



# Practice Standards for Working with Women Affected by Domestic and Family Violence



**Queensland Government**  
Department of **Families**

**Practice Standards for  
Working with Women  
Affected by  
Domestic and Family Violence**

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# INTRODUCTION

The response in Queensland to domestic and family violence depends on the expertise, experience, and commitment of workers in the field who deal daily with the realities of women escaping from violence. These practice standards formalise practices and procedures which have been developed over decades by service staff, and more recently, court assistance workers, to ensure that women affected by domestic and family violence are provided with the best service possible. They also allow for the Department of Families to ensure that funding arrangements reflect the aim of high quality service by linking funding with adherence to the practice standards.

The Department of Families (DOF) leads the Government's response to domestic and family violence in Queensland. The Department's leadership role is in providing vision and direction for service delivery as well as practical strategies for implementing that vision and direction and ensuring the achievement of specified outcomes. The Department's funding handbook nominates outcomes required of the services it funds to respond to domestic and family violence. These outcomes are:

- 1: Victims and child witnesses of domestic and family violence are supported in dealing with the impact of domestic and family violence.
- 2: People affected by domestic and family violence are assisted in having their multiple needs met through coordinated, inter-agency responses at the local level.
- 3: A culture of intolerance of domestic and family violence is developed in communities and individuals.


The practice standards were developed through extensive consultation with people working in services, including workers who provide Court assistance; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies; Police; and other key stakeholders who are involved in providing services to people affected by domestic and family violence. The standards recognise the specific needs of women from a diverse range of backgrounds and the importance of a response that reflects those specific needs.

The good practice measures are provided by way of suggestion only. Practice hints are examples of practical ways for meeting the standards.

The standards are intended for the reference of workers in services funded by the Department to respond to women who have experienced domestic and family violence. The standards also apply to workers who provide Court assistance. Where standards apply to workers who provide Court assistance, they are provided in the shaded boxes. These standards replace the *Standards for Good Practice in Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) Funded Domestic Violence Services for Women and Children in Queensland (2002)*. SAAP funded domestic violence and family violence services must also comply with some specific SAAP requirements such as participation in national data collection and the use of a case management approach in working with clients.

Each Practice Standard is divided into Minimum Practice Standards, Good Practice (indicated with ■) and Practice Hints. Compliance with minimum practice standards is necessary to meet the terms contained in service plans between services and the Department of Families.

This document is also a valuable resource for generalist services who work with this client group but who do not receive funding from the Department.



The Department of Families will work through its regional offices with funded services and workers who provide Court assistance to assist them to comply with the minimum practice standards. The Department will also provide training on the practice standards for relevant staff, so that the vision contained in this document translates to improved services for women who are affected by domestic and family violence.

**Readers may also wish to refer to the following related documents:**

- . *National Practice Standards for Working with Children and Young people who have lived with domestic violence*, an initiative of the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence.
- . *DRAFT Commonwealth Competency Standards for people who come into professional contact with those affected by domestic and family violence*.
- . *Domestic Violence Protocol-Providing safety, information and support in the Queensland Magistrates Court Registry*, Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Queensland.
- . *Developing your organisation* found at [www.families.qld.gov.au](http://www.families.qld.gov.au).



# PHILOSOPHY

## (THINKING ABOUT GENDER, RACE AND CLASS)

These practice standards have been developed through extensive consultation. They are underpinned and informed by women's lived experiences of domestic and family violence. Of paramount importance in responding to a woman who has been subjected to domestic and family violence is the non-judgmental recognition and validation of her experience by workers who have appropriate skills and knowledge.

A woman's capacity to heal fully will be enhanced by an informed response which places domestic and family violence in its socio-political context. That is that domestic and family violence is an exercise in power and control. For women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, immigrant and refugee women, and women with disabilities, there are additional issues of colonisation, racism and discrimination which must also be raised and addressed to ensure an appropriate response.

Responses based on women's lived experiences of domestic and family violence are reinforced by a commitment to basic human rights for each and every woman and child. These include the right to live free from violence and the right to make informed choices.

These standards demonstrate this commitment and acknowledge the impact of broad social issues such as gender, race, ethnicity, disability and class.

## DEFINITIONS

It is important that there is a shared understanding of the terminology that is commonly used in responding to domestic and family violence. The definitions are provided with this purpose in mind. (Text in yellow shaded boxes is information specific to workers who provide Court assistance.)

### Advocacy

An advocate builds relationships with other key stakeholders in order to gain specialist knowledge about the systems and services that exist to respond to the needs of women who have experienced domestic and family violence. **Advocacy** involves providing specialist assistance and support for women in order to help them to negotiate these systems effectively. This may also involve advocating on behalf of a woman (with her consent) with other key stakeholders.

**Advocacy** may involve negotiating on the client's behalf with groups including:

- non-government, community or government agencies (such as Centrelink);
- family and friends;
- schools;
- employers;
- police; or
- legal practitioners.

**Advocacy** does not mean the provision of legal representation or legal advice.

#### FOR WORKERS WHO PROVIDE COURT ASSISTANCE

The term advocacy is often used in cases where a person/worker or Solicitor is making an application for a Domestic Violence Protection Order as an "authorised person" on behalf of a woman.

Workers who provide Court assistance need to guard against giving legal advice in their advocacy role. A woman should always be referred to a legal service for legal advice. **(See also the definitions of legal advice and legal information.)**

### Associate

**Associate** is a term which comes from the domestic violence legislation, where it broadly means a friend or relative who has been affected by the violence or the threat of violence. It is usually someone who is close to the woman, and may include children, a work colleague or the neighbour of the woman. It does not include the perpetrator of the violence.

### Case management

**Case management** is a service delivery mechanism which aims to enhance client outcomes through a more focused approach to assessment and support planning. There are eight stages in SAAP case management:

- Entry/Screening
- Assessment
- Planning
- Direct Service
- Coordination
- Monitoring and Review
- Exit Planning/Case Closure and Follow up
- Evaluation

SAAP funded services are required to operate a case management approach to working with clients.

(Source: National Case Management Working Group (1999) *Good Practice in SAAP Services*, p3)

## Client

**Client** means a woman affected by domestic and family violence who is seeking assistance from the service or workers who provide Court assistance.

