

Client Incident Management System Quick Reference Guide

For further information refer to the Department of Families,
Fairness and Housing *Client Incident Management System –
Policy and Guidance*

Introduction

This Quick Reference Guide assists staff who are reporting an incident which has harmed a client or was reasonably likely to seriously harm a client.

The safety and wellbeing of clients is the priority. Any issues impacting on the immediate safety of clients should always be addressed prior to reporting and throughout the management of an incident.

The objectives of CIMS are:

- Ensure that timely and effective responses to incidents address client safety and wellbeing
- Ensure effective and appropriate investigation of incidents
- Ensure effective and appropriate review of incidents
- Learn from individual incidents and patterns of incidents, to reduce the risk of harm to clients and improve the quality of services and the service system
- Ensure accountability of service providers to clients
- Protect and maintain the personal and sensitive information of those involved in CIMS.

All incidents must be reported to the department within **three business days** of the incident occurring or being disclosed to the service provider.

The department is responsible for the quality assurance of incident reports, follow-up actions, investigations and reviews submitted by the service provider.

This Quick Reference Guide provides the high-level process for responding to and reporting client incidents. Please refer to the *Client incident management System – Policy and Guidance* for the complete process.

Responding to an incident

Once an incident has occurred, the priority is the health, safety and wellbeing of the client and others involved. Follow these steps:

- 1 Ensure the immediate safety of client** by assessing the situation, securing the environment and removing all individuals from the source of danger, if it is safe to do so.
- 2 Call a medical practitioner or ambulance** or provide transport (if it is safe and appropriate to do so) for the injured person to the nearest hospital emergency department if the client, staff or others require urgent medical attention.
- 3 Gain a basic understanding** of what has occurred. Recognise and acknowledge the harm experienced by the client.
- 4 Assure the client** that the incident will be taken seriously. Discuss their options with them and ask them how they would like to be supported throughout the process.
- 5 Notify the next of kin, guardian, or key support person** of the incident. When the client is a client of Child Protection or Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC), inform the practitioner of the incident.
- 6 Report the incident to police** if a crime is suspected to have occurred and appropriate client consent is obtained (where appropriate). Refer to the *Client Incident Management System – Policy and Guidance*.

7 Remove the person who is accused or suspected of harming the client from contact with the client (or any other person) if they present a risk to their safety and wellbeing.

8 Explain to the client what actions will be taken in response to the incident. This includes educating the client about their rights and taking their wishes into consideration.

9 Put a support plan in place for the carer when they are the subject of an allegation.

10 Document all actions undertaken in the client's file.

Reporting overview

There are five key stages or reporting an incident.

1 Determine if the event / circumstance is a client incident

A client incident is an event or circumstance which occurs during service delivery that results in harm to the client or is reasonably likely to cause serious harm to the client.

2 Select an incident type

Determine the appropriate type of incident to record.
See page 9 of this Quick Reference Guide.

3 Select an incident category (major impact or non-major impact)

Most incident types have a mandatory impact classification.
For incidents which require an assessment of impact, use professional judgement regarding the requirements of the *Client Incident Management System – Policy and Guidance*. See page 20 of this Quick Reference Guide.

4 Report the incident

All incidents must be reported to the department within 3-business days of the incident occurring or being disclosed to the service provider.

5 Determine the follow up action for major impact incidents

All major impact incidents are subject to an investigation or review. Allegations of abuse, sexual exploitation – grooming, neglect by a staff member, caregiver or another client, and unexplained injuries must always be investigated.

Determining whether or not an event / circumstance is a client incident

- 1 Determine if the event / circumstance is a client incident
- 2 Select an incident type
- 3 Select an incident category (major impact or non-major impact)
- 4 Report an incident
- 5 Determine review or investigative action for major impact incidents

A client incident is any event or circumstance that occurred during service delivery and resulted in harm to the client or is reasonably likely to cause serious harm to the client.

An incident that has occurred 'during service delivery' is an incident that occurs during any of the following circumstances:

- When the client is receiving a service
- When the client attends a service provider's premises, including the area within the boundaries of the premises or the surrounding area within sight of the premises.
- For clients under the care of 24-hour services, such as out-of-home care, custodial services, supported accommodation or child protection, any incident is deemed to occur during service delivery.
- For off-site/outreach services, this includes incidents that occur at the location of service delivery and the surrounding area within sight of that location.
- When a client is receiving non-residential services, and an incident occurs that is related to the provision of the support or service.

