency or severity.

Guidance on collaborative ongoing risk assessment and management is outlined in **Responsibility 10**.

> ### TOOLS
>
> **Responsibility 4**, **Appendix 9** contains a template safety plan for adult victim survivors which can include safety planning for children through the parent/carer.
>
> **Responsibility 4**, **Appendix 10** contains a template safety plan that can be used directly with older children or young people.
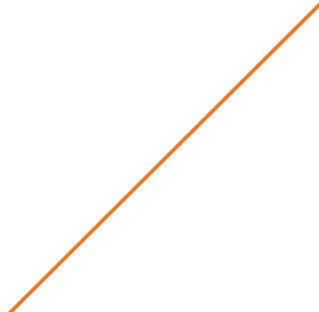
RESPONSIBILITY 5: SECONDARY CONSULTATION AND REFERRAL

Guidance in **Responsibility 5** is for all professionals to use when family violence is present and/or assessed and you determine that information, guidance, support or collaboration from another professional or service is required. The guidance in this chapter is general as each individual victim survivor's level of risk, circumstances, wellbeing and needs will require a unique response, that is built on the outcome of risk identification, assessment or management.

Responsibility 5 includes information on how to: seek internal supervision through your service or organisation; consult with family violence specialists to collaborate on risk assessment and risk management; and make active referrals for comprehensive specialist responses, if appropriate.

The outcome of risk identification (**Responsibility 2**), assessment (**Responsibility 3 or 7**) or management (**Responsibility 4 or 8**) will inform your secondary consultation or referral.

PURPOSE OF SECONDARY CONSULTATION AND REFERRALS

Seeking secondary consultation and referral involve you determining what response is required to an individual's risk, or to support their wellbeing or needs, and identifying appropriate services that can assist. Secondary consultation may lead to referral or you may refer someone directly after risk assessment or management.

This section outlines that secondary consultation or referral may involve a range of services, such as specialist family violence services, Victoria Police, Child Protection, Child FIRST or other advocacy, universal and general professional or therapeutic services.

RESPONDING TO BARRIERS

Barriers to service access may make it less likely that some victim survivors will follow up on a referral. This section guides you on understanding the effects of trauma which may significantly affect a person and their capacity to engage with services and the differing level of support that victim survivors may need to engage with services.

SEEKING SECONDARY CONSULTATION

Secondary consultation can assist professionals to determine seriousness of risk, inform ongoing risk assessment and approaches to risk management and safety planning. Secondary consultation can be for a range of reasons, such as using the skills and knowledge of a specialist family violence service to further understand family violence risk, or other specialist expertise to address a person's wide-ranging wellbeing or needs.

This section contains guidance on referring or reporting to Victoria Police, Child Protection or Child FIRST, and seeking secondary consultation with specialist family violence services, mainstream or universal services and other specialist and therapeutic services.

REFERRAL

Referral is the process of connecting adult and child victim survivors to information or services that are outside of your organisation's practice area including early intervention, responding to escalation or crisis and to support stabilisation and recovery from family violence. Specialist family violence services triage responses to referrals with actions taken for higher risk cases as a priority. Referral is an important part of the risk management process.

This section contains guidance to enable a successful referral, the processes of making a referral including what information should be contained in a referral and which organisations referrals might be made to. There is also information on good referral practices between professionals and services.

CONSENT OR VIEWS ON SECONDARY CONSULTATION AND REFERRALS

Victim survivors should be involved in making decisions about referral and secondary consultation wherever possible. This section explains why you should outline and clearly explain the service referral options and purposes for secondary consultation, and why ideally victim survivors will consent to you sharing information. The section also outlines instances where consent may not be required.

RECORD KEEPING AND REFERRALS

You should make file records of information you share with other professionals and services, and information you provide in referrals. You should also keep records of consent or views to information sharing and referrals.

If sharing information using the Family Violence Information Scheme or the Child Information Sharing Scheme, specific requirements apply for keeping records. Further detail on record keeping requirements when sharing information are outlined in Chapter 10 of the *Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines*, and Chapter 5 of the *Child Information Sharing Scheme Guidelines*.

RESPONSIBILITY 6: INFORMATION SHARING WITH OTHER SERVICES (AS AUTHORISED BY LEGISLATION)

Responsibility 6 includes information on how to: proactively share information relevant to the assessment and management of family violence risk, including under the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme, Child Information Sharing Scheme, privacy law or other authorisations; and respond to requests to share information from other services.

