

every child every chance

a good childhood is in everyone's best interests

Implementation plan - strategic framework for Family Services



A Victorian
Government
initiative



Implementation plan - strategic framework for Family Services

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1. Introduction

The implementation of *A new strategic framework for Family Services 2006* represents a significant shift in terms of culture, practice and service delivery for Family Services and the Child and Family Services system. To enable this new vision for Family Services to be realised, appropriate guidelines, protocols, strategies, training and other supports will be developed and introduced in the months prior to the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*, and the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*, coming into effect.

Consultations and a series of collaborative workshops on the Framework and Standards for Family Services during May–August 2006 highlighted a range of challenges and opportunities for Family Services, which this implementation plan is designed to address. These include:

1. Creating a stronger focus on the best interests of children and young people;
2. Targeting more vulnerable children, young people and families through integrated Family Services (and enabling an earlier intervention approach);
3. Establishing clearer governance arrangements and mutual accountabilities for the outcomes of clients at the State, Region and Sub-Regional Catchment levels to support the reforms;
4. Implementing the Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Teams (Child FIRST) in such a way that supports greater accessibility to Family Services to those in greatest need, a stronger capacity to manage demand, shared approaches to decision-making, improved information sharing and greater coordination at the catchment level;
5. Developing a consistent approach to child and family action planning;
6. Strengthening the relationship between Child Protection and Family Services;
7. Ensuring services are responsive and respectful of cultural and Aboriginal specific needs;
8. Developing a consistent quality culture across Family Services including facilitating agency compliance with (and continuous improvement against) the Standards and the registration process;
9. Development of data collection and analysis tools and processes; and
10. Evaluating the reforms in such a way that:
 - enables outcomes for children, young people and families to be effectively measured;
 - facilitates reflective practice thereby improving the wider implementation process, supporting a dynamic, change-oriented approach, as well as identifying service delivery barriers and gaps, and best practice developments.

To support this, a partnership approach between DHS, centrally and regionally, and the Family Services sector will collaboratively develop guidance to ensure consistency in practice across the state. Flexibility and innovation at the catchment level will be promoted by the core partners of Child and Family Service Alliances, taking the lead in developing appropriate guidelines to respond to the needs of vulnerable children, young people and families within their catchments.

This implementation plan provides a road map indicating key pieces of work that are needed to develop policy, guidelines, and training support in order to operationalise the framework. It purposely builds on the foundation of good work within the Family Services sector, regions, and the advances already made by effective Family Services networks. Specifically, this document overviews implementation requirements for:

- implementation of the framework;
- introduction of the standards;
- an evaluation process; and
- Learning and development requirements.

It is intended that this document provides a high level overview of tasks that need to be completed as part of the implementation process, in a format which distinguishes tasks that need to be completed at a statewide, regional, catchment and agency level.

It by necessity concentrates on the tasks pertaining to Family Services drawn from the Strategic Framework for Family Services, and will intersect in some actions with the broader *Every Child Every Chance* implementation strategy (both at statewide and regionally), the Learning and Development Strategy, and Registration process for Community Service Organisations. It will be undertaken in coordination with these broader implementation strategies.

The Child Protection and Family Services Advisory Group will oversee the implementation plan and processes, and monitor the progress of actions detailed in the document.

2. Implementation Plans - Proposed Actions

This section provides:

- further details of the current opportunities and challenges for Family Services;
- highlights “where we want to be” as an outcome of the implementation process;
- outlines the actions required at the state, regional, catchment and agency levels in order to implement the reforms; and
- suggests the priority of each of the planned actions - whether the work needs to be completed in the short term, or can commence within a longer term time frame.

2.1 Creating a focus on best interests of children and young people

Where we are today:

Child centred/family focused approach with a focus on the family as the client.

Where we want to be:

“Best interests” focused - supporting the safety, stability and development of children and young people, and supporting positive relationships between children/young people and their parents and families - this effectively places the child/young person in the context of their family as the client for Family Services.

While this is broadly consistent with the child centred/family focussed approach currently used by Family Services, there is now a need to:

- more strongly emphasise positive outcomes for children as the main focus for Family Services interventions;
- focus on effective service responses and innovative models of service delivery to promote these outcomes for children;
- position Family Services within a continuum of a service delivery that links universal, early childhood services, and other related secondary services;
- consider a range of means to engage children and young people, and to identify and consider their wishes and needs within the context of their family circumstances; and
- broaden thinking from immediate harm to include potential for cumulative harm caused by patterns of family behaviour over a period of time.

