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| Good Practice Bulletin |
| Spotlight on information sharing  Office of Professional Practice, Issue 17, January 2019 |

# Chief Practitioner’s welcome

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In 2018 the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) and the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) were introduced. Child Protection is a prescribed information sharing entity (ISE) under these schemes. An ISE is obliged to provide information in response to a request from another ISE (unless the information is exempt). The schemes enable professionals to share risk relevant information in relation to family violence and share information about child wellbeing. The schemes enable services to work together more easily and intervene earlier and more effectively.

The schemes do not replace the information sharing permissions in the *Children, Youth and Families Act* 2005 (CYFA), rather, they expand the circumstances in which information can be shared to promote the wellbeing and safety of children, the safety of victim survivors of family violence, and to hold perpetrators accountable for their behaviour.

Key points to keep in mind about how the information sharing reforms impact your work include:

* **If you could already share information, you still can**. The CYFAand other relevant legislation maintain its authority to share and receive information.
* **You may be asked for, and can share more information than ever before.** The FVISS and CISS enable information sharing about perpetrators of family violence to hold them to account and maintain their visibility.
* **Requesting information from child protection under the FVISS and CISS is different to making a report.** It allows the recipient of the information to make fully informed decisions, and to better support a child and their family outside of the statutory system. The recipient of the information may still decide that a report to child protection is required.

# Case study

You are the allocated worker for Koa who is the first child of Lenah and Tau. Child protection became involved with Koa when he was born. When Lenah and Koa commenced a placement in a mother and baby unit she told the workers that she didn’t want to live with Tau as he was aggressive. Tau attended the unit and threatened to kill Lenah before punching her and leaving with Koa in his car. Police were called, found Koa and arrested Tau.

Tau has an older child Warrin who was known to child protection. Warrin resides with his mother Nita. There is an IVO prohibiting Tau from having contact with Warrin and Nita. When Warrin was 6 years old, Tau started to hit Warrin when Nita didn’t obey Tau. Warrin was hospitalised with injuries and malnourishment. After a two year intervention by child protection, Nita disclosed to Tau that he was not Warrin’s biological child. Tau ceased attempting contact with them.

You receive a phone call from Mary a Specialist Family Violence Worker who is working with Tayla, Tayla has been is in a relationship with Tau for the past six months. The Specialist Family Violence Worker explains she is a Risk Assessment Entity and wants information about Tau to assist in her risk assessment and management. She thinks child protection may have information to share because Tayla has a daughter, Micky.

# Discussion prompts (see tips below for hints)

What is a Risk Assessment Entity (RAE) and how is this different from other Information Sharing Entities?

Are you able to share information with Mary? Why?

Whose consent or views (if any) would you require in order to share information with Mary? How might you go about obtaining relevant consent or views? Consider this [*Guide for ISEs on how to share information*](https://www.vic.gov.au/system/user_files/Documents/fv/A_guide_for_ISEs_on_how_to_share_information.pdf)

What information would you share with Mary? What information might you request from Mary? What can you do with information Mary tells you?

Where can you find resources, and who can you call for advice and assistance if you are not sure what to do?

# Information sharing tips

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| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | A risk assessment entity (RAE) is an information sharing entity prescribed to be a risk assessment entity. Risk assessment entities can request and receive voluntary disclosures from ISEs for a family violence assessment purpose. |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | If you receive a request for information relating to a closed case, and you are not able to access that information, you can refer the request to the Information Sharing team at [info.exchange@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:Benita.large@dhhs.vic.gov.au) |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | You have to respond to a request made under CISS and FVISS. If you make a decision not to share the information with the ISE, you have to provide them with a written reason for not providing the information. |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | An information request and your response, in brief, must be recorded on the child’s file using the ‘Information Sharing Exchange’ drop down note type. |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | Consent is only required if the information relates to the adult victim survivor or a third party BUT only when there are no affected children or no serious threat to life, health, safety or welfare. The perpetrator should not be advised of the information sharing. |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | Even if consent is not required, it is good practice to seek the views of the adult victim survivor and/or child about the sharing of their information, if appropriate, safe and reasonable to do so. A brief note should be kept about any consent or views you seek. |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | More detail about CISS can be found [here](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/our-approach/roles-and-responsibilities/family-violence-information-sharing-scheme) in the child protection manual and at <https://www.vic.gov.au/childinfosharing>. More detail about FVISS can be found [here](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/our-approach/roles-and-responsibilities/family-violence-information-sharing-scheme) in the child protection manual and at <https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/family-safety-victoria/information-sharing-and-risk-management/the-family-violence-information-sharing-scheme.html> |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | Need to talk to someone? Call the Victorian Government helpline: 1800 549 646 |

If you have any feedback or ideas about what you would find useful to include in the bulletin this year, please email *officeofprofessionalpractice@dhhs.vic.gov.au*

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