## Client pathway

A **client pathway** describes how people interact with a service system that is relevant to their needs. The aim is to ensure that the service system is coordinated and unimpeded, so that from any entry point, a range of services may be accessed as part of a holistic response to domestic and family violence. **See also Coordinated Community Response.**

## Coaching a witness

The term **coaching** means telling a witness what to say when giving evidence in court or suggesting how she should say it. **Coaching** also includes prompting the witness in Court, whether by gesture or other non-verbal cue. **Coaching** can jeopardise the outcome of a matter before the Court as a Magistrate or Judge is likely to dismiss a matter if she or he believes that the evidence being given is tainted through **coaching**.

## Consent

**Consent** means gaining informed agreement from the woman for a particular course of action. This involves ensuring that prior to making a choice the woman is aware of all factors that may bear on the decision, including the range and likelihood of possible repercussions.

## Coordinated Community Response to domestic and family violence (CCR)

A **CCR** is a model of practice that involves the development of collaborative working relationships between all staff and key stakeholders involved in responding to domestic and family violence. This model aims to facilitate clear **client pathways** through the range of relevant services. This model also aims to empower clients, reduce duplication of service and eliminate any possible victimisation of the client by the service system.

A **CCR** may involve establishing interagency procedures, coordinating multi-agency training, monitoring collaborative practice, reviewing cases and disseminating public information.

Possible services involved in a **CCR** include:

- Domestic violence specific services, including domestic violence regional services, refuges, safe houses, and specialist workers who provide Court assistance;
- Specialist domestic and family violence services, eg, services that work with:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
  - lesbian, bisexual and transgender women;
  - migrant and refugee women from other cultural and linguistic backgrounds;
  - women in prison - pre and post release;
  - women with a disability;
  - women with mental health issues; and
  - women with alcohol and substance abuse issues.
- Services that work with perpetrators of domestic and family violence;
- Services that work with children affected by domestic and family violence;
- The Queensland Police Service, including Police Prosecutors and Domestic Violence Liaison Officers;
- Legal Services including Legal Aid Queensland, the National Aboriginal and Islander Legal Services Secretariat (NAILSS), and the Women's Legal Service;
- Hospitals;
- Community Health Centres;
- Specialist support services;

- Courts;
- Translating and Interpreting Services; and
- Youth Services.

### **Critical Incident**

A **critical incident** is an event which compromises or threatens to compromise the physical or emotional safety of a woman and/or her associates (including her children, relatives, friends, other residents, or the workers). A critical incident may for example be if a perpetrator has located a high-security refuge; or if a woman has self-harmed.

### **Diversity**

**Diversity** recognises that an individual woman may have specific needs or a cultural background or preference that bears on her experience of violence, her expectations for herself and the relationship, and what might be the appropriate response by workers to that experience. Examples of diversity include, but are not limited to:

- an Aboriginal background;
- a Torres Strait Islander background;
- other cultural and linguistic background, eg, migrants and refugees;
- age, including young and older people;
- religious or other affiliation;
- disability;
- geographical location eg rural or remote areas;
- imprisonment - pre and post release;
- same-sex relationship;
- transgender;
- mental health issues; or
- addiction or dependency issues.

### **Domestic Violence**

**Domestic violence** means violence between people specified in the domestic violence legislation. It includes:

- wilful injury;
- wilful damage to property;
- intimidation or harassment including stalking;
- indecent behaviour toward the spouse without the spouse's consent; and
- a threat or attempt to commit any of the above.

The term '**domestic violence**' covers a range of behaviours and can involve physical abuse such as punching, hitting, slapping, shoving and other forms of physical and sexual assault. **Domestic violence** does **not only** involve physical abuse and can include a range of behaviours that may be used to gain power and control over the victim or frighten the victim, eg, threatening to injure or otherwise harm the spouse or the spouse's children, or constantly following a spouse. It is the important elements of fear and intimidation that distinguishes between conflict in a relationship and domestic violence. (See also the definition of **family violence**, below).

### **Domestic Violence Order (DVO)**

A **Domestic Violence Order** is a civil order made by a Court under the *Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989*. The DVO restricts the respondent spouse's behaviour in order to protect the aggrieved spouse, their relatives and/or their associates from further domestic violence. Breaches of a DVO are criminal in nature, and may result in serious penalties, including jail. In certain circumstances, children and other people affected by the violence may be named on the order as an aggrieved person. In these cases, the aggrieved person receives the same protection from the order as the applicant.

## Empowerment

**Empowerment** is a process whereby a woman is actively involved in assessing her needs and has some control over what service will be provided to her. This process also involves assisting the woman to improve her self-esteem, gain knowledge, develop skills and make informed choices in order to be in control of her life.

## Facilitator

A **facilitator** is a worker who assists with, and monitors a group process and can be a worker of the service or an external worker.

## Family violence

**Family violence** is a term preferred by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and the term is used in this document with specific reference to those communities. The term **'family violence'** captures the importance of kinship and family connections, and acknowledges that this has consequences for the causes and effects of violence in Indigenous families and communities.

**Family violence** is the beating of a partner or other family members, homicide, suicide and self-inflicted injury, rape, child abuse and child sexual abuse, incest and the sale of young family members for misuse by others as a way of obtaining funds for drinking and gambling. In addition to physical injury, family violence includes verbal harassment, psychological and/or emotional abuse, and economic deprivation. (*Tjunparni: Family Violence in Indigenous Australia in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Taskforce on Violence Report*). (See also the definition of **domestic violence**, above.)

## Legal advice

**Legal advice** involves advising women as to the most appropriate legal course of action, interpreting the law and/or making an assessment of the possible ramifications of a particular legal course of action. Women should always be referred to a legal service for legal advice.

## Legal information

**Legal information** involves describing legal procedures or processes and may include providing basic information about:

- the domestic violence legislation or other area of the law;
- making a complaint to Police regarding a criminal offence;
- Court processes including domestic violence hearings, and Family Court or criminal proceedings, including the role of the Magistrate or Judge;
- making protection orders effective;
- the role of the Police; and
- the role of legal representatives, including individual solicitors, representatives from Legal Aid Queensland, Prosecutors, and community legal centres.

Legal information **does not** include telling women the most appropriate course of legal action to pursue, interpreting the law **or** making an assessment of the ramifications of any legal course of action.

## Perpetrator/respondent spouse

**Perpetrator/respondent spouse** means the person who carries out domestic and family violence. The perpetrator may also be called the primary aggressor in cases of cross applications for domestic violence orders (**DVOs**).

## Safety plan

A **safety plan** assists a woman to identify and recognise her safety needs and plan for emergency situations. **Safety plans** can be developed to assist a woman to escape the violent situation, or to remain with the person who has abused her. In either case, the aim of the **safety plan** is to assist the woman to stay, or to leave, as safely as possible.