How do we get there:

In order to support a focus on best interests of children and young people, there is a need to:

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
<p>Action 1: Finalise development and implementation of Understanding Children’s Best Interests: The Bests Interests Framework 2006. Implementation will be supported by training at the central and regional levels. The Best Interests Framework will provide an evidence-based approach to working with children that incorporates a shared language and approach. The framework will be developed to provide guidance in relation to practice with children and families.</p>	Medium term	Office for Children – statewide Child and Family Services Alliances DHS Regions
<p>Action 2: Development of common assessment and practice guides – The Best Interests Case Practice Model, and supporting specialist assessment guides to enable a consistent and integrated approach to considering the best interests of children and young people throughout the continuum of organisations involved in service delivery to children and young people.</p>	Medium term	Office for Children with the sector
<p>Action 3: Child and Family Services Alliances to work with DHS regions to operationalise the Best Interests Framework and common assessment and practice guides at the regional and catchment levels. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying gaps between current practice and new guidelines. For example, this could focus on determining the extent to which agencies perceive a focus on best interests to differ from current knowledge, practice, and behaviour and the ease or difficulty of adopting this approach, and what is required to operationalise; • determining barriers to and factors which promote implementation; • establishing strong linkages with other professionals and referral groups; and • assessing the requirements for workforce development. There will be an increasing focus on engaging children and young people in the assessment process and staff will need to encourage children and young people to participate in age and developmentally appropriate ways. 	Medium to long term	DHS regions and Child and Family Services Alliances, supported by Office for Children

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
<p>Action 4: Development of practice guidelines and materials to support child focussed practice. This should provide organisations with guidance on a range of best practice approaches to engage with and address the needs of children and young people in age and developmentally appropriate ways, in the context of the family. This may include strategies for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working directly, creatively, and therapeutically with children and young people (listening to the voice of children and young people); • considering and addressing children and young people's needs through working with parents, families and carers; and • focusing on the family as a whole to support the wellbeing, stability and development of the child or young person. 	Short to medium term	DHS regions, Alliances and agencies - supported by the Office for Children
<p>Action 5: Review of agency practice and policy documents to ensure they are consistent with the Best Interests Framework, and a casework approach that always supports the child/young person's best interests. This will assist in compliance with standards for registration.</p>	Medium term	Family Services
<p>Action 6: Development of a strategy to monitor the use of the Best Interests Framework and common assessment and guides in practice. This strategy may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using case reviews to determine understanding of the framework, utilising standards review process; • monitoring usage as part of supervision process; 	Medium term	Child Protection & Family Services Branch and Registration Reference Group Community Service Organisations

2.2 Targeting more vulnerable children, young people and families

Where we are today

Family Service Innovation Project experience, and the good practice work within the sector over many years has demonstrated the value of:

- greater responsiveness to children, young people and families with increasingly complex needs; and
- a stronger focus on earlier intervention to reduce risk factors and progression to a Child Protection response.

Where we want to be:

Family Services should primarily target vulnerable children and young people and their families, prioritising those who are:

- likely to experience greater challenges as the child or young person's development has been affected by the experience of risk factors¹ and/or cumulative harm; and/or

1. Refer to risk and protective factors in Appendix C of the Strategic Framework.

- at risk of escalating harm and therefore becoming involved with Child Protection if problems are not addressed.

The intention is to provide services to this group of clients earlier to protect children and young people and improve family functioning. Family Services should provide critical, timely and responsive services before the risks and concerns escalate and lead to Child Protection intervention.

How do we get there:

Ensuring that Family Services appropriately targets those vulnerable children, young people and families will require:

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
Action 1: Develop guidance as to when to refer to Child Protection and when to refer to Family Services. Criteria for decision-making has been identified in the Framework.	Short term	Office for Children - statewide
Action 2: Identify the key elements necessary to enable Family Services to assess and address the development, safety and stability of children, and to identify the needs of families to support this.	Medium term	Child FIRST and Family Services
Action 3: Further develop an evidence base about what is working effectively in engaging resistant families with complex needs - including exploring innovative settings for engagement and creative service models that enhance client outcomes. Development of an evidence base drawn from across the State, that can be facilitated by desk top research, statewide forums about key topics, or the creation of specific topic based working parties to locate and analyse good practice models. Child & Family Alliances, CSOs and the evaluation of the reforms all have a role. Office for Children to draw together and disseminate to sector.	Long term	Office for Children Child & Family Alliances Family Services CSOs Centre for Excellence in Child & Family Welfare
Action 4: Development of decision-making criteria to guide decisions and practice approaches for brief interventions, active holding responses and complex interventions.	Medium term	Office for Children - statewide in consultation with Family Services sector
Action 5: Development of shared criteria and protocols - at the statewide level - for assessing and prioritising clients based on need, vulnerability, risk and cumulative harm.	Short term	Office for Children Child and Family Services Alliances
Action 6: A project to review the feasibility, including benefits and implications of the Families First program being incorporated within the Family Services program and provided under the Strategic Framework for Family Services	Medium term	Office for Children CPFSAG Families First providers