Determining if the event needs to be reported

Related to the provision of the support or service means the provider action or decision has harmed the client, or a direct link exists between the service provision and harm experienced by the client.

'During service delivery' excludes harm that occurs to a client:

- ☒ In the general course of life. For example, when a client is receiving episodic care and an incident occurs when the client is not receiving the services. This exclusion does not apply to clients who are under the care of 24-hour services.
- ☒ Following adequate and appropriate discharge or release from the department-funded service or following the completion of the service provision period.

Selecting an incident type

Selecting an incident type

- 1 Determine if the event / circumstance is a client incident
- 2 **Select an incident type**
- 3 Select an incident category (major impact or non-major impact)
- 4 Report an incident
- 5 Determine review or investigative action for major impact incidents

The CIMS incident report must contain a primary incident type. There are 18 incident types in CIMS.

For complex incidents, where the client experiences more than one type of harm, a secondary incident type can be recorded in the one incident report.

Service providers should report an incident under the incident type that caused the greatest harm to the client.

1. Select incident types

Incident type	Major impact	Non-major impact	Assess impact
Absent client			Yes
Attempted suicide	Yes		
Death	Yes		
Emotional / psychological abuse	Yes		
Emotional / psychological harm		Yes	
Escape from secure facility	Yes		
Financial abuse	Yes		
Inappropriate physical treatment		Yes	
Inappropriate sexual behaviour		Yes	
Injury	Yes (unexplained)		Yes (explained)
Medication error			Yes
Neglect	Yes		
Physical abuse	Yes		
Self-harm			Yes
Serious risk		Yes	
Sexual abuse	Yes		
Sexual exploitation – grooming	Yes		
Sexual exploitation – suspected		Yes	

Incident categories

Definitions of incident types

Incident type	Definition
Absent client	A client's whereabouts is unknown, or is known but their absence is not approved, and is considered likely to result in harm.
Attempted suicide	Actions that intentionally cause harm or injury to self with the intention to end one's own life.
Death	The death of a client during service delivery where the death is unanticipated or unexpected. This includes death as a result of the use or misuse of drugs, alcohol or other substances.
Emotional/psychological abuse	Intentional or reckless actions or behaviours that reject, isolate, intimidate, or frighten by threats, or the exposure to family violence, to the extent that the client's behaviour is disturbed, or their emotional/psychological wellbeing has been seriously impaired.
Emotional/psychological harm	Client witnesses, hears or is otherwise exposed to an event circumstance or action which causes an emotional or behavioural response, such as anxiety, fear or helplessness, beyond what is usual and actively case managed.
Escape from a secure facility	This incident type only applies to clients in custodial care and/or disability services, clients subject to compulsory treatment or judicial orders. This incident type includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A client escaping a centre within defined boundaries• Failure of a client to return from temporary leave

Incident categorisation	Considerations
Assess impact	<p>When a Safe Custody Warrant has been issued, report as major impact.</p> <p>When a Missing Person's Report has been made, assess impact.</p>
Always major impact	
Always major impact	<p>Client deaths as the consequence of the progression of a diagnosed condition or illness are not reportable as a client incident unless the death occurred in a disability residential service.</p>
Always major impact	<p>This definition aligns with the significant emotional and psychological harm interpretation by the Commission for Children and Young People for the Reportable Conduct Scheme.</p>
Always non-major impact	
Always major impact	

Incident categories

Definitions of incident types

Incident type	Definition
Financial abuse	<p>The misuse of a client's assets, property, possessions, or finances without their consent or through coercion. It includes but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Denying a client the use of their own assets, property, possessions or finances• Theft, fraud, exploitation or pressure in relation to assets, property, possessions or finances• Obtaining assets through deception
Inappropriate physical treatment	<p>Intentional or reckless actions that involve the inappropriate use or threatened use of physical contact or force against a person that does not meet abuse thresholds. This includes but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Threats of physical abuse made to a client by another person <p>The lawful use of force, such as the lawful and duly authorized use of physical restraint, is not reportable in CIMS.</p>
Inappropriate sexual behaviour	<p>Actual or attempted unwanted actions of a sexual nature against, with or in the presence of a client, that do not meet abuse or exploitation thresholds. Consideration must be given to cumulative harm and whether this upgrades the incident to the abuse threshold.</p>
Injury – explained	<p>Actions or behaviours that unintentionally cause harm to a client and require medical attention.</p> <p>An explained injury is an injury sustained by a client which has an identifiable cause.</p>