## Safety/Risk Assessment

Conducting a **Safety/Risk Assessment** involves the consideration of a number of factors that impact on the safety of individual women, children and young people, in order to determine the current risk of harm to them. These factors include:

- the current whereabouts of the perpetrator (if known);
- the history and level of the violence;
- the woman's ability to make informed choices to protect herself and/or her associates including her children;
- whether the woman is in crisis;
- whether anyone else is in immediate danger; and
- the woman's access to resources and support.

## Spouse

**Spouse** is defined in the *Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989* and means:

- (a) either one of a male or female who are or have been married to each other;
  - (b) either one of the biological parents of a child, whether or not they are or have been married or are residing or have resided together; or
  - (c) either one of two persons, whether of the same or the opposite sex, who are residing or have resided together as a couple.
- Two persons are a couple if they reside together in a relationship that is normally considered by the community to indicate that they are a couple.
  - A relationship is one formed on the basis of intimacy, trust and personal commitment and does not include, for example, a relationship where the 2 persons are merely cotenants.

## The sector

**The sector** means the range of services and agencies who are involved in responding to domestic and family violence, including workers who provide Court assistance and services funded under the key funding area of domestic violence prevention and homelessness.

## The Service

**The service or service provider** means the organisation that is funded by the Department of Families to work with women affected by domestic and family violence.

## Worker(s)

**Worker(s)** are employees of a **service** (see definition above), or workers who provide Court assistance, depending on the context. These workers may be employed in a range of positions including, coordinator, manager, information worker, support worker, counsellor or group worker. Workers may also include any volunteer workers working in the service, where these volunteers are providing direct service delivery to women affected by domestic and family violence.

# THE PRACTICE STANDARDS

The standards are based on ten principles. The principles were identified as a result of consultation and research including obtaining information from other jurisdictions and literature reviews. Each principle has identified Practice Standards, which are divided into Minimum Practice Standards, and Good Practice. Compliance with minimum practice standards is essential and will be measured as part of the funding arrangements between service providers and the Department of Families. “Practice Hints” are simply suggestions developed by people working in the area or by government for providing the best service possible to women who are affected by domestic and family violence.

## PRINCIPLES

### **PRINCIPLE 1: SAFETY**

The safety of women and their associates (including their children), and of workers has priority.

### **PRINCIPLE 2: RESPECT**

Women are treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity.

### **PRINCIPLE 3: ACCESS AND EQUITY**

Women are supported and assisted to access services on an equitable basis.

### **PRINCIPLE 4: EMPOWERMENT**

Women identify and express their needs and make decisions in a supportive and non-judgmental environment.

### **PRINCIPLE 5: CONFIDENTIALITY**

Women have their right to confidentiality respected and observed and are informed of situations where that confidentiality may be limited.

### **PRINCIPLE 6: COORDINATION**

Services operate within a context of interagency cooperation, collaboration and coordinated service delivery.

### **PRINCIPLE 7: ADVOCACY**

Women affected by domestic and family violence are provided with appropriate advocacy.

### **PRINCIPLE 8: PREVENTION**

A culture of intolerance about domestic and family violence is developed in communities and individuals.

### **PRINCIPLE 9: ACCOUNTABILITY**

Women receive quality service from appropriately skilled workers.

### **PRINCIPLE 10: SERVICE ENVIRONMENT**

Women access a service environment that enables effective service provision.

# PRINCIPLE 1: SAFETY

## The safety of women and their associates (including their children), and of workers has priority.

The safety of women affected by domestic and family violence, their children, relatives and associates, and the safety of workers, must be given the highest priority at all times. Workers must consider the safety needs of women and their children at home and when attending the service or the Courthouse. Workers should not only consider the physical safety of women, but also their emotional and/or psychological safety.

Workers must ensure that safety/risk assessments are undertaken to identify potential safety risks for women and their associates, including their children. This is to accurately assess safety needs and to ensure that appropriate referrals are made. Workers must also ensure that women are assisted to develop safety plans to promote their safety and the safety of their children.

The service must take steps to ensure the safety of workers is upheld and that the service premises ensure the safety of workers and clients.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 1.1 Safety risks for women and their associates, including their children are identified and responded to.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 1.1.1 The service has a safety/risk assessment process to identify potential safety risks and assess the safety needs for the woman and her associates, including her children.
- 1.1.2 The worker assists the woman to develop a safety plan. (See **safety plan** definition).
- 1.1.3 The service has a policy for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect.
- 1.1.4 The service has a policy for reporting the disclosure of serious criminal offences committed against women and/or their associates, including their children.
- 1.1.5 The worker encourages, supports and empowers a woman who wishes to make a complaint to the Police or other relevant body in relation to criminal offences.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

An example of a safety/risk assessment tool is included in Appendix 2.

- The safety/risk assessment process includes informing the woman of her right to safety; and assisting her to identify her safety needs, and the safety needs of her children.
- This safety/risk assessment process includes consideration of each woman's immediate referral needs, along with the referral needs of her children. When required, the worker:
  - a. refers the woman for medical treatment if she has sustained any physical injuries, and/or to a sexual assault service if she has been sexually assaulted;
  - b. arranges for immediate referral to safe accommodation, including refuge or a safe house;