2.3 Establishing clearer governance arrangements at the catchment level

Where we are now:

There are currently exemplars of the characteristics of good governance at both strategic and practice level, within the Family Services sector and between the sector and regions. These arrangements can be built on in moving towards more integrated leadership, planning, service coordination and management at the catchment level, to enable greater responsiveness to and better outcomes for children, young people and families.

Where we want to be:

Governance of the child and family service system will be characterised by activities at the statewide, regional and catchment levels. Family Services, in conjunction with regional DHS will determine the operating model for each catchment. Child and Family Alliances will be established at the catchment level and will include partners from Child FIRST, all funded Family Services, Child Protection, DHS Partnerships staff, and where capacity exists, an Aboriginal controlled family service.

Other sector representatives will be invited to participate as determined by the alliance partners. These may include organisations that provide drug and alcohol, mental health or universal and early intervention services, or other secondary services.

Alliances will have three key functions:

- undertake catchment planning;
- provide operational management; and
- coordinate service delivery at the catchment or local level.

How do we get there:

In order to support the overall operation of the Child and Family Services Alliances there is a need for:

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
Establishment of the Child and Family Services Alliance		
<p>Action 1: Building on useful existing arrangements to establish the alliance facilitation function. This will include negotiation amongst Alliance partners regarding the most appropriate organisation or organisations to facilitate the Alliance based on the individual needs of the catchment. The facilitation function will entail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordinating data collection across the Child and Family Service Alliance; • supporting and monitoring the implementation of the catchment plan; 	Short to Medium term	Child and Family Services Alliance members

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing and maintaining partnerships with other relevant sub-regional catchment networks, partnerships and services; and developing and maintaining directories for the range of child and family services and other partners of the alliance; supporting and facilitating workforce development and training. 		
Catchment Planning		
Action 2: Development of a shell template for the Child and Family Services Alliance's Catchment plan identifying key statewide elements which will then incorporate catchment specific needs and issues.	Short term	Office for Children - statewide with sector and CAFSAG
Action 3: Facilitation and support of catchment planning processes between Alliance partners to support a stronger capacity to respond to children, young people and family needs both now and into the future.	Short to medium term	DHS - regional office
<p>Action 4: Establishing appropriate participants and determine leadership of a planning group, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> representatives of Family Services with an appropriate level of decision-making authority and capacity to contribute to planning at the catchment level; representation Aboriginal service providers, parents or elders (where there is capacity); inviting other relevant service providers and consumer representation. 	Short to medium term	Family Services, with facilitation from DHS regional office
Action 5: Working mutually and respectfully with Aboriginal services to develop an Aboriginal service capacity building and mutual mentoring strategy.	Medium term	Alliance partners including Aboriginal Services
<p>Action 6: Supporting opportunities for more effective use of catchment resources to meet community needs.</p> <p>To enable this, Alliance partners will be encouraged to share information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> funding allocations; existing patterns of resource use; and client loads and complexity of clients being managed by Family Services. 	Medium term	Alliance partners, with support from DHS region
Action 7: Monitoring the impact of Child FIRST on Family Services demand and the complexity of children, young people and families accessing support.	Medium to long term	Alliance partners Office for Children - statewide and regional
Operational Management		
Action 8: Develop processes and procedures for the operation of family services systems in the catchment area.	Short to medium term	Child and Family Alliances