Incident categorisation	Considerations
Always major impact	
Always non-major impact	
Always non-major impact	<p>Staff to client incidents must not be reported under this category. Report under 'Sexual abuse' incident type and consider obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.</p>
Assess impact	

Incident categories

Definitions of incident types

Incident type	Definition
Injury – unexplained	<p>Actions or behaviours that unintentionally cause harm to a client and require medical attention.</p> <p>An unexplained injury is an injury sustained by a client that does not have a direct cause, or the explanation of the injury is inconsistent, vague or unlikely.</p>
Medication error	<p>Refers to any error in the administration of a client’s prescribe medication, where the service provider is responsible for such administration. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incorrect administration of medication• The incorrect or unauthorized administration of PRN restraint medication or psychotropic medications
Neglect	<p>Intentional or reckless actions or behaviours by caregivers or staff which fail to provide for the health, safety and wellbeing needs of a client and the client experiences major impact harm.</p>

Incident categorisation	Considerations
Always major impact	
Assess impact	Client refusal and missed due to absenteeism to be managed through case management processes.
Always major impact	This definition aligns with the significant neglect interpretation by the Commission for Children and Young People for the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Incident categories

Definitions of incident types

Incident type	Definition
Physical abuse	<p>The intentional or reckless use of physical force against a client, or the intentional or reckless use of conduct or behaviour that causes the client to believe physical force will be used against them.</p> <p>This includes but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct or behaviour whereby contact is made with the client and causes major impact harm• Conduct or behaviour which causes the client to believe physical force would be used that would seriously injure or harm the client• Repeated conduct or behaviour where contact is made with the client but does not cause major impact harm• Reckless behaviour by worker or volunteer which causes actual or threatened physical violence
Self-harm	<p>Actions that intentionally cause harm or injury to self without the intention to end one's own life. This includes the misuse of prescription or over-the-counter medications with the intention to harm self.</p>
Serious risk	<p>To align with the Social Services Regulation Act 2021, serious risk is:</p> <p>An incident that is reasonably likely to cause serious harm to a service user (s48(2)(b)).</p> <p>Serious harm is defined in the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Death/Permanent or long-term serious impairment/Permanent or long-term serious disfigurement/ Loss of foetus; or• Permanent or long-term severe psychological injury or development delay

Incident categorisation	Considerations
Always major impact	<p>Staff-to-client specific:</p> <p>Physical abuse does not include an act that constitutes a lawful use of force, such as the lawful and duly authorized use of physical restraint.</p> <p>This definition aligns with the physical violence interpretation by the Commission for Children and Young People for the Reportable Conduct Scheme.</p>
Assess impact	
Always non-major impact	

Incident categories

Definitions of incident types

Incident type	Definition
Sexual abuse	<p>Actual, attempted or alleged actions of a sexual nature against, with or in the presence of a client without consent, or by force, intimidation and/or coercion.</p> <p>This includes sexual exploitation where a person over the age of 18 engages a person under 18, or a person with a cognitive disability, in sexual activity through force, coercion or manipulation in exchange for goods, services, favours or promises. The client may provide consent for the activity, however, due to their age and/or vulnerabilities and the power imbalance in the relationship, their ability to provide informed consent is impacted or impaired.</p>
Sexual exploitation – grooming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct by a person over 18-years-of-age towards a client that includes non-sexual activities, such as providing drugs, alcohol, money or mobile phones, affection or attention paid to the client, deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with the client, to lower the client’s inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity; and• There is confirmed knowledge of exploitative activity, including dates, times and/or locations. This includes:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The person of interest is known, or is currently being established– Client has received goods, services or favours with the promise of sexual activity <p>Reporting under this incident type includes contact with a known person of interest or registered sexual offender.</p>
Sexual exploitation – suspected	<p>A client under the age of 18’s behaviour or actions suggest that they are being sexually exploited, however, there is no confirmed knowledge of sexual exploitation.</p>