PURPOSE OF INFORMATION SHARING

Effective sharing of information is crucial in keeping victim survivors safe and holding perpetrators to account. Information can also be shared to promote the broader wellbeing and safety needs of children, which may or may not relate to their experience of family violence.

This section explains Victoria's legal authorisations to share information, including the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVIS Scheme) and the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CIS) and how they relate to each other.

INFORMATION SHARING IN STRUCTURED PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT

Information sharing is a key enabler of Structured Professional Judgement because it supports professionals to share information to inform risk assessment. This section describes how information sharing can assist professionals to identify additional risk factors or provide more information about known risk factors.

REFLECTING ON SAFE ENGAGEMENT, INCLUDING FOR INFORMATION SHARING PRACTICE

Each victim survivor, adult and child, should be considered individually for the services or supports they may need. This section explains the importance of discussing options with victim survivors for referrals and secondary consultation and identify any barriers to service access.

You should use an intersectional analysis lens when seeking secondary consultation or information sharing. For example, if the victim survivor has let you know they are Aboriginal, belong to a diverse community, or are a child, young person or older person, consider if your service engagement would benefit from specialist advice or support.

THE FAMILY VIOLENCE INFORMATION SHARING SCHEME

The section outlines the key elements of the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVIS Scheme), including:

... Who can share information under the FVIS Scheme, and an explanation of information sharing entities and risk assessment entities

... When information can be shared, including when consent is required or not required. For more information see the FVIS Scheme resources webpage

... An explanation of the two purposes for which information can be shared – a family violence assessment purpose and a family violence protection purpose

... How seeking views can inform your risk assessment or management planning

... Considerations to support decision-making and to identify risk-relevant information

... Sharing information relating to family violence risk for children and young people

... The range of ways information can be shared, including verbally or in writing

... Requirements for record keeping when sharing information

... Providing de-identified information when sharing information about third parties.

For further detail on information sharing under the FVIS Scheme, including where information can be shared without consent, refer to the *Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines*.

RESPONSIBILITY 7: COMPREHENSIVE RISK ASSESSMENT

This chapter should be used to guide comprehensive risk assessment of family violence. Professionals required to have knowledge of **Responsibility 7** should be able to: understand and apply all guidance on each of the previous responsibilities; and comprehensively assess the family violence risks, needs and protective factors for victim survivors (adults, children and young people).

Comprehensive risk assessment is undertaken only by professionals with a specialist level of skill, knowledge and expertise in family violence practice. It is an in-depth process which focuses on working with victim survivors to understand the full spectrum/presentation and impact of risk for each family member that is affected by the violence.

Guidance which refers to a perpetrator in **Responsibility 7** may also be relevant to situations where an adolescent is using family violence. Remember that adolescents who use violence may also be a victim of violence and engagement with them should reflect this.

STRUCTURED PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT IN COMPREHENSIVE RISK ASSESSMENT

Responsibility 7 uses all elements of the process of Structured Professional Judgement and applies an intersectional analysis to inform the assessment. Guidance in **Responsibility 7** will enable you to form a professional judgement on the level or 'seriousness' of risk, based on the victim survivor's self-assessed level of fear, risk and safety, the risk factors present (including change or escalation in frequency or severity) and the degree of mitigation provided by protective factors. This section includes guidance on how information from the victim survivor, as well as information gained from other sources and an intersectional analysis of both the victim survivor and perpetrator, will inform the comprehensive assessment.

PURPOSE OF COMPREHENSIVE RISK ASSESSMENT

Comprehensive risk assessment includes considering the risk, safety and needs of each individual separately, and collectively as a family unit. This section outlines the purpose of a comprehensive assessment, including determining the level or seriousness of risk, understanding a perpetrator's pattern of abusive behaviour and understanding the likelihood and severity of future violence, as well as identifying imminent risk.

Remember, risk assessment is a 'point-in-time' assessment. For specialist family violence practitioners, monitoring dynamic risk is a key part of ongoing risk assessment.

USING GENOGRAMS IN COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT

The genogram is a graphic representation of a relationship, similar to a family tree, that details further information among relationships, hereditary patterns, identity and other family dynamics that may be important. This section of **Responsibility 7** explains how a genogram can be used to better understand the victim survivor's circumstances and family, as well as build trust and rapport. A genogram template that enables recognition of each individual's identity is in **Responsibility 7**, **Appendix 12**.

THE COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT TOOL

Responsibility 7 explains the comprehensive risk assessment process for an adult or child/young person who is experiencing family violence. This section has further information about using the Comprehensive Assessment Tool and the Child Assessment Tool.