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
<p>Action 9: Project to identify the critical features and elements of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or formal agreement to support integrated service delivery for consideration by all Child and Family Service Alliances (and Family Service partners within the alliance), drawing on learnings from Stage 1 sites and to provide for roll-out of Stage 2 and 3 sites. Outcomes of project to be able to be adapted to the needs of individual catchments.</p> <p>Collaborative strategy to disseminate the findings and review and inform knowledge base of 'good practice'.</p>	Short term	Office for Children - statewide with Stage 1 Child FIRST sites and following on with Stage 2&3 sites Centre for Excellence Child & Family Welfare
<p>Action 10: Different alliances are likely to be at different stages of development, with some requiring initial support. Regions should play a facilitating role in bringing the partners together and assisting with the development of a shared partnership agreement or MOU, drawing on Stage 1 learnings as detailed above.</p>	Short to medium term	DHS regional offices working with Family Service Innovation Project and Family Service providers
<p>Action 11: Establishment of formal partnership and governance arrangements between key alliance partners, these should specify processes and procedures for management and prioritisation of referrals, review of cases, and mechanisms for case allocation. These operational arrangements should be formalised through MOU process.</p>	Short to medium term	Child and Family Services Alliance Partners
<p>Action 12: Consider statewide information sharing guidelines and develop protocols to guide information sharing practices at the catchment level and agency level.</p>	Short to medium term	Child and Family Services Alliances Family Services
Service Coordination		
<p>Action 13: At the catchment/regional level, determine the key linkages and referral pathways required to support integrated service delivery for children, young people and families. These linkages may include Universal services such as the Maternal and Child Health Service, early intervention programs, Education providers and secondary services focussing on mental health, substance abuse, family violence or service delivery to CALD or Aboriginal families. Including formal agreements with other service systems' intake mechanisms. This will form the basis of service coordination activities as determined by Child FIRST, Family Services, Child Protection, the Aboriginal Family Service (where capacity exists).</p>	Short to medium term	Child & Family Alliances
<p>Action 14: Facilitation of linkages with other services and sectors, to support their participation in service coordination. This will involve community education and promotion of examples good cross sectoral practice with vulnerable families, to engage the wider human services sector.</p>	Medium term	Child & Family Alliances and DHS regions
<p>Action 15: Establishing regular meetings/forums to discuss referrals, priority of access, identifying the process for allocation and review existing cases against priorities. Activities will be in line with processes and protocols developed and document in MOU, as part of the operational management section.</p>	Short term once operational	Child & Family Alliances Family Services CSOs

2.4 Implementing the Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Teams (Child FIRST)

Where we are now:

For some children, young people and families, knowing how and where to access the service system can be challenging. Professionals may also have difficulty in navigating the service system in order to refer children, young people and families to an appropriate service that will meet their needs. This difficulty has inadvertently led to the Child Protection system becoming a default point of contact for many vulnerable children and families requiring support and intervention to reduce risk and promote stability.

The Family Services Innovation Projects have successfully demonstrated the value of establishing a single, identifiable entry point in each catchment, in facilitating access to Family Services.

Where we want to be:

Establishment of an identifiable point of access to services in each catchment will support more effective service delivery to vulnerable and at risk children, young people and their families.

Child FIRST locations will establish a strong profile within the catchment or local area, with a particular focus on key professional groups and organisations.

Staff within Child FIRST will have the appropriate skills and capabilities to perform the full range of Child FIRST functions, including knowledge of the local service system and services provided by Alliance participants.

How do we get there:

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
<p>Action 1: Development of a communication strategy to build an awareness of Child FIRST, and its role and functions. Communication and awareness raising should optimally occur at a range of levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-wide through development of FACTS sheets other resources for distribution to stakeholders; • Statewide through targeted strategies for key sectors such as Police, Mental Health, Health, Family Violence etc. Further to education and communication, statewide agreements with key sectors should provide a basis and platform for catchment arrangements to build on these • Within catchments: through the Alliance facilitator and partners actively targeting the full range of universal, secondary, specialist and tertiary services which are likely to refer to Child FIRST, utilising communication tools to develop localised resources. 	Medium	<p>Office for Children - statewide</p> <p>Office for Children - statewide</p> <p>Alliance Partners with support of regional office</p>
<p>Action 2: Negotiation and agreement at the catchment level about which functions Child FIRST will perform and which will be performed by Family Services. For example:</p>	Short term	Child FIRST and Family Services Alliance Partners

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the active holding response be managed centrally or by individual agencies? • Will Child FIRST provide short term interventions? • Arrangements clearly communicated within catchment and documented as part of operational arrangements 		
<p>Action 3: Facilitation of discussion groups, working groups and issues based workshops, to be held at key points during the implementation process to enable shared problem solving and to share learnings (this will support roll-out at the state-wide level).</p>	Short term once operational	Alliance partners CPFSAAG Centre for Excellence C & FW Office for Children - statewide
<p>Action 4: Development of transitional arrangements for regions where Child FIRST is not being implemented in the first instance to provide clarity about acceptance of referrals under legislative provisions</p>	Short term	Regional offices in consultation with Office for Children Family Services

2.5 Developing a consistent approach to child and family action planning

Where we are now:

Family Services currently use a range of practice approaches when working with families, however, the development with the family of agreed plans may not occur in all situations.

