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| Family violence crisis response model  Frequently asked questions |



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# Purpose

This frequently asked questions (FAQs) document aims to answer questions in-scope service providers might have about the new family violence crisis response model. It looks at the following parts of the model:

* Roles and responsibilities in providing emergency accommodation (R&R for emergency accommodation)
* Roles and responsibilities after hours (R&R after hours).

Before reading this document, please ensure you have read:

* these two sets of roles and responsibilities
* the Family violence case management program requirements and its FAQ document
* the [guidelines for family violence crisis brokerage](https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/news/updated-family-violence-crisis-brokerage-guidelines) <https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/news/updated-family-violence-crisis-brokerage-guidelines>.

## Key messages

The family violence crisis response model has been developed to improve the way the family violence service system works together to support victim survivors in crisis. The model outlines shared responsibility for supporting victim survivors of family violence who are experiencing crisis. The model aims to ensure the following:

* **All victim survivors in crisis get immediate support and emergency accommodation, if needed, no matter which specialist family violence service they access** (through The Orange Door, Safe Steps, or a local family violence support service). All specialist family violence services now have family violence crisis brokerage to provide immediate crisis support.
* **All victim survivors in emergency accommodation can get face-to-face support from a local family violence support service, wherever they are accommodated and at any time of day or night**. For example, Safe Steps (a phone-based service) will be able to activate local outreach support from The Orange Door partner agency (victim services) during business hours, or a local family violence after-hours service outside of business hours.
* **All victim survivors will be supported by, or connected to, a local family violence support service when leaving emergency accommodation.** The local family violence support service will support the exit and provide ongoing case management, if required.

The model will ensure victim survivors in crisis are supported through responses that are:

* consistent
* clearly communicated
* jointly managed by the services involved.

It prioritises crisis support provided at the local level, where possible, and in line with victim survivor choice and safety.

Ensuring victim survivors across the state have prompt access to local family violence support services during a crisis, including after hours and/or while in emergency accommodation, will improve the quality and continuity of support provided. It will also lead to more sustainable and localised support for victim survivors.

The model also creates statewide consistency and clarity for how specialist family violence services are expected to provide crisis responses. By establishing this consistency and clarity of roles and responsibilities across the service system, the model aims to create system efficiencies and improve service coordination across the state.

In line with Dhelk Dja: Safe our way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families, the program requirements, and MARAM, the model is underpinned by a commitment to Aboriginal self-determination. The principle of Aboriginal self-determination requires that ‘services respect and uphold the right to Aboriginal self-determination, choice and cultural safety’. The model has therefore been designed to ensure Aboriginal victim survivors have the choice of getting Aboriginal-led support. It also ensures they receive culturally safe and responsive crisis responses, no matter where they get support.

## What is the family violence crisis response model?

The family violence crisis response model consists of:

* the Case management program requirements for specialist family violence services which support victim survivors (as they relate to crisis responses)
* R&R for emergency accommodation
* R&R after hours (for funded after-hours service providers).

The program requirements set out the service expectations for specialist family violence services in providing a crisis response.

The R&R documents set out clear roles and responsibilities for key parts of the specialist family violence service system in providing emergency accommodation or after-hours support.

## Is the crisis response model relevant to my organisation?

Please refer to the appendix for a list of funded activities that are in scope or relevant for the crisis response model.

The R&R in providing emergency accommodation outlines key responsibilities for:

* the statewide 24/7 family violence crisis service (Safe Steps)
* The Orange Door network
* local family violence support services
* family violence accommodation services.

The R&R after hours sets out key responsibilities for:

* the statewide 24/7 family violence crisis service (Safe Steps)
* (funded) local after-hours service providers
* family violence accommodation services.

## When does the crisis response model come into effect?

The scale of change for in-scope service providers to align with the crisis response model will vary because many providers are already moderately or well aligned.

Services should work flexibly to fulfil their roles and responsibilities under the crisis response model from April 2023. Earlier alignment is encouraged, where possible.

## Is my agency expected to deliver crisis responses 24/7 or outside of our regular business hours?

No. Only agencies funded for an after-hours service will have to deliver services outside business hours. Please refer to R&R after hours for more guidance.