- c. ensures the woman has the Police emergency number and information on the Domestic and Family Violence Access and Support Service and its 1800 Number;
  - d. ensures the woman has information on legal protection available to her and if necessary refers the woman to a worker who provide Court assistance, Solicitor, Community Legal Centre, Legal Aid Queensland or Courthouse to make application for a Domestic Violence Protection Order or refers her for legal advice;
  - e. ensures the woman has information on the impact of domestic and family violence on children and young people, and referrals to children’s services;
  - f. ensures that children and young people have information on the impact of domestic and family violence on them; and/or
  - g. the worker clarifies with the woman whether there are any safety precautions that must be taken if the worker phones the woman at home, eg, not leaving their name and number or identifying the nature of the call when another person other than the woman answers the phone.
- The safety plan will:
    - a. assist a woman to escape the violent situation;
    - b. remain with the person who has abused her, in a way that protects her or reduces the likelihood of them being in violent situations; and or
    - c. assist the woman to travel safely to the organisation, courthouse or other location.
  - The worker is aware that the woman’s safety requirements may change from time to time and regularly assists the woman to reassess her safety requirements.
  - The policy on reporting the disclosure of serious criminal offences:
    - a. recognises that women may be reluctant to make complaints to the Police for a range of reasons, including fear of the consequences for their partner, experiences of torture/trauma in their country of origin, and concerns about the impact on the family;
    - b. assist a woman who chooses to remain with the person who has abused her, in a way that protects her or reduces the likelihood of her being in a violent situation; and or;
    - c. considers the specific issues related to lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and recognises that many of these women may be reluctant to make a complaint to police for fear of judgment, trivialisation and/or being ‘outed’; and/or
    - d. details procedures that promote women’s safety and must be followed where women do not wish to make a complaint to the Police;
  - The worker is aware that should they see the woman in public they will not make contact with or acknowledge the woman until she initiates the contact/acknowledgment; and
  - The worker assists the woman to apply for (obtain) an urgent temporary protection order when necessary.
  - In areas where domestic violence applications are not heard regularly, the worker assesses the urgency of the matter and in a situation of urgency and with the woman’s consent, the worker contacts the Police in order to make an urgent temporary application under *s 54 of the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989*. Alternatively, the worker contacts the Courthouse to see if arrangements can be made to obtain an urgent temporary order.

## Good Practice

- The service's answering machine message gives details :-
  - about times when the service is available;
  - about emergency 'ooo' referral to the Police;
  - about details regarding the 1800 Domestic and Family Violence Access and Support Service; and
  - asks the woman in leaving a message to clarify any safety precautions that must be taken if the worker needs to phone her back. (eg. not identifying service etc.)

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 1.2 Safety risks for service workers and workers who provide Court assistance are identified and responded to.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 1.2.1 The service has a written safety policy.
- 1.2.2 The service monitors and reviews the safety policy, practices and procedures on a regular basis.
- 1.2.3 The service provides safety training on induction and on an ongoing basis in accordance with the safety policy.

## Good Practice

- The service encourages workers to employ safe practices and not take any unnecessary risks.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The safety policy reinforces worker safety at all times, outlines safe practices and procedures and includes procedures for dealing with safety risks or critical incidents, whether on site or off site.
- The safety policy states that the private phone number or other personal details of workers must not be disclosed, and that the service must ensure that workers personal details cannot be obtained from any public database, eg Main Roads Department, Electoral Roll. Telephone company, Energex.
- The service encourages workers to employ safe practices and not take any unnecessary risks.

#### FOR WORKERS WHO PROVIDE COURT ASSISTANCE

## Good Practice

- The worker ensures the police prosecutor is informed of any perceived threat to the woman.
- The worker avoids disclosing their full name in Court and the worker informs the Police Prosecutor to refer to the worker by their first name only.
- If asked to give their name in Court, the worker provides a card detailing their name and role to the magistrate to avoid disclosing this information.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 1.3 The service premises (where they exist) promote safety.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 1.3.1 The service premises must have adequate physical security measures in place to meet the safety needs of women, children and workers. (Higher levels of physical security may be required for different models of service delivery such as high security refuges or safe houses.)
- 1.3.2 The service premises offer privacy to women, eg. discreet waiting room etc.
- 1.3.3 The service has interview rooms to ensure confidentiality and security.

#### Good Practice

- The premises are equipped with security alarms and where possible linked up to Police or security.
- Assistance and support is provided in a women only space.

## FOR WORKERS WHO PROVIDE COURT ASSISTANCE

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 1.4 Every attempt is made to ensure the woman, her children, and any other person attending with her are safe within the Court precinct.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 1.4.1 The worker is aware of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's *Domestic Violence Protocol* for Courts and advocates for implementation of the protocol in conjunction with local court staff.
- 1.4.2 The worker has established local safety procedures with the local Court staff and Police.
- 1.4.3 The worker provides support to women in Court

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The worker informs the Police Prosecutor of any perceived threat at Court so that appropriate measures can be taken to provide greater security. This may include arranging for security, or a Police escort for the woman to a safe waiting place, and to and from the Courtroom and being present in the Courtroom.
- Where adequate security arrangements are not available at the Courthouse, the worker attempts to arrange security by contacting Police as required.
- As required, the worker discusses safety procedures with the woman for attending at Court in particular entering and exiting from the Courthouse. This may involve negotiating with Court staff to arrange for safe entry to the Court or arranging for one party to be given their copy of the order before the other, to ensure they can leave the Court at different times.
- When working with an interpreter, the worker ensures that the interpreter is briefed on any potential safety risks and that procedure is followed to ensure the safety of the interpreter.

- Every attempt is made to ensure the woman, her children and any other person accompanying her have a safe place to wait whilst in the Courthouse
- The worker is aware of the complexity of Indigenous family violence and considers the risk that other members of the respondent's family may pose to the woman or her family when assessing safety
- The worker is mindful of the possibility of a range of relationships, if approaching a woman who attends at Court accompanied by a man. The worker must not assume any particular relationship between a woman and a man who accompanies her to Court as he may be the perpetrator of the violence.
- The worker does not assume any particular relationship between a woman and another woman who accompanies her to Court. The accompanying woman may not be a friend and may be the woman's partner and/or the perpetrator.
- As required, the worker supports the woman during the Court proceedings and/or refers her to alternative support services for support at mentions, hearings, breaches and/or criminal proceedings.
- Where possible and appropriate, the worker sits beside the woman and as close to the bar table as is permitted by the Magistrate, during the proceedings and is sensitive to the needs of the woman in the Courtroom such as providing water or tissues as necessary.
- The worker follows the Court proceedings closely so that if called upon by the Magistrate to clarify or comment, they are able to do so.
- In situations where the woman attends at Court with the respondent the worker provides information on options for support to the woman as required.
- In situations where the male respondent is seeking information from the worker who is supporting the aggrieved, the worker:
  - provides information in a Courteous manner;
  - does not collude with the respondent's version of events;
  - ensures that any communication is limited; and
  - if the worker talks to the respondent the worker explains to the woman the reason why.
  - The worker never mediates between the two parties to a protection order.

### Good Practice

- The worker arranges for the woman to wait in a safe room, (separate from the respondent) before and after their Court appearance and/or while waiting for the completion of the Protection Order. Where there are no separate waiting areas, the worker negotiates with the Court staff as to how to make the Court experience safe for women. This may include negotiating with the Court staff to discretely identify women attending for domestic violence matters, in order to offer assistance.
- The worker ensures that any requests to speak with the aggrieved by other parties such as the solicitor for the respondent, are with the woman's consent. Workers should also be aware that the solicitor for the respondent should not speak to the aggrieved if the aggrieved has a solicitor, unless the aggrieved's solicitor has been notified prior to the discussion.
- Where there are potential safety risks, the worker monitors the respondent's and/or any other relevant family members' movements in the Courthouse, when leaving the Courthouse, or the worker liaises with Court staff or Police to do so.