Where we want to be:

For those vulnerable children, young people and families receiving case work services, a child and family action plan will be developed in consultation with the family and other services involved. A child and family action plan identifies the objectives and goals of intervention and the roles and responsibilities of the child, young person and family and each of the organisations providing services to the family. It intends the range of secondary and specialist services involved with a family will act in a coordinated and complementary manner. This will support and enable case workers to be focused on achieving and measuring improved outcomes for children, young people and families.

How do we get there:

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
<p>Action 1: Prepare guidelines for the implementation of child and family actions plans for all families receiving Family Services. This will guide practice in line with the “Service delivery approaches for Family Services Section 4” as set out in the Strategic Framework for Family Services</p>	Short term	Office for Children - statewide in consultation with the Family services sector
<p>Action 2: Implementation of child and family actions plans</p>	Medium	Family Services CSOs

2.6 Strengthening the relationship between Child Protection and Family Services

Where we are now:

There is a lack of a consistent and joint approach between Child Protection and Family Services (including guidelines, protocols and training) for considering the best interests of children and young people, and in supporting families as circumstances change. Child Protection and Family Services are often managing the same vulnerable children, young people and families, and the very successful introduction of Community Based Child Protection as a component of the Family Support Innovation Project model has demonstrated the impact of collaboration in strengthened relationships, and improved assessment and support to vulnerable children, young people and families

Where we want to be:

There is a need to promote stronger relationships between Family Services and Child Protection services, enabling Child Protection and Family Services to provide support and advice to each other and allowing for referrals between services.

Leadership in Child Protection and Family Services will promote and model the value of collaborative relationships in supporting vulnerable families. This will demonstrate a culture of shared responsibility to clients.

How do we get there:

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
Action 1: Workshop with sector and regions key elements to develop standard partnership agreements for Stage 1, and Stage 2&3 sites which provide guidance between Child FIRST and Child Protection	Short term	Office for Children Sector and regions
Action 2: Develop standard agreements inclusive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> statewide shell agreement to guide development of local agreements at subregional/regional level; protocols for referral between Child FIRST and Child Protection; role, task and requirements of the Community Based Child Protection Workers; criteria for differentiating those clients in need of a Family Services responses, from those requiring a statutory Child Protection intervention; and processes for managing disagreements/disputes between Child and Family Services Alliances, Child FIRST and Child Protection. 	Short term	Office for Children - statewide In consultation with Family Services

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
<p>Action 3: Commitment to a shared vision and articulation of the components of a partnership approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • procedures for joint decision-making and joint visiting/ contact; and • shared expectations regarding joint review of cases to support more effective decision-making. • Supporting learning environment where there are opportunities for practice improvements arising from reviews such as the Ombudsman, SIDS findings etc 	Short term	Office for Children CPFSAG Alliances (including Child Protection) with the support of DHS - regional level

2.7 Ensuring services are responsive and respectful of cultural and Aboriginal specific needs²

Where we are now:

Aboriginal children, young people and families are under-represented in Family Services and over-represented in Child Protection and out of home care services. There is a need to build the responsiveness of mainstream services to Aboriginal needs, develop partnerships between mainstream and Aboriginal services which are based on mutual respect and mutual engagement, and build the capacity of the Aboriginal service sector.

Where we want to be:

An ongoing forum operating at the catchment level to bring together Aboriginal services and communities and mainstream services. As an outcome:

- a coordinated culturally competent approach to providing Family Services to Aboriginal children, young people and families operating at the catchment or local area;
- Aboriginal Services play a key role in planning, design and delivery of Family Services within the catchment; and
- opportunities to build the capacity of Aboriginal services and to improve access to mainstream services are identified.

2. The *family and placement services sector development plan, 2006* provides more detailed strategies on improving service responses for Aboriginal children, young people and families.