The Comprehensive Risk Assessment Tool builds on questions about evidence-based risk factors in the intermediate risk assessment. It contains additional questions relating to presentation of risk factors for people who are Aboriginal, or people who identify as belonging to a diverse community or at-risk age group (for example, older people). Each question is about the presence of family violence risk factors.

The Child Assessment Tool includes questions about the experience of risk for children and young people.

ASSESSING RISK

Individual responses to each question in the Comprehensive Assessment Tool will guide your assessment of the level of risk and to help plan for risk management (see **Responsibility 8**).

High risk factors are crucial indicators that the victim survivor is at an increased risk of serious injury or being killed by the perpetrator. Identifying whether these factors are present will assist you in forming your assessment of the level of risk.

This section details how to identify levels of risk - 'at risk', 'elevated risk' and 'serious risk' and why an adult victim survivor's self-assessment of risk should be a crucial input to your assessment. It also provides questions you might ask to understand the person's self-assessment of risk.

You will also learn about severity, likelihood and timing, frequency, and change or escalation in frequency or severity and understanding how risk changes or escalates over time and how to determine seriousness of risk.

ASSESSING THE RISK OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and young people affected by family violence are victim survivors in their own right, with unique experiences of family violence and its impacts, and can be affected by family violence even if they do not directly witness it. This section of the guide outlines unique considerations for assessing a child or young person's risk, including the factors that may influence direct interaction with children and young people like age and developmental stage and whether direct service access is available.

Working with children and young people can include:

... Risk and needs assessment for each child or young person via the parent (who is not a perpetrator)

... Risk and needs assessment directly with the child or young person

... Addressing children and young people's needs individually, and in conjunction with the parent (who is not a perpetrator), including putting protective factors into place.

This section includes a list of risks that can present and impact on children and young people and some suggested prompting questions to begin the assessment process. There are also: tips on how you can support strengthening the parent/carer-child bond; understanding how parental and child guilt and shame can impact assessment; and the best ways to communicate a child victim survivor's risk to their parent (who is not a perpetrator).

ASSESSING VIOLENCE BY A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON AGAINST A FAMILY MEMBER

Violence can be used by a child or young person against any family member, often referred to as 'adolescent family violence', including using violence towards a parent or sibling, other family member or an intimate partner. This section explains this form of family violence in more detail, including the underlying factors and context and how to work with children and young people who use violence and may also be victims of family violence or work with other family members affected a child or young person's use of violence.

Responses to adolescents who use violence differ to responses to adult perpetrators. A therapeutic and holistic response which addresses risks and needs as well as the sources of violence and abuse are recommended over a criminal justice response.

This section also describes how you should apply an intersectional lens when assessing risk.

ASSESSING FOR TRAUMATIC OR ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY AS A RESULT OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Risk assessment questions and risk management strategies relevant to traumatic brain injury (TBI) or acquired brain injury (ABI) and family violence is an emerging area of practice. This section explains when you might seek assessment for a diagnosis. Further information about asking questions to screen for potential brain injury is in **Responsibility 3**, **Appendix 8**.

USING AN ECOMAP IN COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT

An ecomap is a useful tool to identify protective factors for victim survivors. The ecomap (**Responsibility 8**, **Appendix 15**) can act as a visual tool for both you and a victim survivor to identify social and personal relationships that may enhance safety and lessen the risk of further harm. This can also be used in Intermediate Assessment

IDENTIFYING RELEVANT INFORMATION ABOUT A PERPETRATOR'S CIRCUMSTANCES

A perpetrator's circumstances can be relevant to inform your determination of the level of risk, as well as your risk management and safety planning actions. This section provides in table form detailed information about identifying information relevant to a perpetrator's circumstances. An ecomap tool can also be used to identify the connections and use of services of a perpetrator to also identify services and organisations that may hold relevant information for risk assessment and risk management.

DETERMINING THE PERPETRATOR/ PREDOMINANT AGGRESSOR AND MISIDENTIFICATION

Correctly identifying perpetrators of family violence is a critical component of risk assessment and risk management. Incorrect identification has serious implications for the safety and wellbeing of victim survivors in multiple and compounding ways. This section provides guidance on how to properly identify the predominant aggressor and how to respond to perpetrators who falsely report that they are experiencing family violence. It includes a number of factors that can assist you to assess for the correct identification of the perpetrator.

The *Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines* also provide information on rectification of misidentification.

TOOLS

Responsibility 3, **Appendix 7** contains the Child Assessment Tool. Note, young people who are closer to adulthood may be asked questions in the Adult Comprehensive Assessment Tool if you believe it is appropriate for their age, developmental stage and individual circumstances.

