

Elizabeth
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FACT SHEET FOR WORKERS #1

7th September 2006

SUBJECT: WESTERN FAMILY VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIP: INTEGRATED SERVICES FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

CHANGES TO THE FAMILY VIOLENCE SYSTEM

From July 2006 women and children affected by family violence in the Western sub-region will be supported by a new consortium of local agencies including Women's Health West, Western Region Health Centre, Elizabeth Hoffman House, in association with The Gathering Place and Mackillop Family Services. This integrated multi-agency approach will provide a range of support services, counselling and group work programs. Better communication between agencies will ensure that women receive an appropriate, gendered response, regardless of the pathway by which they seek assistance.

A parallel initiative arising from the government's reform agenda has been the funding of Men's Behaviour Change Programs to be implemented by another consortium of agencies in the Western sub-region. These include Djerrivarrh Health Service, Relationships Australia and Lifeworks as part of a larger consortium. These organisations will be invited to participate as stakeholders in the Western Family Violence Integration Committee.

The implementation of the Integrated Family Violence Services System (IFVSS) is part of the State Government's strategy to reduce the incidence of family violence, the leading contributor to death, disability and illness for women aged 15-44 in Victoria.

BACKGROUND

The State-wide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence established in 2002 as part of the Women's Safety Strategy, found that fragmented services for women and children experiencing family violence were operating independently, resulting in an inconsistent approach. Research shows that when the police, justice system, housing and community services work together, they provide a more effective and consistent response to family violence.

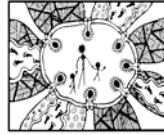
SERVICE INTEGRATION

Police system

The introduction of the *Police Code of Practice for Police Response and Investigation of Family Violence* (August 2004) shifts the focus from women (and children) initiated responses to family violence, toward a system where police are more accountable for women's safety. For example, Victorian Police must now provide options in family violence situations including referral opportunities and obtaining intervention orders.

Legal system

Changes to the legal system in the West include the introduction of Family Violence Court Services which operate at Sunshine, Melbourne and Werribee courts providing specialist Family Violence Magistrates, Police Prosecutors and Applicant Support Workers.



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Community sector

Historically the judicial system (police and courts) and family violence services have worked towards the same goals but largely in isolation from each other and in very different ways. The service integration model aims to encourage a nexus between these parallel systems by:

- Increasing the number and consistency of entry and referral points
- Introducing a common risk assessment tool
- Developing a core set of service delivery principles
- More effectively monitoring and evaluating processes

INTEGRATION IN THE WESTERN SUB-REGION

Family violence cannot be addressed in isolation so the Western Integrated Family Violence Partnership (WIFVP) is adopting a multilayered approach involving not only consortium members, but also complementary partners and the broader service system. This inclusive approach means that agencies and services who may not view family violence as their core business will be supported and encouraged to become more responsive to the needs of women and children experiencing family violence.

WIFVP consortium members already provide the majority of funded services and will work together to provide them as follows:

Women's Health West

Leadership Service Integration and Planning

- Terms of Reference will be developed by the Western Integrated Family Violence Committee (WIFVC)
- A Project Co-ordinator will be appointed to support the work of this committee
- Annual strategic planning and review forums will inform the operational plan and priorities for the Project Co-ordinator

Community Education and Prevention

A Family Violence Prevention Steering Group will determine community education and prevention activities for implementation and will be linked to the priorities of the WIFVC.

Family Violence and Court Outreach

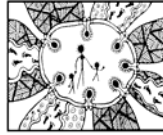
The Integrated Family Violence Outreach Services will provide client-centred case management services incorporating risk assessment and safety planning, crisis support, and court support. The outreach team will work with other services to provide an integrated response to women and their children experiencing and escaping family violence.

Regional After Hours Outreach Support Service

The integrated model will provide continuity and follow-up by expanding and building on existing after-hours service provided by Women's Health West. The After Hours Outreach Support Service will operate seven days a week and 24 hours over the weekend across the Western Metropolitan Sub-region. A face to face service will be provided at a number of locations within the region to enhance the referral pathways. The Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service will assess and refer clients to the After Hours Outreach Support Service.

Intensive Case Management for high risk and complex needs families

The new Intensive Case Management model will be based on the existing model currently implemented by Women's Health West. Features of this approach include fostering partnerships with police and other services to identify eligible women, customising responses to specific client's needs, safety plans and actively engaging support networks. The model has been developed to support the needs of women and children to achieve long term safety, engage proactively with the service system, access appropriate social networks, overcome barriers to services and address the issues resulting from exposure to chronic and extreme violence and abuse.



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Linking to the Private Rental Market

Based on the successful Women's Health West pilot program, the Private Rental Brokerage assists women to enter and sustain private rental and in doing so encourages independence from homelessness services.

Children's Counselling and Support

Women's Health West will employ a Children's Counselling and Support Worker to address children's family violence counselling needs through a partnership model with specialist children's services. The Children's Counselling and Support Worker will provide specialist consultation, information, advocacy and referral, community education, networking and awareness raising and will engage in targeted group work in collaboration with other specialist providers.

For more information contact Women's Health West on 9689 9588.

MacKillop Family Services

Administration of Women's Support Group and Recovery Brokerage Funds

Agencies currently supplying group support and recovery programs will be able to apply for interim financial support through the Brokerage Fund to be administered by MacKillop Family Services. The Groupwork Brokerage Reference Group will be set up to develop program guidelines to be endorsed by the Partnership and promote the integration of groupwork provided by agencies.

For more information contact MacKillop Family Services on 9689 4799.

Elizabeth Hoffman House

Indigenous Outreach, Counselling and Support Services

Elizabeth Hoffman House in association with The Gathering Place is developing an appropriate service model for Indigenous outreach, counselling and support services to be located in the Western sub-region for Aboriginal women and children affected by family violence.

For more information contact Elizabeth Hoffman House on 9482 5744.

Western Region Health Centre

Women's Counselling and Support Services

Western Region Health Centre (WRHC) will work in collaboration with other community health services to provide individual counselling for women. A Working Group of practitioners will be established by WRHC to further develop the service model across the sub-region to be endorsed by the Partnership.

For more information contact Western Region Health Centre on 8398 4171.

MOVING FORWARD

Most service delivery components of the Integrated Family Violence Service System will be operational on the 1 July 2006 and new components will become operational over the next few months.

The Western Integrated Family Violence Committee will be set up as the forum for both the Partnership and many other stakeholders to work together towards the goal of service integration across the sub-region. The Government has acknowledged that implementation of these reforms will take time and that systems will need to be developed to enable integration.