How do we get there:

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
<p>Action 1: Child and Family Service Alliances, Aboriginal services and Aboriginal community members consult with each other about the best means to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support Aboriginal services and communities to participate in catchment planning and service delivery; • provide contemporary, evidence based services that address the complexity of problems facing young Aboriginal people; • engage and support young Aboriginal people within their community; • develop the cultural competence of staff members and organisations within the Alliance; • support development of Aboriginal service capacity at the catchment level; and • explore how Aboriginal services and mainstream services can best work together. 	Medium to long term	Aboriginal services Child & Family Alliances
<p>Action 2: Child and Family Services Alliances and Aboriginal services collaboratively develop protocols - based on the principles of mutual respect, understanding and engagement and continual learning - to support partnership in service delivery and planning.</p>	Medium term	Aboriginal services Child & Family Alliances
<p>Action 3: Child and Family Services Alliances and Aboriginal services develop and undertake an Aboriginal service capacity building strategy. This may include opportunities for joint training and staff development, mentoring, placements of Aboriginal staff with mainstream agencies and vice versa.</p>	Medium term	Aboriginal services Child & Family Alliances
<p>Action 4: Develop an evidence base in relation to cultural competence of mainstream services working with Aboriginal children and families. This evidence base can then be shared and replicated both at a state-wide level, and at catchment level through training, education and information sharing.</p>	Long term	Aboriginal Services, Child & Family Alliances Office for Children Aboriginal Initiatives Unit

2.8 Developing a consistent quality culture

Where we are now:

- The Child and Family Services sector has been working with a range of quality improvement frameworks.

Where we want to be:

The introduction of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*. builds on this commitment through:

- building a stronger and shared focus on positive outcomes for children, youth and families;
- development of sub-regional Alliances to encourage quality and innovative practice initiatives that respond to local needs;
- developing and strengthening entry level requirements for agencies to provide services to the most vulnerable children; and strengthening the level of accountability for ongoing quality of services.

A consistent quality culture will act as a key enabler in developing more responsive services with the capacity to support the best interests of children and young people and strengthen the capacity of parents, carers and families to provide effective care.

Family Services will engage in the quality cycle by:

- emphasising a reflective practice culture;
- committing to evidence based best practice approaches;
- responding to local needs as identified through analysis of catchment data;
- ensuring that service approaches and service delivery are aligned with the needs of particular client groups, for example, children experiencing chronic neglect, or adolescents at risk of homelessness;
- providing services that are flexible to the needs of the client and consider creative service delivery points such as through schools, public housing estates or Neighbourhood Houses;
- creating opportunities throughout the catchment for sharing good practice and for creating shared learning opportunities;
- engaging in partnerships with universal and early childhood services, and other secondary service providers;
- implementing a standardised outcome measurement tool;
- undertaking an annual self-assessment against the standards and developing an action plan (for improvement) in-conjunction with the Office for Children; and
- participating in independent external review within a three year period, developing action plans for quality improvement.

Family Services will focus on innovative practice and continuous improvement, sharing learnings within and between Child and Family Services Alliances and focusing on building service capacity at the catchment level.

How do we get there:

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
<p>Action 1: Development of a standardised client outcome measurement tool.</p> <p>The tool should be initially trialled in the nine Child FIRST sites - with sites implementing the tools in conjunction with all agencies in the Child and Family Alliance.</p> <p>The following steps will support the development and roll-out of the client outcome measurement tool:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consultations with Family Services about the key elements to be included in the tool; • guidelines should be developed to assist alliance partners to implement the tool, collect appropriate data, monitor the effectiveness of the implementation and make inform the outcomes measurement process; • use of issues based discussion groups at key points to allow learnings from the implementation process to be effectively shared and built into the wider roll-out at the state-wide level. • Linked to ongoing evaluation of integrated Family Services 	Medium term	Office for Children - statewide in conjunction with Alliances and CAFSAG
<p>Action 2: Development of a Quality Assurance Strategy which provides guidance to Family Services about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • registration requirements, including the independent monitoring and review process, joint action planning processes for situations where standards are not met, and timeframes for commencement; • annual internal assessment processes; and • three yearly external audit processes 	Long term	Office for Children - statewide
<p>Action 3: Introduce standards, along with internal and external audit tools. Identify methods to monitor and review implementation of standards.</p>	Medium term	Family Services, with Regions
<p>Action 4: Annual internal assessment against the standards and identification of opportunities for quality improvement and capacity building.</p>	Medium term	Office for Children - statewide Regions Alliance partners