## What is the relationship to the case management program requirements?

Family Safety Victoria (FSV) released the Case management program requirements for specialist family violence services which support victim survivors (the program requirements) to specialist family violence services in early 2022.

The program requirements set up expectations for specialist family violence services in delivering case management for victim survivors. This includes crisis responses. The program requirements ensure victim survivors get a service that is:

* consistent
* equitable
* accessible
* high-quality.

This applies no matter where they live across the state or what support they need.

For service providers, the program requirements:

* detail the critical roles, responsibilities and functions of case management services
* describe the elements of quality service delivery
* outline how different parts of the service system work together
* bring together key reforms and practice guidance.

The program requirements comprise three components – responses, domains and case management functions. They define a crisis response, linking with:

* the principles and standards set out in the Code of practice: principles and standards for specialist family violence services for victim-survivors
* the practice guides and tools outlined in MARAM.

Those sections of the program requirements relevant to a crisis response form part of the crisis response model. Please refer to the R&R for emergency accommodation and the R&R after hours for more information.

All agencies in-scope for the crisis response model should read the program requirements. Together, these resources represent the foundational requirements for specialist family violence services to deliver and continuously improve crisis and case management support for victim survivors.

## What is meant by ‘leads’ or ‘lead agency’ in the context of crisis responses?

The program requirements define the lead agency as the primary specialist family violence support provider that communicates directly with the victim survivor.

The lead agency delivers, coordinates and documents specialist family violence responses. This is usually done for all victim survivors in the family group. They hold key MARAM responsibilities including:

* undertaking the brief or comprehensive risk assessment and coordinating updates with other support agencies involved
* leading coordinated risk monitoring, risk management responses and collaborative action planning
* managing and documenting consent agreements and co-case management arrangements between agencies involved in each victim survivor’s case
* updating other support agencies involved with risk relevant information in line with information sharing guidelines.

Other agencies may ‘support’ this response, through working with the lead agency to offer secondary consultation or co-case management. They may also offer episodic outreach support for victim survivors.

## What is the relationship to the Safe Steps and The Orange Door Network interface guidance?

The Safe Steps and The Orange Door network: Interim interface guidance to support working together (the interface guidance) sets out how Safe Steps and The Orange Door network will work together to ensure responses – including crisis responses – are timely and victim survivors’ safety and support needs are prioritised. Other specialist family violence services are not in scope for the interface guidance.

The interface guidance outlines the key requirements and considerations for referrals and consultations across The Orange Door network and Safe Steps. It also lists key considerations for ensuring victim survivors get coordinated support across both business hours and non-business hours.

Relevant sections of the interface guidance outline how the services should work together to respond to:

* victim survivors supported by The Orange Door network who contact Safe Steps needing support outside of business hours
* victim survivors accessing The Orange Door network requiring immediate support towards the end of business hours
* victim survivors supported by The Orange Door network who are eligible for a family violence accommodation service placement.

The roles and responsibilities outlined in the crisis response model align with those in the interface guidance.

## What is the definition of emergency accommodation in this context?

Emergency accommodation includes:

* family violence accommodation services such as crisis accommodation properties and refuges
* other types of emergency accommodation, such as hotels, motels and caravan parks.

## Does the crisis response model alter current referral and intake pathways for The Orange Door?

No. The Orange Door network and Safe Steps are (and remain) Victoria’s primary entry points for victim survivors seeking support, including children and young people.

However, victim survivors should have alternative access and support options. These options should ensure victim survivors who have already been assessed or supported by a specialist family violence service do not have to return to these primary entry points.

To enable this, all local family violence support services must accept and progress referrals from:

* victim survivors (self-referring)
* The Orange Door (where a risk assessment has been completed)
* Safe Steps (where a risk assessment has been completed)
* other specialist family violence services[[1]](#footnote-2) (where a risk assessment has been completed).

This aligns with the program requirements, which establish requirements for screening, identification and triage as core case management functions. These include:

* operating a ‘no wrong door’ for victim survivors
* accepting and quickly progressing referrals from the statewide 24/7 crisis service and The Orange Door or ‘other agencies’ when victim survivors have been referred to or accommodated in emergency accommodation in their local area.