Responsibility 7, **Appendix 11** contains the Comprehensive Assessment Tool as a stand-alone template.

Responsibility 7, **Appendix 12** contains a genogram template. It includes basic and intersectional genogram symbols and guidance on how to develop a genogram.

Responsibility 7, **Appendix 13** contains the questions from the Comprehensive Assessment Tool with a table of practice guidance about each question, including some of the common presentations for people who identify as Aboriginal or belonging to a diverse community.

Responsibility 8, **Appendix 15** contains the ecomap template which can be used to help identify protective factors.

RESPONSIBILITY 8: COMPREHENSIVE RISK MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY PLANNING

Guidance in **Responsibility 8** should be used when family violence has been established and a comprehensive risk assessment has been completed for an adult, child or young person. It will assist specialist family violence practitioners working with victim survivors who are adults, children and young people.

Professionals required to have knowledge of **Responsibility 8** should be able to: understand and apply all guidance on each of the previous responsibilities; confidently and competently plan and undertake a range of risk management activities with victim survivors; actively monitor family violence risk and respond to changes in risk levels; and proactively share and gather information on family violence risk.

Comprehensive risk management is the process of responding to identified family violence risk. It includes developing, monitoring and actioning safety plans and risk management activities with victim survivors. It also includes a focus on ongoing review and assessment (see also **Responsibility 9**) to respond to the dynamic nature of risk, and collaborative information sharing to understand risk/s from the perpetrator.

This chapter builds on the guidance on safety planning in **Responsibility 4**, with additional guidance relating to:

... Safety planning in an emergency, in the home, when not ready to leave, when leaving and post-separation

... Engaging with the justice system

... Providing appropriate risk management for Aboriginal people, or people who identify as belonging to a diverse community

... Providing appropriate risk management for children and young people.

DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The risk management process should respond appropriately to the assessed level of risk, the form of violence that is occurring, as well as likelihood/timing of risk. This section provides guidance on how to develop a risk management plan, including working with the victim survivor to understand practical and structural barriers they face and to increase protective factors. It also includes further detailed considerations about protective factors and explains how an ecomap can be used to support identification of these factors.

Responsibility 8 outlines key considerations for risk management when: initial contact is limited (including when you believe the victim survivor is in immediate danger); post-separation violence has occurred; no separation is planned or the victim survivor does not want to leave; or the victim survivor is not ready to engage or not ready for assistance.

This section also guides you on approaches when you believe the victim survivor is at serious risk and requires immediate protection and that the victim survivor and/ or their children (where applicable) may be seriously harmed by the perpetrator.

SAFETY PLANS

Safety planning involves discussing with a victim survivor what actions you can take or coordinate with other services to manage risk from the perpetrator and meet their needs and documenting the discussion outcomes.

This section provides guidance on how to use the Comprehensive Safety Plan template and lists important tips for safety planning in different scenarios (for emergencies, in the family home and leaving the family home). There is also detailed information about access to money and financial security, technological safety, transport and routines, and informing people and organisations.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

When developing risk management strategies with the victim survivor, identify, work with and advocate for effective and timely responses from justice and statutory bodies. This section provides information about family violence intervention orders and the role of Victoria Police, Courts Services Victoria and Corrections Victoria.

SAFETY PLANS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and young people affected by family violence are victim survivors in their own right, with unique experiences of family violence and its impacts. While children and young people's safety and wellbeing is linked to the safety and wellbeing of the adult victim survivor (usually the mother), they may also have differing safety and wellbeing needs. Where appropriate, a child or young person may need their own safety plan. An adult victim survivor should be aware of any safety plan that is developed for a child or young person.

Much of the information in this section is adapted from the document prepared by the Department of Health and Human Services, "Assessing children and young people experiencing family violence". It includes information and a table that outlines considerations for safety planning with children and young people including guidance for age and stage appropriate approaches.

RISK MANAGEMENT FOR AN ADOLESCENT WHO IS USING FAMILY VIOLENCE

Adolescents who use family violence may also be victim survivors of family violence and interventions need to explore and address this. This section explains how adolescents using family violence require a holistic and therapeutic risk management response with a high level of collaboration between services.

INCLUSIVE PRACTICE AND APPLYING AN INTERSECTIONAL LENS WHEN MANAGING RISK

Applying an intersectional analysis lens when managing risk means understanding that a person may experience a range of structural inequalities, barriers and discrimination throughout their life and that these experiences will impact on their experience of family violence, how they manage their risk and safety and their access to risk management services and responses.

