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| Overnight Safety Plans |

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| Further guidance to support approval and review processes |

# Purpose of plans

The improved safety and supervision requirements are part of the *Program requirements for residential care in Victoria* and outline expectations of residential care providers to proactively respond to the care needs of young people in residential care overnight including:

* a stand-up staff member in all four bed homes overnight; and
* every residential care home is subject to an area level Overnight Safety Plan.

This document supports Area Directors and Senior Managers at Community Service Organisations (CSOs) with the approval and review of Overnight Safety Plans, developed by residential care providers. It does not replace or change existing policy expectations outlined in the program requirements or Overnight Safety Plan template.

## Key requirements

* Every residential care home must be subject to an Overnight Safety Plan including unfunded or contingency placements. Please note there are no exceptions.
* As part of the Overnight Safety Plan, providers are required to outline the ‘overnight response’ to provide additional staffing support when necessary.
* Key requirements of the overnight response include:
	+ Additional staffing support is provided within 30 minutes once decided this is needed.
	+ Additional staffing response is provided by experienced staff familiar with residential care homes.
	+ A presumption that staff will pick-up and transport young people home during evening hours, unless this is not the safest or fastest method. If an alternative safe and timely response is warranted it must be at no cost to the young person.
* Young people should be involved in safety planning, as appropriate to their age and development, and are to be aware of the strategies in place to support them to return home safely.
* Young people’s sense of connection and belonging to the residential home and continuity of care should be supported as much as possible.
* Consideration needs to be given to the dynamics in residential care homes subject to the plan and take into account individual plans (for example, behaviour support plans), however it doesn’t replace existing individual case management and planning processes.
* There may be circumstances where additional staffing is required above the overnight response, a portion of which is provided for within the complex RP3 level of funding. The indicators to be considered by the residential care provider in deciding when to activate this support are outlined in the safety and supervision requirements.

# Approval and review

* Overnight Safety Plans will be approved by the most senior CSO manager in the area and the respective department Area Director.
* Every plan must be formally reviewed and signed on a quarterly basis by the CSO senior manager and respective department Area Director.
* Consideration needs to be given to the time required to have the Overnight Safety Plan finalised prior to the commencement of the upcoming quarter. Providers need to consider timeframes when submitting plans to the department.
* Variations to the plans can occur outside the quarterly review. For example, in response to Major Impact incidents, where changes are required to the area-based approach or strategies are needed for an individual home for a period of time (i.e. house dynamics change).

# Best practice guidance

Overnight Safety Plans should:

* Be succinct and action orientated (how, when, who and what) and easy to navigate.
* Clearly articulate how and when additional staffing will be mobilised overnight, either to the home or to support the transport of young people home. This includes the collection of young people who are missing overnight.
* Not assume additional funding or rely on After Hours Child Protection Emergency Services for a response, who should only provide outreach when the execution of a statutory delegation is required (further guidance on the role of After Hours Child Protection Emergency Services is below).
* Be developed with a focus on longevity, only requiring changes where new or adapted strategies are required.
* Outline additional *strategies* at the house level to meet the care, safety and supervision needs of a specific home, where this is required over and above the strategies outlined by the CSO to provide an overnight response of additional staffing when required.

## Additional considerations

* *Prevention:* To promote overnight safety and supervision of young people in residential care there needs to be a focus on prevention and early intervention and not just on responding to crises or incidents as they occur.
* *Missing from care:* Young people outside the residential care home overnight are at greater risk to themselves and others including engaging in offending behaviour, risk of sexual exploitation and other forms of victimisation when out of the home.
* *Reducing criminalisation:* There is a need to reduce unnecessary contact with the criminal justice system for young people in residential care. Responses to incidents should only involve police when appropriate.
* *Behaviour support planning: Y*oung people with behaviours of concern have the right to receive individualised and effective support that maximises their wellbeing, rights and reduces their need to use these behaviours.
* *Voice of the child: Y*oung people need to be provided with the opportunity to consent, participate in and have their views taken into account as part of care planning processes.

## Role of After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service

The After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service responds to situations where there is immediate risk to the safety of a child or young person. Residential home staff should consult with their on-call prior to calling the After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service to ensure that all actions that can be taken by the CSO have been undertaken and that the following information is available:

* The name, age and current address of the child that you are calling about.
* What is happening now to the child that places them at immediate risk of harm?

Matters or incidents that can be managed by the CSO or where information can reasonably be expected to be provided during business hours should wait till then. There may be other circumstances where contact with the After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service is necessary to ensure the safety of a child or young person. If a CSO is in doubt about whether a situation involving a child or young person is serious or not, err on the side of caution and call the After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service.

Since October 2017, a direct telephone line has been created for agencies to call when requesting an urgent warrant for a case contracted client. The After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service will decide whether the warrant is applied for or not. Operating guidelines have been distributed by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare to relevant CSO and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

# Quick guide to support approval of Overnight Safety Plans

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| Section | Prompts |
| Preparing for approval | Has consideration been given to the following: Safety and supervision needs of individual young people and dynamics within each residential care home.Client incidents that have occurred over the last quarter.Any variations that occurred in the previous quarter.Any anticipated stressors or issues for the following three month period.Consultation with Child Protection.Consultation with Placement Coordination Unit. |
| Overnight Safety Plan details(page four) | Is the following clear: * How many and which properties are subject to the plan.
* What quarter/three month period the plan covers.
* Date the plan was first approved.
* Date the plan was last reviewed.
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| Section one: Agency/CSO level | Is the following clear:How and when additional staffing will be mobilisedHow and when young people will be transported homeHow and when additional staffing support within the complex level of support will be implemented above the overnight response.How responses or strategies outlined will be triaged by the provider.Are the following requirements satisfied: * Additional staffing capacity can be provided within 30 minutes with consideration to the geographic coverage and number of homes.
* There is a commitment that staff will collect young people outside the home overnight when it is required and safe to do so.
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| Further information  | The Overnight Safety Plan template does not specify what information the CSO needs to include in this field, however, this could be used to demonstrate: How young people have been involved in safety planning and informed of the strategies available for them to return home at night (highly recommended as this is a key requirement of overnight safety planning).Actions to prevent young people from going missing from care and strategies to promote their safety if this does occur (for example, provision of mobile phones). Further pertinent information about the on-call arrangements or overnight response. |
| Section two: House level | Has consideration been given to the overnight care, safety and supervision requirements of children and young people in the home and overall house dynamic? Where the needs of a particular home are adequately met through the strategies identified in section one (Agency/CSO level), no further information is required.Where the house level section is used, does the information provided outline strategies to address the identified needs or issues? Where this information is descriptive, consideration should be given to including this in another section of the plan or individual behaviour support plans.  |
| Signing  | Is the plan dated by the agency and department. |

Following approval, signed Overnight Safety Plans are to be returned to the residential care provider and made available within the residential care home.

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