Also, the program requirements and crisis response model set out crisis response as a key part of case management. All local family violence support services should keep supporting victim survivors they are already case managing who need a crisis response and/or emergency accommodation.

## How does [family violence crisis brokerage](https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/program-requirements-family-violence-crisis-brokerage-fvcb) support crisis responses?

[Family violence crisis brokerage](https://www.vic.gov.au/funds-to-support-victims-of-family-violence) <https://www.vic.gov.au/funds-to-support-victims-of-family-violence> (crisis brokerage) aims to increase the safety and wellbeing of people experiencing family violence by providing immediate, flexible, person-centred support during a crisis. All specialist family violence services in scope of the crisis response model have access to crisis brokerage.

The guidelines for crisis brokerage include a broad set of eligible goods and services for victim survivors in crisis. These include payments for:

* private medical services
* culturally specific foods and clothing
* child development and safety items
* care and placement of pets.

It allows eligible victim survivors to get up to $5,000 of goods and services straightaway. This will help cover their immediate safety needs.

## What can an agency do if it exhausts its crisis brokerage allocation?

Agencies that receive crisis brokerage are expected to manage their annual allocation to ensure they have access to brokerage throughout the course of the year. Agencies are expected to acquit brokerage expenditure in accordance with the [crisis brokerage guidelines](https://www.vic.gov.au/funds-to-support-victims-of-family-violence) <https://www.vic.gov.au/funds-to-support-victims-of-family-violence>. Agencies can raise any concerns about their allocation to their Agency Performance and System Support team through this acquittal process.

Agencies are also expected to have a good understanding of the other funding programs available to support victim survivors to access safe accommodation. These include Flexible Support Packages, Private Rental Assistance Program and the relevant Commonwealth financial support options.

## What resources will be available to support implementation of the crisis response model?

FSV and Safe and Equal are working together to develop a range of implementation and change management supports to help agencies align with the roles and responsibilities under the crisis response model. Resources include:

* the Family violence crisis response model: frequently asked questions (this document)
* an overview flowchart and case scenarios that show how the model will work in diverse circumstances (to be released by the end of 2022)
* information sessions (to be delivered by the end of 2022)
* practice-related support (provided by Safe and Equal from the end of 2022)
* an alignment checklist (to be released in early 2023)
* area-level implementation support (from early 2023).

# Roles and responsibilities in providing emergency accommodation

The scale of change for in-scope providers to align with the crisis response model will vary. Consultations to date show that most in-scope service providers are already moderately or well aligned.

## What are the key changes for local family violence support services?

The R&R for emergency accommodation outlines clear and consistent roles and responsibilities for supporting victim survivors in crisis who need emergency accommodation.

Safe Steps and The Orange Door are the main entry points for crisis responses. But all services have a critical role to play to ensure victim survivors get the right case management support during a crisis.

Key changes implemented through the R&R for emergency accommodation include:

* **All local family violence support** **services** must lead or support crisis responses for victim survivors they are already case-managing and those who self-refer. This includes Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and targeted services. Agencies must offer support to access emergency accommodation where it is safe for victim survivors to stay in the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing local area. (Note that victim survivors requiring support to move out-of-area are referred to Safe Steps.)
* **Only The Orange Door partner agencies** for victim survivor services or ACCO partner agencies (for Aboriginal victim survivors) are expected to receive referrals from Safe Steps and The Orange Door. Referrals will be to either lead or support crisis responses for victim survivors. If an ACCO does not have capacity to lead a crisis response for an Aboriginal victim survivor, the referral will go to The Orange Door partner agency for victim survivor services. In these instances, the lead agency will engage the ACCO to provide secondary consultation or co-case management.

Local family violence support services will:

* locate and organise suitable accommodation options – this may include applications to Safe Steps for placement in a family violence accommodation service (and supporting victim survivors while an outcome is determined) and/or exploring alternative accommodation options
* coordinate access to alternative emergency accommodation (such as motels) for victim survivors when it is safe for them to stay in their local area
* offer case management support to victim survivors in motels, including local outreach
* offer brief intervention or episodic outreach support to victim survivors in motels whose lead support is provided by Safe Steps or The Orange Door. **(This only applies to The Orange Door partner agencies.)**

## What are the key changes for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations?

FSV engaged with ACCOs that offer victim survivor case management through targeted forums and the FSV-convened ACCO Family Violence Forum. Most ACCOs already align with the R&R for emergency accommodation in that they support victim survivors to access accommodation when required.