Incident categorisation	Considerations
Always major impact	<p>Staff to client incidents must always be reported as sexual abuse.</p> <p>This definition has been informed by the sexual misconduct and sexual offences interpretation by the Commission for Children and Young People for the Reportable Conduct Scheme.</p>
Always major impact	<p>This definition draws upon the Crimes Amendment (Grooming) Act 2014 and the Child Protection Manual sexual exploitation tier one response.</p>
Always non-major impact	<p>Reporting under this incident type includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The client has in their possession money, material goods or services that have not been acquired through employment income or known source <p>This definition draws upon the Child Protection Manual sexual exploitation tier two response.</p>

Selecting an incident category

- 1 Determine if the event / circumstance is a client incident
- 2 Select an incident type
- 3 Select an incident category (major impact or non-major impact)
- 4 Report an incident
- 5 Determine review or investigative action for major impact incidents

CIMS categorises incidents as **major impact** or **non-major impact**, determined by the harm experienced by the client.

Most incident types have a mandatory category of impact, see page 9 for the mandatory categorisation of incident types.

There are four incident types that require the service provider to assess the impact on the client to determine the incident category:

- absent client
- explained injury
- medication error
- self harm.

Impact assessments must focus on the level of harm the client has experienced. This assessment is based on professional judgement and the information available at the time of reporting. This includes the level of injury, response/reaction of the client, other signs of harm that may be apparent and the client's intersectionality.

The staff member witness to the incident, or the staff member to whom the incident was disclosed, completes the incident report on the CIMS IT webform or the services providers IT system and determines the incident category.

Major impact incident

Harm that is experienced by the client that:

- Caused impairment, disfigurement or injury that is likely to be permanent or long-term or death; and/or
- Is an accumulation of harms resulting in impairment, disfigurement, or injury that is likely to be permanent, or long-term or death; and/or
- Requires acute medical or mental health response; and/or
- Requires significant additional resources/supports to respond to the needs of the client, such as long-term placement change or additional staffing supports.

Non-major impact incident

- The client experiences harm from the incident at the time, but harm is not permanent or long-term. The incident does not require additional resources or supports beyond the client's existing service, care arrangement or care planning to manage the response; or
- The client was reasonably likely to experience serious harm from the incident.

Determining whether an incident is major or non-major

- 1 Determine if the event / circumstance is a client incident
- 2 Select an incident type
- 3 Select an incident category (major impact or non-major impact)
- 4 Report an incident
- 5 Determine review or investigative action for major impact incidents

The following are examples of questions to consider when determining the categorisation of the client incident, based upon the professional judgment of the service provider:

Client experience

- Are there cultural or social factors that may compound or influence the harm experienced by the client?
- Is there a relationship between the client and subject of allegation that may compound the experience of harm? For example, imbalance of power or betrayal of trust.
- How do the client's social identities interact and affect their experience of harm?



Severity of outcome

- What level of treatment did the client require as a result of the incident?
- How has the harm from the incident affected the client's day-to-day life?



Vulnerability of client

- Does the client's age and stage of development, disability, culture or gender increase the severity of suffering and trauma experienced?
- Does the client's individual mental or physical capacity, understanding of potential risks or communication skills affect their participation in social life?



Pattern and history of incidents

- Has the client experienced harm of this type before?
- Does the client's previous experience of harm compound the client's current experience?
- Remember, if a non-major impact incident is related to a pattern of incidents for one client, it is important to consider, when taken together, whether this incident should be reported as major impact.

Reporting an incident

- 1 Determine if the event / circumstance is a client incident
- 2 Select an incident type
- 3 Select an incident category (major impact or non-major impact)
- 4 Report an incident
- 5 Determine review or investigative action for major impact incidents

Once you have selected an appropriate incident type and category, you must report the incident to the department. The incident report may be submitted through the CIMS IT webform, or through a third-party system that interfaces with the CIMS IT system.

Both major impact and non-major impact incidents must be reported and submitted to the department within **three business days** of the incident occurring or being disclosed to the service provider.

