

WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Children/young people were present at 46.7% of all family violence police call outs in the 2022–2023 period in Gippsland. This is higher than the state average of 30%.

Children are uniquely impacted by family violence, and can be impacted even if they are not physically present at incidents of family violence.

The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework (Victoria's Risk Assessment Framework), notes that there are specific risk factors which relate to a child's circumstances which indicate that family violence may be present at home, these are:

- **A history of professional and/or statutory intervention.** A history of involvement by Child Protection, youth justice, mental health or other professional may indicate the presence of family violence risk, including that family violence has escalated to the level where the child requires intervention or other service support.
- **Change in behaviour, not explained by other causes.** A change in the behaviour of a child that cannot be explained by other causes may indicate presence of family violence or an escalation of risk of harm from family violence for the child or other family members.
- **Child is a victim of other forms of harm.** Children's exposure to family violence may occur within an environment of polyvictimisation. Child victims of family violence are also particularly vulnerable to further harm from opportunistic perpetrators outside the family, such as harassment, grooming and physical or sexual assault.

(MARAM Evidenced Based Risk Factors – Foundational Knowledge Guides).

Professionals should be aware of the factors mentioned above and ensure they report suspected family violence.

Professionals who work with children or young people may also receive disclosures.



DISCLOSURES

A child or young person's disclosure is rarely straightforward and they can disclose abuse in several ways. Many of the ways children and young people disclose abuse are indirect or accidental. Some of the things to be aware of are:

- Changing their behaviour or by making ambiguous verbal statements. For example, a child or young person might suddenly refuse to attend the house of a previously loved relative, or could begin saying and doing sexual things that are inappropriate for their age.
- Older children may indirectly attempt to disclose or cope with their abuse through risk-taking behaviours such as self-harming, suicidal behaviour and disordered eating.
- Some children and young people may disclose when asked or after participating in an intervention or education program such as Respectful Relationships.
- Others may initially deny that they have been abused if asked directly, or say that they forget, only to disclose later.
- Some will disclose directly to an adult they trust.

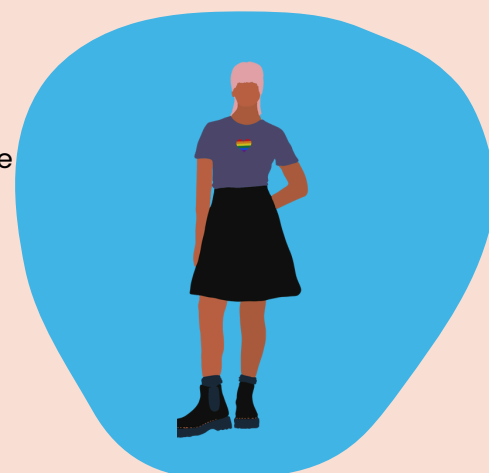


RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES

Responding to disclosures requires empathy and believing the child/young person on their first disclosure. Many children/young people are accused of making up stories, which makes them reluctant to disclose again.

The Department of Human Services recommends that if you receive a disclosure you:

- Give the child or young person your full attention.
- Maintain a calm appearance.
- Don't be afraid of saying the "wrong" thing.
- Reassure the child or young person it is right to tell.
- Accept the child or young person will disclose only what is comfortable and recognise the bravery/strength of the child for talking about something that is difficult.
- Let the child or young person take his or her time.
- Let the child or young person use his or her own words.
- Don't make promises you can't keep.
- Tell the child or young person what you plan to do next.
- Do not confront the perpetrator.



Children and Young People told us through the 'I Believe You Report' that if an adult suspects something is wrong at home that they want to be asked questions such as:

- You have seemed distracted lately, do you want to discuss anything that's happening at home?
- You haven't been in school lately, what has been happening for you?
- You have seemed really tired lately, is something going on at home?

It may take time for the child/young person to disclose, so open the lines of communication regularly.

REFERRALS

All referrals need to go to your local Orange Door (unless Child Protection is indicated). The Orange Door will determine whether a Family Violence or Family Services response (or both) will best assist the family.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Family Violence services assist the family to develop a:

- Risk assessment and risk management
- Safety planning
- Case planning
- Coordination of services Referrals
- Therapeutic Support

The aim is to manage safety and wellbeing of the family.

FAMILY SERVICES

Family Services aims to promote the safety, stability and development of vulnerable children, young people, and their families through:

- Risk assessment & risk management
- Building parental capacity to support their child's wellbeing
- Developing an individualised child & family action plan to determine the goals of intervention
- Referrals to therapeutic support, parenting programs and other services as required.

Providing early intervention to children as early as possible has shown to have the most significant impact on reducing the effects of family violence on both a child/young person's development and physical and mental health.