As such, the R&R for emergency accommodation applies to ACCOs. It is an extension of their current practice.

Existing referral pathways between Safe Steps and The Orange Door and ACCO partner agencies will continue.

All non-Aboriginal family violence services supporting Aboriginal victim survivors must offer a choice of ACCO-led further support. Where an ACCO cannot lead a crisis response, they must be asked for a secondary consultation or co-case management with the lead support agency.

## What are the key changes for family violence accommodation services?

Family violence accommodation services will provide crisis responses and family violence accommodation services for existing and referred victim survivors.

Key changes implemented through the R&R for emergency accommodation include:

* Family violence accommodation services will accept referrals from Safe Steps for eligible and prioritised victim survivors in line with the Victorian refuge eligibility and prioritisation framework.
* Family violence accommodation services will ensure Safe Steps is advised of any current and/or upcoming vacancies for victim survivors by regularly updating the Family Violence Accommodation Register.
* All family violence accommodation service providers must lead crisis and case management support for all victim survivors they accommodate, regardless of their duration of stay. This includes supporting exits for victim survivors to longer term housing and/or liaising with Safe Steps if an alternative family violence accommodation placement is needed.

## What are the key changes for Safe Steps?

Safe Steps will continue to lead crisis responses for victim survivors who self-refer or who are referred by other non-specialist family violence support services such as housing services, mental health services, alcohol and other drug services, and Victoria Police. This includes addressing immediate accommodation needs to enhance safety for victim survivors.

Key changes for Safe Steps implemented through the R&R for emergency accommodation include the following: ​

* There will be greater statewide clarity and consistency about referral pathways and support options for victim survivors experiencing a family violence crisis, including those in emergency accommodation.
* When leading support for a victim survivor in a motel, Safe Steps will have the option to activate local face-to-face episodic outreach by The Orange Door partner agency in the area where the victim survivor is staying, as needed.
* Safe Steps’ role as the central coordination point for referrals to family violence accommodation services will be formalised, ensuring family violence accommodation service placements are allocated to victim survivors at highest risk. This centralised coordination role will be supported by the use of a standardised refuge application form and the Family Violence Accommodation Register.

## What are the key changes for The Orange Door?

The Orange Door will continue to lead crisis responses for victim survivors who self-refer or who are referred by other non-specialist family violence support services such as housing services, mental health services, alcohol and other drug services, and Victoria Police. This includes addressing immediate accommodation needs to improve safety for victim survivors.

Key changes for The Orange Door implemented through the R&R for emergency accommodation include the following:

* There will be greater clarity and consistency about referral pathways and support options for victim survivors experiencing a family violence crisis, including those in emergency accommodation.
* When leading support for a victim survivor accommodated in a motel, The Orange Door will have the option to activate local face-to-face episodic outreach by the local victim survivor partner agency, as needed.
* The Orange Door will manage out-of-area placements across The Orange Door network.
* The model provides clear guidance regarding crisis responses for victim survivors who are eligible and prioritised for family violence accommodation service.

## Our agency has never done motel placement work before, what support is available?

Improving area-based approaches to coordinating access to emergency accommodation (including in motels) is a key enabler for the crisis response model. FSV, Safe and Equal and Safe Steps have worked together to develop and release guidance to support implementation the Local Family Violence Motel Coordination Projects. The local projects aim to increase safety for victim survivors of family violence by optimising access to appropriate emergency accommodation.

Project funding for 12 months to June 2023 was provided for a Local Family Violence Motel Coordination Project in each Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Area. This will support the implementation of the crisis response model. The aims of the local projects are to:

* support a more coordinated Area-level approach to using motels for family violence emergency accommodation by developing systems and information-sharing processes (including interagency protocols) between local agencies and with statewide services
* develop Area-level strategies to manage the risks and challenges related to identifying appropriate motels and managing relationships with moteliers to increase access to suitable motel accommodation
* develop systems, information and resources to support safe and appropriate motel placements and to manage relationships with moteliers that can be sustained beyond the funded project.