Reporting major impact incidents

Reporting major impact incidents

Complete and submit a client incident report to the department within three business days

The reporting process for **major impact incidents** is outlined below. Reporting major impact incidents in a timely and complete manner helps to ensure that the client's safety and wellbeing is being addressed and that the incident is being managed appropriately. The report will also form the basis of any subsequent investigation or review.

Major impact incidents must be reported electronically to the department and recorded in the service provider's client incident register.

Incident occurs or is disclosed

The service provider becomes aware of the incident and responds in accordance with page 3 of this summary guide.

Record incident

The incident report is created in the CIMS IT webform or third-party system with the incident type and incident category registered as **major impact**.

Endorse incident

CEO or delegated authority within the service provider **reviews and approves the client incident report and the follow-up action of an investigation or review**.

Report incident

Within three business days of the incident occurring or incident disclosure, the CEO or delegated authority submits the completed client incident report to the department.

Update client file

The client incident report is saved on the service provider's client incident register and the client file.

Reporting non-major impact incidents

- 1 Determine if the event / circumstance is a client incident
- 2 Select an incident type
- 3 Select an incident category (major impact or non-major impact)
- 4 Report an incident
- 5 Determine review or investigative action for major impact incidents

Reporting non-major impact incidents

Reporting non-major impact incidents

Record in the service provider's client incident register within three business days.

Submit non-major client incident reports to the department within three business days.

The reporting process for **non-major impact** incidents is outlined below. Non-major impact incidents are required to be reported to the department and recorded in the service provider's client incident register within three business days of the incident occurring or the service provider becoming aware of the incident.

Incident occurs or is disclosed

The service provider becomes aware of an incident and responds in accordance with page 3 of this summary guide.

Record incident

The incident report is created in the CIMS IT webform or third-party system with the incident type and incident category registered as **non-major impact**.

Endorse incident

CEO or delegated authority within the service provider reviews and approves the non-major impact client incident report.

Report incident

Within three business days of the incident occurring or incident disclosure, the CEO or delegated authority submits the completed client incident report to the department.

Update register and client file

The incident details are recorded in the service provider's client incident register within three business days and a copy of the incident report saved on the client file.

Determine investigative or review action for major impact incidents

- 1 Determine if the event / circumstance is a client incident
- 2 Select an incident type
- 3 Select an incident category (major impact or non-major impact)
- 4 Report an incident
- 5 Determine investigative or review action for major impact incidents

All major impact incidents must be subject to either an investigation or a review led by the service provider.

Both an investigation and review concludes with a service provider making recommendations to promote the client's safety and well-being, and/or improve the quality of services being delivered to the client.

Incident investigation

An investigation must be conducted for all incidents of:

- Any abuse type (staff-to-client or client-to-client)
- Sexual exploitation – grooming (staff-to-client or client-to-client)
- Neglect; and
- Unexplained injury

An incident investigation determined whether the abuse or neglect of a client has occurred.

Investigations are a formal process of collecting information to ascertain the facts, which may inform any subsequent criminal, civil, disciplinary or administrative sanctions.

Incident review

An **incident review** is required for all major impact incidents that are **not subject to an investigation**.

An incident review analyses an incident to identify what happened, determine whether the incident was managed appropriately, and to identify the contributing factors to the incident.

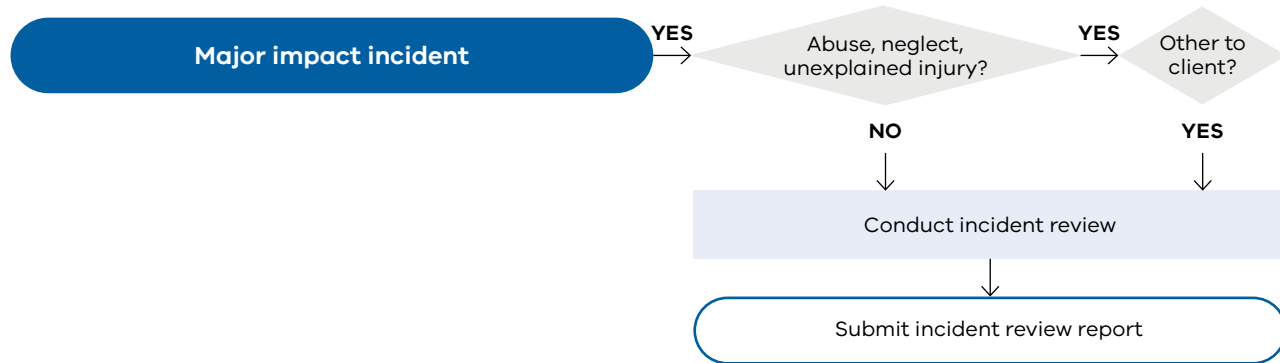
The incident review identifies subsequent learnings which are implemented to promote the safety and wellbeing of the client, and improve the quality of services being delivered to the client.