## PRINCIPLE 2: RESPECT

### Women are treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity.

Respect is an essential element in the provision of service to women affected by domestic and family violence. If a worker is to establish a trusting and empowering relationship, they must be empathic and sensitive and must respect the experience, diversity, history and cultural background of each woman. Adequate time must be given for listening to the woman's story and for clarifying the issues in order to ensure appropriate options and referrals are outlined.

All aspects of service provision must reflect a commitment to the woman's right to self-determination. This involves enhancing her ability to make her own choices at all stages through respectful and supportive processes.

Workers must be aware of their own values, beliefs and experiences and how these affect their work. It is also important to avoid making assumptions about the values and beliefs of others.

### PRACTICE STANDARD

#### 2.1 Women experience empathetic, accepting and non-judgmental service delivery.

##### Minimum Practice Standards

2.1.1 The worker supports the woman and accurately assesses her individual needs.

2.1.2 The woman is provided with information about her right to be treated with respect and without judgement by the worker.

##### PRACTICE HINTS

- The worker develops a rapport with the woman to establish a supportive and professional relationship and to encourage the woman's confidence in the worker.
- The worker accepts what the woman says without being judgmental and never blames the woman for the violence.
- The worker acknowledges and validates the woman's experience.
- The worker supports the woman in her parenting and addresses concerns about parenting with the woman within a solution focused framework.

### PRACTICE STANDARD

#### 2.2 Women are treated as individuals and are not stereotyped according to their cultural background, sexual preference, religious or other affiliation or individual needs or differences.

##### Minimum Practice Standards

2.2.1 Workers attend training on working with women with diverse needs including:

- cross cultural training and working with interpreters;
- issues for lesbian, bisexual and transgender women affected by domestic and family violence;

- working with women with disabilities;
- working with women with mental health issues; and
- working with women in prison pre and post release, affected by domestic and family violence

2.2.2 The service has mechanisms for feedback from women regarding respectful and culturally appropriate service provision.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The worker avoids stereotyping the woman according to her cultural background, sexual preference, disability, or religious or other affiliations, or on the basis of any difference or specific need.
- The worker respects the woman's beliefs and values and does not belittle those beliefs or values.
- The service has mechanisms for feedback from women to evaluate whether or not they have received a respectful and culturally appropriate service.

### PRACTICE STANDARD

#### 2.3 Services provide a variety of programs or interventions in order to meet the diverse needs of women who access the service

*NOTE: This section (2.3) does not apply to court assistance workers*

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 2.3.1 The worker gives information to the woman on the intervention strategies available to her through the service to meet her individual needs.
- 2.3.2 The service provides a range of intervention strategies, appropriate to the individual and diverse needs of women including:
- . crisis support - telephone and face-to-face;
  - . information and referral for women and their associates (including children);
  - . advocacy
  - . support and counselling - telephone and face-to-face;
  - . group work; and
  - . outreach and follow-up work.
- 2.3.3 The service advises women of their rights as clients. **(see Appendix 1 - Draft statement of client rights).**
- 2.3.4 The service implements a case management system.
- 2.3.5 All group work offered by the service is in accordance with relevant guidelines. **(See Appendix 3 Draft Guidelines for group work).**

## PRINCIPLE 3: ACCESS AND EQUITY

### Women are supported and assisted to access services on an equitable basis.

Services must ensure they are well known amongst the target group or potential target group to ensure that all women affected by domestic and family violence have access to the service. The service must be affordable, welcoming and relevant to a diverse range of women and any barriers to accessing the service need to be identified and addressed. This includes recruiting staff from backgrounds that match those of the client population.

Service providers must ensure that links are made with specialist services including Aboriginal groups and Torres Strait Islander groups, multicultural, lesbian, bisexual and transgender groups, and groups or services who work with women with disabilities, mental illness, alcohol or substance abuse issues and women in prison - pre and post release.

These links will ensure that service providers are informed about the needs of women from specific needs groups, culturally appropriate practices and relevant referral options.

**All women must be able to access the legal system. The worker who provides Court assistance plays a vital role in enhancing women's access to the legal system. It is important for worker who provides Court assistance to recognise that particular groups of women experience disadvantage when accessing the legal system and that they may require specific support and assistance in order to receive an equitable level of service.**

### PRACTICE STANDARD

#### 3.1 Services are accessible and provide equitable support and assistance appropriate to women's diverse needs.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 3.1.1 The service has adopted access and equity guidelines based on the *Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in SAAP Strategy*.
- 3.1.2 Services provided to women are free of charge or where fees are charged, the service has a clearly stated fee policy that takes into account the woman's ability to pay and does not discriminate against women who have no income.
- 3.1.3 The service has guidelines about the use of professional interpreters, which precludes the use of children, other relatives and friends.
- 3.1.4 Workers are trained in working with interpreters including the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), face-to-face and AUSLAN sign interpreters.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The service acknowledges that women have family responsibilities and ensures that service provision is planned to accommodate these responsibilities

#### Good Practice

- Interpreters are used in a face-to-face situation (when appropriate).
- Interpreters are female.

- Interpreters have the appropriate level of competence required for a given situation.
- The service provides disability access and is wheelchair accessible.
- When required, outreach or after hours sessions can be arranged. Where outreach or after hours sessions are provided the service ensures that they are provided at a safe location.

#### FOR WORKERS WHO PROVIDE COURT ASSISTANCE ONLY

- The worker advocates with Court staff to have domestic violence matters heard at times that are accessible to women with school aged children.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### **3.2 Workers are aware that women have diverse backgrounds and are sensitive to cultural practices and/or specific needs that arise from those diverse backgrounds.**

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 3.2.1 The service maintains a data-base or referral list of services and points of access, including key persons or elders in the different cultural communities.
- 3.2.2 The workers regularly network with a variety of specialist agencies, including specialist legal services that work with people affected by domestic and family violence. Specialist agencies include groups or services that work with women from diverse backgrounds (see **diversity** in the definition section.)
- 3.2.3 The workers attend training regarding issues and specific needs that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The service collects demographic data on the diverse groups that make up the local community.
- The worker locates points of access (key persons, elders) in the different cultural groups in the community and accesses information on various cultural practices.
- When necessary the worker contacts the above specialists for advice and assistance or to seek direction or supervision regarding complex practice issues concerning the woman.
- The worker is aware of issues relating to domestic and family violence in the lesbian, bisexual and transgender community. In particular, the worker is aware that some women are trans-gendered and they are subject to the same power and gender issues as biological women. The worker is also aware of particular issues relating to fear of disclosure and family rejection for lesbian, bisexual and transgender women.
- Workers are aware of their own professional limitations and refer situations that are outside their skills level, but not outside their area of responsibility, to other identified workers as required.