Safe and Equal (in partnership in Safe Steps) have also developed guidance on identifying suitable motels, establishing and maintaining relationships with moteliers, and managing issues and incidents. This guidance document, Key considerations for motel relationship management, was distributed in August 2022 and is available from FSV.

## What should a local family violence support service do if they cannot find a suitable motel in their local area?

Victim survivors living through a family violence crisis should be supported to stay within their local area wherever safe and possible. This will help avoid extra disruption and disconnection from their community, employment and/or education.

The availability of accommodation options, including motels, is a key factor in deciding whether it is safe and/or possible for a victim survivor to be accommodated in their local area.

As such, if a local family violence support service cannot find an appropriate motel in their local area, the victim survivor can be referred to Safe Steps for accommodation in another area. This should only take place when all in-area options are exhausted.

Where out-of-area movement is required, specialist family violence services should work together to maintain continuity of local support and connection to the local area. In practice, this may mean a local family violence support service keeps a victim survivor’s case open while Safe Steps supports them out of area. The local service may also have to liaise with Safe Steps for the transition back to the local area when possible.

Additional guidance for local family violence support services is provided in the Key considerations for motel relationship management document (available from FSV and Safe and Equal).

## How will demand be managed for out-of-area accommodation placements from Safe Steps, and referrals for outreach or crisis support?

FSV has worked with Safe Steps to examine demand based on recent service delivery data. This has helped us to understand the projected impacts at the area level related to:

* one-off crisis responses including face-to-face and material aid outreach for victim survivors in motels
* referrals to lead crisis responses for victim survivors already in emergency accommodation
* leading crisis responses for victim survivors needing emergency accommodation (existing clients or self-referred).

Demand estimates and their impacts have informed additional funding being allocated in 2022-23 to enable local family violence support services to manage demand.

## What are the expectations for complying with the timeframes?

The R&Rs in emergency accommodation set out several timeframes to guide practitioners/services in providing timely crisis responses. In particular, timeframes are established in:

* elements of the crisis response for victim survivors accommodated in motels and prioritised for refuge when lead support is held by Safe Steps or The Orange Door (refer to section 3.3 of the R&Rs in emergency accommodation)
* payment in advance for a minimum period of motel stay (refer to section 3.9 of the R&Rs in emergency accommodation).

These timeframes will set a consistent benchmark to guide practitioners in responding to victim survivors in crisis. Consistent timeframes clarify expectations across different parts of the service system and support service coordination.

But it is important to note that the suggested timeframes are intended as a guide. Decision making should always be informed by professional judgement and consider the specific needs and preferences of the victim survivor and the dynamic nature of family violence risk.

## What criteria should be used to assess eligibility and prioritisation for refuge placement?

Statewide criteria to ensure consistent assessment of refuge applications is a key system enabler for the crisis response model.

FSV is working with key stakeholders to finalise the Victorian family violence refuge eligibility and prioritisation framework. These stakeholders include Safe and Equal, the Specialist Family Violence Sector Advisory Group and family violence supported accommodation service providers.

The Victorian family violence refuge eligibility and prioritisation framework will outline:

* eligibility criteria for refuge placement
* prioritisation of victim survivors for available refuge places
* how refuges respond to local needs while considering the statewide view of victim survivor risk
* expectations for specialist family violence services to use a consistent refuge application form
* expectations for refuges’ use of the Family Violence Accommodation Register.

## Who manages exit pathways for victim survivors in ‘short stay’ family violence accommodation services?

The roles and responsibilities of family violence accommodation service providers does not change according to the length of time a victim survivor stays in their facility.

As such, family violence accommodation service providers must lead crisis and case management support to all victim survivors they accommodate, regardless of their duration of stay. This includes supporting exits for victim survivors to longer term housing and/or liaising with Safe Steps if an alternative family violence accommodation placement is needed. This is outlined in the case management program requirements.