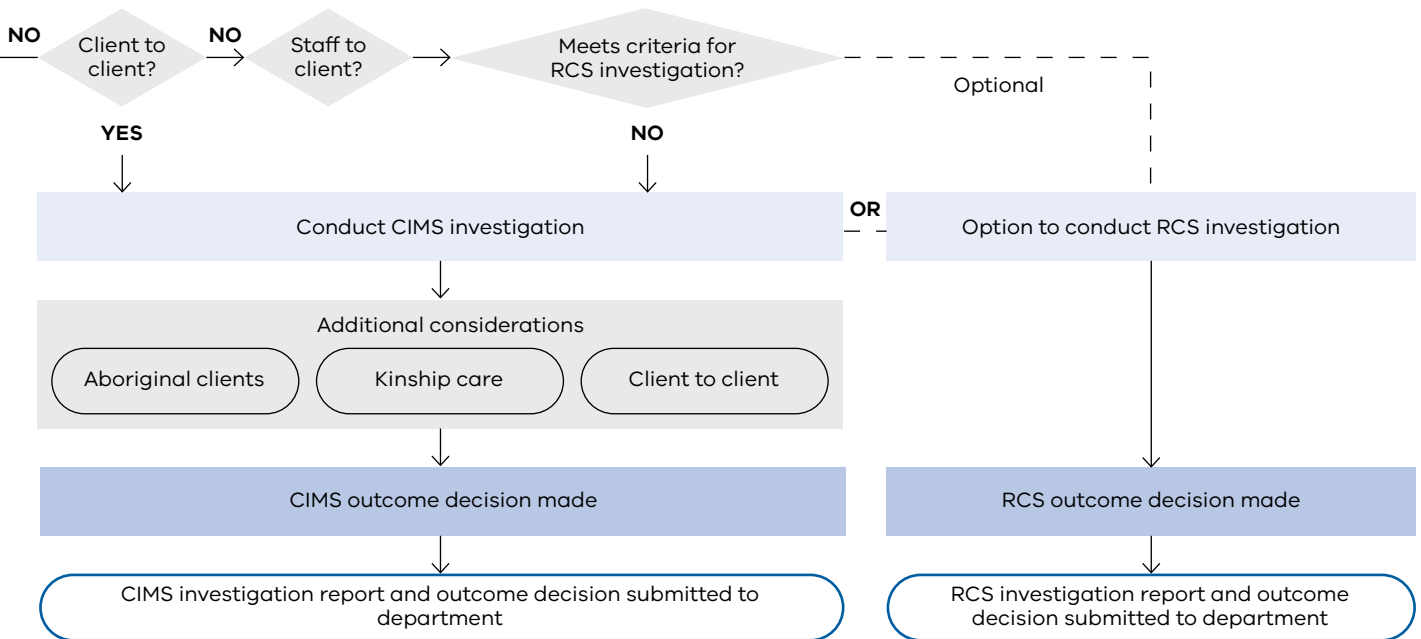
Determine investigative or review action for major impact incidents

The follow-up action of investigation or review is submitted to the department when reporting the incident in the CIMS IT webform or third-party system.

Remember, the incident report must be submitted within three-business days of the incident occurring or being disclosed to the service provider.

A high-level overview of the key decisions within this process is outlined below. See Chapter 4: Investigations and Chapter 5: Reviews of the *Client Management System – Policy and Guidance* for more details.





Where to get more help

Client Incident Management System – Policy and Guidance <<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/cims>>

Visit the CIMS webpage <<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/cims>>

Visit the Funded Agency Channel <<https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/incident-reporting>>

Email the Operations Support team <StatewideCIMS@dhhs.vic.gov.au>

To receive this document in another format email StatewideCIMS@dffh.vic.gov.au

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