This guide outlines some additional risk management considerations for:

... Aboriginal victim survivors

... Victim survivors from culturally, linguistically diverse and faith communities

... Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans and gender diverse, Intersex or Queer (LGBTIQ) victim survivors

... Older victim survivors

... Victim survivors with a disability

... Victim survivors with mental health conditions

... Victim survivors living in rural and regional communities.

TOOLS

Responsibility 4, **Appendix 10** contains a template safety plan that can be used directly with older children or young people.

Responsibility 8, **Appendix 14** contains the (Adult) Comprehensive Safety Plan template.

Responsibility 8, **Appendix 15** contains the ecomap template which can be used to help identify protective factors.

RESPONSIBILITY 9: CONTRIBUTE TO COORDINATED AND COLLABORATIVE RISK MANAGEMENT

Guidance in **Responsibility 9** supports all professionals to understand their role of coordinated risk management and ongoing collaborative risk assessment and management as an integral part of family violence responses. It will enable you to identify the processes required for effective multi-agency collaboration and risk management.

Where engaged, specialist family violence practitioners will provide leadership of coordinated risk management, monitoring of risk and collaborative action planning.

COORDINATED RISK MANAGEMENT IN STRUCTURED PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT

You should continue to use Structured Professional Judgement to inform your approach to determining seriousness of risk, including through coordinated and collaborative management and ongoing risk assessment. **Responsibility 9** explains how each element of Structured Professional Judgement can be considered collaboratively with other professionals who contribute their knowledge and expertise to the assessment process.

This section also outlines how you can collaborate with a victim survivor through a person-centred approach. It is critical that the victim survivor feels supported, informed and has agency of decision making regarding their options wherever possible, to support effective engagement and outcomes. Particularly, this section stresses the importance of the victim survivor understanding the dynamic nature of risk and how it can change quickly, as well as discussing if they have any issues, concerns or scenarios where they believe risk might escalate.

WHAT IS COORDINATED RISK MANAGEMENT?

Coordinated risk management is when multiple professionals and organisations act together to assess risk and plan to mitigate family violence risks for victim survivors.

Guidance in **Responsibility 9** includes a table describing four key risk management components that are part of a coordinated response:

... Monitoring of risk and safety

... Facilitate engagement of support services

... Maintain perpetrator visibility and action interventions

... Undertake safety planning.

It also lays out the continuum of coordination or collaboration approaches, from 'practice autonomy' to 'integration'.

CONTRIBUTING TO COLLABORATIVE RISK MANAGEMENT

Your role in liaising with other key services will depend on the professionals or services involved in risk management. **Responsibility 9** describes different approaches to coordinated risk management, and your role, responsibilities and required actions within that approach.

COORDINATION OF RISK MANAGEMENT

This section of the guide focuses on different modes of coordinated risk management. It explains how specialist family violence practitioners will often lead and conduct case coordination to draw on the collective wisdom of multiple professionals and services. This section also outlines a professional's responsibilities within a multi-agency coordinated approach to risk management.

The structure and role of 'Risk Assessment and Management Panels' or RAMPs to improve responses to serious threats to victim survivors of family violence is also explained here.
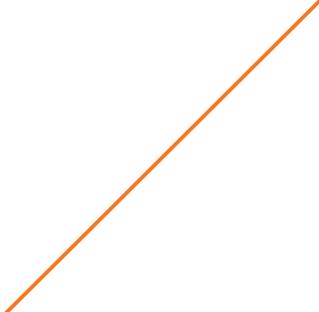
RESPONSIBILITY 10: FAMILY VIOLENCE RISK: AN ONGOING AND COLLABORATIVE MULTI-AGENCY PROCESS

Due to the dynamic nature of family violence, family violence risk assessment and management is a continuous process. The aim of professionals, services and organisations working together is to understand family violence risk and undertake joint risk management strategies for the victim survivor. This guidance describes what good practice in multi-agency responses looks like and emphasises the need for system-level collaboration (supported by organisational policies), rather than just depending on collaboration at an individual professional level.

SYSTEM-LEVEL COLLABORATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Professionals and services should understand their role in responding to family violence and how their service/organisation participates in and contributes to a broader network of services responding to family violence.

Services and organisations have a responsibility to work jointly to address family violence risk and undertake family violence risk assessment, risk management, planning and review. This section further describes the expectations for service-level collaboration and development.

THE ROLE OF SPECIALIST FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES

This section outlines the role that specialist family violence services have in: strengthening the identification of family violence, referral pathways, bringing professionals and services together and promoting a shared understand and commitment to family violence risk assessment and management.