- The worker does not assume that women from non-English speaking backgrounds, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or Australian South Sea Islander women will always want to speak to a worker from the same cultural background. This can be particularly important when a community is small and there are issues of privacy, confidentiality, and kinship relationships or there is a risk of community backlash towards the woman or her family.
- Workers are aware of specific issues around Indigenous family violence and where necessary offer support or referral to extended family or other people who may be supporting an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander woman at Court or otherwise involved in the response to the woman's experience of violence.

### Good Practice

- The workers are aware of current issues in immigration patterns, eg, responding to victims of torture and trauma.
- The workers are aware of the legal issues relating to immigration and refer women for legal advice regarding applications for visas.
- The workers are assisted to improve their practice in working within a culturally diverse context, through supervision, professional development and peer support.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 3.3 Services are promoted widely.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 3.3.1 The service has written information, in plain English, about its role and services offered.
- 3.3.2 Information about the service is widely distributed amongst the local community and other relevant services who have contact with women affected by domestic and family violence.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The service is promoted at inter-agency forums and to all key agencies in the community.
- The service uses community events to display information about the service.

### Good Practice

- The service uses the media to promote the service (eg, community radio announcements, local community papers and community notice boards).
- Information about the service is distributed in a variety of media and languages (eg audio, videos, print).

## PRINCIPLE 4: EMPOWERMENT

### Women identify and express their needs and make decisions in a supportive and non-judgmental environment.

Services have a responsibility to ensure that all information provided to women is accurate, timely, relevant and easy to understand. Workers must ensure that information is up-to-date and that all workers have the relevant skills to provide this information.

An effective intake system is essential to gather relevant information about the woman and to clarify her needs. Workers must use crisis intervention skills that consider the possible effects of violence on the woman such as stress, confusion, diminished ability to respond to her own needs, lack of confidence or self-esteem and/or inability to accurately assess the danger she is in due to the domestic and family violence. The use of crisis intervention skills ensures that workers empower the woman to make her own decisions and that they accurately assess and respond to her needs.

It is recognised that workers who provide Court assistance operate in a unique and often extremely hectic environment at Courthouses. Therefore, workers must develop the skills to assess and prioritise the needs of the women accessing the service to ensure women's access to the legal system is increased.

### PRACTICE STANDARD

#### 4.1 Women receive information that is relevant, accurate, up-to-date and easy to understand.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

4.1.1 The service maintains a database of relevant information and resources.

4.1.2 The workers use interpreters as required, eg, Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), AUSLAN, NAATI

4.1.3 The workers provide relevant, accurate and up-to date information to the woman, as required.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The worker uses effective interpersonal skills to enable the woman to feel confident in disclosing information and to ensure that she understands the information provided. This may involve asking questions, clarifying and repeating information and asking the woman to explain her understanding of the information.
- The worker uses plain English and does not use complex technical jargon.
- The worker is aware that some women may have low English literacy skills or are illiterate, and therefore provides information in a variety of ways to ensure that it is understood.
- The worker must ensure that the woman's safety requirements are considered and when necessary, that brochures/resources are placed in plain envelopes, or that small info-cards are used that can be easily concealed. Where there is a possible safety risk, the worker must give the woman the option to read information on the premises, to return at another time or to have the information posted to a safe place.

## Good Practice

- The service provides information about domestic and family violence in a variety of media (eg brochures, pictures, videos) and in a variety of languages.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 4.2 Women are provided with information about available options for meeting their needs and are assisted to identify their preferred option.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

4.2.1 The service has an intake and assessment system to accurately identify client needs.

4.2.2 All workers are trained in the intake and assessment process.

4.2.3 All workers are trained in crisis intervention.

4.2.4 Wherever possible women are offered access to follow-up support during the transitional period following crisis intervention or exit from an accommodation service

4.2.5 In situations where workers are unable to meet with the women before Court, workers must ensure that efforts are made to meet with the women after court to ascertain her needs and provide information and assistance as required.

#### NOT FOR WORKERS WHO PROVIDE COURT ASSISTANCE

4.2.6 The worker develops a case management plan in collaboration with the woman.

4.2.7 The worker regularly reviews the case management plan to ensure the plan reflects the woman's changing needs and to ensure all intervention is purposeful.

4.2.8 The workers are trained in case management planning.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- Crisis intervention may cover some of the following:
  - allowing sufficient time to meet with the woman to discuss matters;
  - encouraging and enabling the woman to participate in the assessment process;
  - assisting the woman to focus on the issues;
  - assisting the woman to assess the safety/risk for her and her children;
  - emphasising to the woman that the responsibility for the violence rests with the perpetrator of the violence;
  - informing the woman that she has the right to live her life free from violence;
  - informing the woman about the role and function of the service and type of service/ intervention available;
  - clarifying the woman's expectation of the service;
  - informing the woman about the role of the workers;
  - outlining options for the woman;
  - allowing the woman to make her own choices at all stages;
  - encouraging the woman to take responsibility for her own decisions;
  - assisting the woman to become aware of the implications and/or consequences of any decisions;
  - ensuring the woman is not overwhelmed with information; and
  - being aware of other issues that may affect the woman's decisions for example immigration status, effects of torture and trauma, and financial status.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 4.3 Workers are able to identify a woman's legal needs and provide appropriate legal information and referral for legal advice.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 4.3.1 The worker provides legal information about domestic and family violence to inform the woman of her rights and responsibilities.
- 4.3.2 The worker provides legal information and not legal advice. (See definitions of **legal advice** and **legal information** in the definition section of this document).
- 4.3.3 As required the worker refers the woman for legal advice, to a qualified legal practitioner in situations where there are legal issues eg. for domestic and family violence matters, disputes about contact and /or residence where children are involved, criminal hearings where there has been physical violence, or disputes about property.
- 4.3.4 The worker provides support to the woman regarding her legal needs.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The worker explains the role of legal representatives, including private Solicitors, Legal Aid Queensland, Prosecutors and Community Legal Centres.
- The service maintains a list of legal referral agencies, by locality, including private Solicitors, Legal Aid Queensland, Women's Legal Services and Community Legal Centres.
- As required, the worker gives information about the legal process and court procedures relating to a Domestic Violence Protection Order. The worker may also refer the woman for legal advice so that the woman can access and confirm this information.
- As required, the worker gives information about Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVOs), breaches of Protection Orders, variations, revocations and appeals and /or refers the woman to Legal Aid Queensland, a Community Legal Centre, or Solicitor to receive/confirm this information.
- As required, the worker assists the woman to complete an application for a Domestic Violence Protection Order or refers the woman to a workers who provides Court assistance, Legal Aid Queensland, a Community Legal Centre, or Solicitor to receive this assistance.
- The worker does not interpret how a Domestic Violence Protection Order might affect any other legal proceedings, eg, Family Law proceedings.
- As required, the worker gives information about the domestic violence provisions in the Migration Regulations, or refers the woman to the Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS) or other service that assists women from other culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- As required, the worker gives information on the criminal justice process and criminal compensation.
- The worker may also refer the women for legal advice so that the woman can access and confirm this information, and/or apply for representation for her domestic and family violence matters.