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
<p>Action 5: Alliances will consider the most appropriate means to develop a consistent and shared quality culture across the catchment. This will involve supporting alliance partners through the internal and external review and compliance processes. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • joint evaluation of service models, approaches and initiatives that have been implemented throughout the catchment; • development of Quality Learning Circles which meet on a regular basis to discuss particular problems, prepare for external audit and share best practice approaches; • establishment of formal or informal mentoring arrangements to build the capacity of those organisations new to quality processes. 	Long term	Alliance partners
<p>Action 6: Review of internal and external audit processes and identification of skills gaps, opportunities for improvement, and capacity building needs at an organisational, regional and state-wide level.</p>	Medium term	Office for Children - statewide; DHS Regional offices and Family Services

2.9 Data collection and analysis

Where we are now:

Data collection currently occurs separately for Child Protection and Family Services via the CASIS and Iris systems respectively. Amendments to the IRIS system will be made to support the operationalisation of Child FIRST and the Strategic Framework for Family Services.

Where we want to be:

Data collection will support:

- Child FIRST and Family Services intakes, referrals and outcomes;
- Ongoing evaluation of system
- Systems operations
- Performance monitoring and planning at agency, catchment and regional and statewide levels
- Provide practice evidence where appropriate to demonstrate compliance with standards

How do we get there:

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
<p>Action 1: Consider and determine type of data required to monitor and support integrated service provision for children, young people and families. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of catchment planning data sets; and • contemporary data dictionary; • characteristics and numbers of clients reported by Family Services to Child Protection; • characteristics and numbers of clients referred to Child FIRST and Family Services; • capacity and allocation reports at agency level • Child FIRST oversight of ‘significant concerns’ referrals at catchment level • length of time case is open; and 	Short term	Office for Children
<p>Action 2: Review IRIS and determine any modifications that should be made in the medium term to enable data collection, reporting and monitoring until introduction of CRISSP.</p>	Short term	Office for Children - statewide
<p>Action 3: Analyse and report on data to ensure that services are targeted appropriately (to support catchment planning).</p>	Long term	Office for Children - statewide
<p>Action 4: Use data to support development of an evidence base for best practice approaches with vulnerable families and to inform appropriate targeting of resources and service capacity building requirements (also see evaluating the reforms)</p>	Long term	Office for Children and Family Services

2.10 Evaluating the reforms

Where we are now:

Evaluation of the Family Support Innovations Projects has taken both an action research process and a more strategic outcomes focus, considering broader systemic outcomes, sub-regional outcomes and client outcomes. This has enabled the value of the FSIPs in supporting the broader reforms to be evaluated.

Where we want to be:

There is a need to extend this action research and strategic outcomes focused evaluation to all Family Services, including Child FIRST to enable a stronger understanding of:

- how Child FIRST as intake into Family Services, and the Child and Family Services Alliances are being implemented in practice and are operating. Gathering of information about “what works” and “doesn’t work”, and disseminating the experiences of the nine pilot sites to support transferability, and sustainability of key lessons and models of service, as well as more effective roll-out at the broader state-wide level; and

- Outcomes including:
 - outcomes for individual children, young people and families;
 - identification of outcomes at a catchment level in relation to catchment plan objectives such as evidence of an effective integrated and collaborative service model and a decrease in the number of children and young people being referred to Child Protection; and
 - statewide population based outcomes that determine improvements in the general population in relation to safety, stability and development of children and young people.

How do we get there:

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
<p>Action 1: Develop a project brief for an action research evaluation of Child FIRST and Family Services operations under the strategic framework. The evaluation should also include Child Protection and the operation of the Child and Family Services Alliances. The following actions will enable data collection and analysis to inform the evaluation in addition to formative and qualitative components.</p>	Short term	Office for Children
<p>Action 2: Articulate a client outcomes framework that takes a cascading approach to outcomes measurement: - outcomes for children and families; efficacy of services; progress in relation to service development and delivery and population based child outcomes. Measures will be developed in association with the state-wide outcomes branch.</p>	Medium term	Office for Children - statewide CAFSAG
<p>Action 3: Staged roll-out of the standardised outcome measurement tool for children, young people and families.</p>	Medium term	Office for Children and Family Services
<p>Action 4: Establish catchment planning processes to enable changes at the catchment level to be monitored. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tools to monitor progress with the implementation of Child FIRST/Integrated Family Services and Child and Family Services Alliances; and • tools to monitor outcomes from a planning, operational management and service coordination perspective. Such outcomes may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increasing capacity to respond to the needs of Aboriginal children, youth and families; - emerging evidence of a more integrated and coordinated service system; - a better understanding of demand at the catchment and regional levels; - stronger and more collaborative relationships between Family Services operating in the catchment; and - emerging shared accountabilities and joint work with Child Protection. 	Long term	Office for Children

3. Training

One of the key requirements of the implementation of the new Strategic Framework for Family Services will be the need for Child Protection and Family Services staff to be trained in a different way.