## Can local family violence support services and The Orange Door network make local referrals directly into refuge?

FSV has worked with key stakeholders to finalise the Victorian family violence refuge eligibility and prioritisation framework. The framework outlines how refuges can respond to local needs within a referral process that considers a statewide view of victim survivor risk.

# Roles and responsibilities after hours

## What are the key changes for local after-hours services?

R&R after hours formalises key updates agreed since 2018 including:

* providing a single phone number for local after-hours providers to allow activations from Safe Steps
* expecting that referrals from Safe Steps to local family violence after-hours services come via the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform after phone activation
* expecting that local family violence after-hours services offer outreach support to neighbouring departmental areas in times of high demand
* the ability for The Orange Door to activate the local family violence after-hours service at the end of business hours where a MARAM risk assessment has been completed and out-of-area movement is not required
* expecting that Safe Steps and local family violence after-hours services will collaborate to work out the most appropriate referrals for further support (next working day).

## Why is the MARAM assessment received as a PDF in the referral?

MARAM assessments require version control and effective methods of counting. They are therefore in PDF format to record the practitioner, agency and time of assessment. This does not allow the local after-hours service to add to the assessment.

Sometimes a situation changes after a referral to the local after-hours service that requires a full review of the MARAM assessment. In this case, a new assessment should build on the information in the referral.

## How do we ensure worker safety during face-to-face responses?

R&R after hours supports a two-worker response where there is increased risk such as:

* attendance at emergency accommodation or residential settings
* where there may be increased support requirements, for example where children are present.

The local after-hours service must have policies and processes in place to support their workers in making decisions about safety. Workers should have access to a manager or supervisor at all times during after-hours operations.

## What happens if The Orange Door wants to send an after-hours referral at the end of business hours?

Referrals from The Orange Door will be received via email following an activation call to the senior on-call worker. The Orange Door referrals should include the MARAM risk assessment along with details of the required after-hours response. Local after-hours services should go through the standard process for recording a manual referral and after-hours response in the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform (SHIP) and create the after-hours profile. Details of the after-hours service response should be provided by reply email to the referring Orange Door on the following business day.

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# Appendix: Funded activities in scope or relevant for the crisis response model

The following table gives an overview of the relationship between FSV-funded family violence activities and the crisis response model.

FSV has recently applied changes to the family violence funding structure. These changes include transferring relevant family violence funding from the Housing Assistance output to the Family Violence Service Delivery output. The table below aligns with these changes, which took effect in July 2022.

Please note that this work focuses on improving crisis support for victim survivors. Funding under any of these activities that does not target this cohort is out of scope.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Funding type** | **Activity name** | **Activity number** | **Relevant sub-activity** | **Notes** |
| Family violence crisis brokerage (FVCB) | Flexible Funding Family Violence and Sexual Assault | 38026 | Family Violence Crisis Brokerage | All local FV support services, local after-hours services and FV accommodation services, as well as Safe Steps, receive funding for FVCB under this activity. |
| Local family violence support services, including targeted services | Client Support Family Violence | 38028 | Client Support | Funding for local FV supportservices and targeted services is allocated under this activity. |
| Aboriginal family violence services | Holistic Aboriginal Family Violence | 38032 | All | Funding for local FV supportservices delivered by ACCOs (Aboriginal FV services) is allocated under this activity. |
| Family violence accommodation services | Supported Accommodation Family Violence | 38034 | All | Funding for family violence accommodation services is allocated under this activity. |
| Statewide 24/7 family violence crisis service | Intake and Access Family Violence | 38033 | Information, support and referral | Funding for the statewide 24/7 FV crisis service is allocated under this activity. |
| Local after-hours services | Client Support Family Violence | 38028 | After hours responses | Funding for local after-hours services is allocated under this activity. |
| The Orange Door network | Support and Safety Hubs – service delivery | 38010 | All | Funding for The Orange Door’s service delivery is allocated under this activity. |
| The Orange Door network | Support & Safety Hubs – flexible funding & brokerage | 38012 | All | Funding for The Orange Door’s brokerage is allocated under this activity. |

1. Other specialist family violence services are FSV-funded local family violence support services, family violence accommodation services (refuge) and targeted family violence services. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)