## **WORKERS WHO PROVIDE COURT ASSISTANCE INFORMATION ABOUT:**

- the domestic violence legislation being an important law to help protect them from further violence and abuse.
- the law aims to prevent violent and abusive behaviour between couples (whether they are of the same sex or opposite sex) or the biological parents of a child whether they are living together or apart,
- the Magistrate will hear evidence to establish that domestic violence has taken place and if it may happen again and will make a decision about whether or not an order will be granted.
- a domestic violence order is granted under civil law and will not give their partner a criminal record unless their partner breaks the order
- the standard of proof for applying for a protection order is based on the balance of probabilities, and not beyond reasonable doubt as is required under criminal law;
- breaches of an order however are considered to be criminal in nature and therefore require the criminal standard of proof, (ie. they must be proven beyond reasonable doubt);
- the role of legal representatives, including Police Prosecutors, private Solicitors, Community Legal Centre and Legal Aid Queensland;
- completing an application for a Domestic Violence Protection Order;
- details of the order, who the order can cover, including children, the four standard conditions, the type of extra conditions that the order may contain, temporary and final orders and the duration of the order (including provisions for granting of an order for more than two years in exceptional circumstances);
- the process for negotiating the conditions of the orders;
- the process for varying or revoking an order. This is particularly important in situations where a 'no contact' condition is being sought;
- ouster conditions and/ or issues regarding tenancy;
- what is involved in giving evidence (eg Court protocols and process, including taking an oath);
- making effective use of a domestic violence protection order including contacting the Police if their partner breaks the order or any of its conditions and keeping a copy of the order with her all times;
- other relevant legislation including s 68T of the Family Law Act, the Criminal Code, Peace and Good Behaviour Act, Residential Tenancies Act, the Criminal Offence Victim's Act and the domestic violence provisions in the Migration Regulations;
- the worker not conducting or engaging in any negotiations or mediation between the parties regarding the application for a domestic violence protection order, the conditions of the order, or any other matter; and
- the option of not proceeding with an application for a DVO, offering further written information on the legal process and legislation, referrals to relevant services, and emergency contact numbers such as the police and domestic violence telephone service. The worker also reinforces that the woman has the option to contact the worker again at any future time.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 4.4 Workers assess each woman's referral needs and make referrals as needed.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 4.4.1 The service has an intake and assessment procedure.
- 4.4.2 The worker uses the intake and assessment procedures to obtain information about the woman's referral needs.
- 4.4.3 The service has policy and procedures for making referrals .
- 4.4.4 The service maintains contact with, and a database of, relevant agencies including legal agencies and specialised support agencies.
- 4.4.5 The service provides training for workers on the relevant policies and procedures.
- 4.4.6 The service has a mechanism for feedback from women regarding referrals and referral needs.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The worker refers the woman to appropriate assistance if that assistance can not be provided by the service.
- The worker is aware of the role and purpose of a range of other relevant agencies and services, including specialist agencies, and is acquainted with their referral processes.
- The worker explores referral options with the woman, provides information to the woman about why referral to other agencies has been suggested and ensures that all referrals are made with her consent.

## PRINCIPLE 5: CONFIDENTIALITY

### Women have their right to confidentiality respected and observed and are informed of situations where that confidentiality may be limited.

Confidentiality is an extremely important issue when responding to women affected by domestic and family violence. A breach of confidentiality can potentially jeopardise the safety of women, children and young people affected by domestic and family violence, their family or associates and/or service or court assistance workers.

It is important that there are effective practices in place for documenting client information and that services advise women of situations where their right to confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. In particular it is essential that workers inform women that in specific circumstances Courts can subpoena workers and information held by the service. Workers need to be particularly mindful of this when recording client information. The service must have a system in place for the safe storage and retrieval of records and client data.

It is acknowledged that the physical environment of the Courthouse may limit the ability of the worker who provides Court assistance to provide complete confidentiality. The worker must develop practices and procedures which maximise confidentiality when working within the confines of the Courthouse.

### PRACTICE STANDARD

#### 5.1 Each woman's right to confidentiality and privacy is respected.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 5.1.1 The service has a policy on confidentiality.
- 5.1.2 The worker informs the woman of the service's policy on confidentiality in plain English.
- 5.1.3 The service has a mechanism for feedback from women regarding their knowledge of the policy on confidentiality.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The policy on confidentiality considers issues related to limited confidentiality, including:
  - reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect (in line with the service's policy on suspected child abuse or neglect);
  - the existence of any coordinated community response to domestic and family violence where information is shared across agencies;
  - a breach of confidentiality related to the service's duty of care eg a security threat or a situation where the woman, the children or any other person is at risk of serious harm;
  - discussion of the case in supervision or team meetings;
  - subpoena of information for Court proceedings; and
  - communicating to the woman the worker's need for privacy and confidentiality such as not disclosing their identity to the abusive partner, and in some instances the service location such as refuges and the domestic violence services.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 5.2 Workers are aware of and observe their legal and ethical obligations and responsibilities in relation to their client's right to privacy.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 5.2.1 The service has a Code of Ethics.
- 5.2.2 The worker complies with the Code of Ethics.
- 5.2.3 The worker attends in-service training regarding the Code of Ethics.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The Code of Ethics considers issues related to workers duty of care. The workers understand their duty of care and the service has developed relevant procedures that promote safety and meet relevant legal obligations.
- Information recorded by workers is accurate, non-judgmental and does not make assumptions.

