

# Working with perpetrators of family violence to reduce risk to children

Tip sheet for child protection practitioners

## OFFICIAL

*Note: This document is currently being reviewed to align with MARAM framework – working with adults using family violence and will be updated in early 2022.*

## Conducting a risk assessment

Regularly assess risk to the child and adult victim survivor by seeking, sharing, sorting and storing information and evidence, which informs your risk assessment. The SAFER risk assessment includes MARAM risk assessment and risk ratings.

Seek information from multiple sources (interviews with all parties; child protection history; review of the L17 Portal, police, MARAM assessments from agency partners; and other relevant services) about:

- **the perpetrator parent's functioning across multiple domains** using the Four P's model:
  - predisposition (background)
  - precipitators (triggers, including drug and alcohol, mental health, socio-economic/cultural factors);
  - perpetuating (thoughts/behaviour, attitudes to the adult victim survivor and parenting that maintain the problem); and
  - protective factors (supports, strengths, any risk reducing strategies)
- all risk factors - static (historical, strong predictive value) versus dynamic (amenable to change).

## Purpose of engagement

Perpetrator engagement needs to occur in conjunction with engagement with the adult and child/ren victim survivors. It should focus on:

- keeping the adult and child/ren victim survivors safe and promoting the child's wellbeing and development
- working in partnership with the adult victim survivor to keep the child safe and strengthen the relationship between the child and adult victim survivor
- enhancing the assessment of risk posed by the perpetrator including understanding patterns of behaviour and coercive control and predicting the likelihood of future violence to reduce risk
- service collaboration including working in partnership with Victoria Police, the Courts, family violence services, family services and the universal service system to hold perpetrators to account and keep children and the adult victim survivor safe.

## Process of engagement with perpetrators: following the SAFER children framework

SEEKING, SHARING, SORTING AND STORE	<b>Step 1: Seek, share, sort and store information and evidence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review CRIS records for all parties, including parents and any other children</li> <li>Review the L17 Portal to obtain a pattern of prior family violence incidents and perpetrator's relationship to victim(s)</li> <li>Review criminal history check for relevant adults, including the perpetrator</li> <li>Obtain any information regarding corrections involvement</li> <li>Review any assessments, including MARAM assessment by agency partners, treatment or medical reports for all parties</li> <li>Check the perpetrator's involvement with Correction Victoria services, men's services and other services</li> <li>Check the Victim survivor's involvement with specialist family violence and other services</li> <li>Check children's attendance at school/childcare/maternal child health or treatment services</li> <li>Share information via the provisions in the CYFA, the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS), which allow information to be shared without consent where appropriate (such as related to safety of a child or risk posed by a perpetrator of family violence).</li> <li>Sort information and evidence according to the essential information categories and factors. Remember the high-risk family violence factors appear in orange in CRIS – these are the factors associated with high risk of the victim being killed or almost killed.</li> <li>Store the information gathered in the 'S' tab in case practice in CRIS and use the information and evidence to complete the analysis in the 'A' tab.</li> </ul>
	<b>Step 2: Prepare for initial visit/interview with the child and adult victim survivor first</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the family violence essential information category and prompt tool to support a thorough interview and then complete the MARAM risk ratings and risk assessment or review risk assessment in CRIS.</li> <li>Where possible, plan and schedule initial visit/interview with the adult victim survivor and child victim survivor (unannounced visits can increase risk to adult victim survivors, especially if the perpetrator resides there).</li> <li>If unannounced visit is unavoidable, coordinate a joint visit with Victoria Police.</li> <li>If the perpetrator is present, DO NOT attempt to interview the child or adult victim survivor; focus on the perpetrator, explain the reason for the visit, arrange an alternative time to visit, preferably at a DFFH office or police station. Explain to both parents that separate interviews are part of the process.</li> </ul>
	<b>Step 3: Interview the adult victim survivor (consider joint visit with specialist FV service/police)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek the adult victim survivor's perspective on: their relationship with the perpetrator; their experience of family violence (note patterns, contexts of risk escalation); the children's experience of family violence; impact of family violence on their relationship with their children and/or capacity to parent; their wishes for the relationship and the violence; and protective factors, their own self-assessment of risk.</li> <li>Explore their assessment of current safety and situational variables that increase/decrease safety.</li> <li>Develop a safety plan and provide information regarding available support services.</li> <li>If serious risk factors are identified, take action to address the immediate safety needs of the child and adult victim survivor. This may include assisting the adult victim survivor and child to seek emergency accommodation and other supports.</li> </ul>

- Obtain their permission to interview the children before interviewing the perpetrator.

#### Step 4: Interview of the Perpetrator

Consider worker safety in planning interview/visit – including location and who should be present.

Advise the adult victim survivor of the interview, noting further safety planning may be required.

- Seek the perpetrator's perspective on their use of violence, focus on most recent incident, identify family violence risk factors (noting any high risk factors; invite them to provide as much detail as possible).
- Use the MARAM prompt tool to assist.
- Balance seeking information with challenging elements of the perpetrator's narrative (avoid confrontational style but challenge to ensure you are not colluding with violence-supporting beliefs).
- Maintain a parenting lens when interviewing the perpetrator. Being a parent can motivate change.
- Seek the perpetrator's perspective on the relationship (remain/separate?), the impact of violence on the adult victim survivor and the relationship between the child and adult victim survivor.
- Seek the perpetrator's understanding of impact of the family violence on each child.
- Explore the role of substance use, mental health, culture and socio-economic factors and how they relate to any patterns on the perpetrator's use of violence and or controlling behaviours.
- Explore the perpetrator's attitude towards any court orders or treatment services.
- Explore the perpetrator's willingness to work with services to address their use of violence and what they would hope to achieve (acknowledgement of concerns and motivation to change).

**DO NOT disclose any information provided by the adult victim survivor or the child victim survivor – focus on reported concerns, known history or the perpetrator's disclosures**

- Conclude by first setting expectations based on content of interview (transparency) – for example advise you will be in contact and what you expect of them.
- Contact the adult victim survivor to advise you have spoken to perpetrator, inform of any concerns for their or children's safety (if perpetrator became agitated, terminated the interview or made threats).

*In consultation with the adult victim survivor, consider need to report to police any matters of concern*

**Complete the risk assessment or review risk assessment which includes the MARAM risk assessment and risk rating and consult with SCPP-FV/ FVCP/ SFV worker or PP/PL**