Family Services staff have traditionally had access to training on an ad hoc basis as per agency guidelines and budget. The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare delivers an excellent calendar of fee for service programs relevant to the Family Services sector with broad appeal to both managers and staff. The Centre also acts as a central information point for other training programs offered by other organisations, with topics highly relevant to working with vulnerable families, for example:

- managing and modifying behaviour;
- working with families;
- negotiating therapeutic boundaries; and
- solution oriented counselling.

Most recently, The Centre has taken a key role in supporting the sector in working towards implementing the reforms, new legislation through the development of its knowledge brokerage role to the sector. It is also providing training and workshops to Boards of Management around their role in the environment of integrated service delivery.

The Child Protection and Juvenile Justice Professional Development Unit (CPJJPDU) within the Office for Children have centrally delivered training of Child Protection staff for many years. The unit has traditionally delivered a training calendar which responds to the needs of the Child Protection workforce and, over the last few years, has offered programs relating to working with sexual abuse, working with high risk infants, working with high risk adolescents, and interviewing and engaging children and young people. The training programs have, on occasions, been open to Family Services staff to attend, but only when programs had not been fully subscribed to by Child Protection staff.

In August 2006, the CPJJPDU distributed the every child every chance learning and development strategy in response to the changing needs of the workforce. The strategy addresses the likely needs of both Child Protection and Family Services staff. This document proposes a three phased approach to the delivery of training to over the next 4 years which includes:

Phase	Activities	Timelines
Preparing for enactment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale forums • Establishment of cross - sectoral training consultative committee • Cooperative development and delivery of regional legislative and reform orientation models • Commencement of training scoping project 	March 2006 to March 2007
Embedding the reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace strategies to support application of new learning • Centrally delivered leadership and legislation and reform orientation modules • Review of all current Child Protection training programs • Ongoing development of multimedia learning aids 	April 2007 to November 2007
Ensuring lasting cultural change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be guided by scoping project identified in phase one • Centrally delivered programs • Development of accredited learning and development pathways for staff 	November 2007 to 2010

Legislation and orientation modules

The Learning and Development Strategy was developed centrally in consultation with the sector and regions and released prior to the completion of the Strategic Framework for Family Services. Leadership Modules are currently being delivered regionally to Child Protection Team Leaders, Unit Managers and coordinators, supervisors and managers in the community service sectors. This one day module guides participants through a change management process and includes sessions on collaborative practice. Other modules covering the key aspects of reform namely:

- working in children's best interests;
- stability Planning;
- earlier intervention and intake;
- case planning for Aboriginal children

will follow from October to April 2007. The participants will be child protection practitioners, team leaders, unit managers and practitioners, supervisors, managers and coordinators from regional community services, placement and support and Aboriginal services.

These modules are currently being designed and developed by the Child Protection and Juvenile Justice Professional Development Unit (CPJJPU) in consultation with key stakeholders.

Clearly there is a need for the training strategy to support the implementation of the strategic framework for Family Services to be well integrated and aligned with the overall learning and development strategy.

Specifically, the strategy needs to ensure that the proposed modules are reviewed to determine the positioning of the strategic framework within these modules and identify further training needs for Family Services staff.

The minimum training requirements to support the implementation of the strategic framework are:

- overview of the new context - summary of strategic framework, overview of new structures including Child FIRST, Child and Family Services Alliances, Community Based Child Protection Workers;
- practice approaches - as outlined in the Strategic Framework and Best Interests Framework - theoretical overview and skill development experiential session;
- working with vulnerable children and families - focus on achieving safety and promoting child wellbeing and healthy development;
- assessing and improving parenting capacity;
- collaborative practice - care team approaches, Child and Family Action Planning;
- culturally competent practice; and
- specifically designed skill development program for Child FIRST practitioners and supervisors.

Action	Priority	Lead Responsibility
<p>Action 1: Review the learning and development strategy to ensure minimum requirements for training to support implementation of the strategic framework are in place.</p>	Short term	Office for Children CAFSAG
<p>Action 2: Develop an ongoing learning and development strategy for Family Services with emphasis on best practice implications (including practice approaches).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on the benefits of joint training with Child Protection derived from the Learning & Development Strategy 	Medium term	Office for Children CAFSAG