#### Good Practice

- The worker adheres to relevant professional Codes of Ethics as applicable.
- The worker is able to prepare Court reports and provide evidence, which focuses on the best interest and safety of each woman and child/young person affected by domestic and family violence and meets the service's relevant legal obligations.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 5.3 Records are kept secure.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 5.3.1 The service has a policy on record keeping.
- 5.3.2 The worker advises women of the policy.
- 5.3.3 The service keeps all files, records and client data secure including information stored electronically.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The policy includes:
  - guidelines about who can access information (client, workers in the service);
  - the process women must follow to access their records which are held by the service; and
  - details of when and how records will be destroyed.

## PRINCIPLE 6: COORDINATION

### Services operate within a context of interagency cooperation, collaboration and coordinated service delivery.

Increasingly, coordinated community responses, or **CCR's** (see the definition section) to domestic and family violence are recognised as the most effective way of providing services to people affected by domestic and family violence. CCR's represent a holistic approach to addressing the needs of women, children and young people who have experienced domestic and family violence. Agencies work together, ensuring that available resources are used in the best possible way to meet the needs of people affected by domestic and family violence.

CCR's aim to facilitate clear client pathways (see the definition of **client pathway** in the definition section) through the justice system and/or range of relevant services. They also aim to empower women, reduce duplication of services and eliminate any victimisation of women by the system.

Ideally any CCR should reflect the range of services available to women, children and young people affected by domestic and family violence.

Workers who provide Court assistance provide an important role in the establishment and maintenance of CCR's with pivotal links to Police, Courts and other services providing support and assistance to people affected by domestic and family violence.

### PRACTICE STANDARD

#### 6.1 Services are part of community networks and do not work in isolation.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 6.1.1 The service attends domestic and family violence and the appropriate local network meetings.
- 6.1.2 The service participates in joint training initiatives and community education activities with other stakeholders.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- In order to establish and maintain effective, professional and collaborative working relationships the service regularly liaises and networks with other key agencies including:
  - Queensland Police Service including Police Prosecutors and Domestic Violence Liaison Officers;
  - Court staff;
  - Children's and young people's services and programs including child protection agencies;
  - Domestic Violence Regional Services;
  - Telephone counselling and refuge referral services;
  - Legal services including Legal Aid Queensland, Community Legal Centres, specialist legal services;
  - Other domestic and family violence services including women's refuges and safe houses, specialist domestic violence services, workers who provide Court assistance, services for children and young and services for perpetrators.
  - Translating and interpreting services;
  - Specialist support services;
  - Community Health Centres; and
  - Youth services.

- Workers in isolated locations develop networks with workers in other locations who can offer useful resources and expertise through the use of teleconferencing and the internet (where available).

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 6.2 Services are involved in a coordinated community response (CCR) to domestic and family violence in their local area.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 6.2.1 The service attends regular meetings with other stakeholders involved in the CCR.
- 6.2.2 The service works collaboratively with all agencies involved in the CCR to encourage the development of a shared philosophy of practice for the CCR.
- 6.2.3 A process has been established for services to develop, monitor and review inter-agency protocols for the CCR.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The service contributes to the development and maintenance of referral protocols negotiated with other key services involved in the CCR, in particular the implementation of protocols for working with the Police, Police Prosecutors and Court staff.
- The service participates in inter-agency meetings with workers from non-specific domestic and family violence services who provide support and assistance to women in prison who have experienced domestic and family violence.
- Protocols are monitored and reviewed regularly and mechanisms are in place to deal with issues or grievances that arise between agencies.

## FOR WORKERS WHO PROVIDE COURT ASSISTANCE

### Practice Standard

### 6.3 Where possible and appropriate, workers participate in the development of policies and procedures (of other jurisdictions) for Court services eg. Court design, Court protocols.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 6.3.1 The service works in collaboration with Court staff and Police to address safety and procedural issues.
- 6.3.2 The worker arranges regular meetings with key stakeholders to discuss relevant issues.
- 6.3.3 The worker encourages and contributes to the application of the safety guidelines and the domestic violence protocol of the Courthouse.

## PRINCIPLE 7: ADVOCACY

### Women affected by domestic and family violence are provided with appropriate advocacy.

Advancing the rights of women affected by domestic and family violence is an essential role for workers. This includes advocating on an individual basis as well as advocating to enhance the system that responds to people affected by domestic and family violence.

An advocate builds relationships with other key stakeholders and agencies in order to gain specialist knowledge about service systems such as court and other legal systems. Advocacy involves using this specialist knowledge in a respectful and collaborative way to support and assist women to negotiate these systems effectively. This may involve assisting the woman to advocate on her own or her children's behalf, advocating on behalf of a woman, with her consent, with other stakeholders or advocating for system change.

A worker who provides Court assistance is a specialist advocate who develops positive working relationships with Court staff, Police and other key stakeholders in order to gain knowledge about the legal process. This knowledge is then used to assist women to successfully negotiate the legal system, receive the support and assistance they require to gain effective legal protection from domestic and family violence and prevent secondary victimisation of women by the system.

*Advocacy in this context does not include the provision of legal representation or advice. (Refer to the definition of **legal advice** and **legal information**).*

### PRACTICE STANDARD

#### 7.1 Workers assist women to identify their rights and advocate for their own and/or their children's needs as required.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 7.1.1 The service has assessment procedures.
- 7.1.2 The worker develops and implements a support plan with the woman.
- 7.1.3 The service has an up to date referral list.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The worker assists the woman to identify her rights and her children's rights or any infringement of those rights.
- The worker assists the woman to make contact and negotiate with relevant agencies and people to advocate for her own and/or her children's needs.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 7.2 Workers advocate for the needs of women affected by domestic and family violence on an individual basis as requested by the woman and with her consent.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 7.2.1 The service has a consent form for the sharing of relevant information.
- 7.2.2 The worker acts as an advocate for the woman, with her consent, when negotiating with other agencies.
- 7.2.3 The worker seeks the consent of the woman before disclosing personal information to other organisations and only presents information that is relevant to achieve the woman's desired outcome.
- 7.2.4 The worker regularly liaises with the relevant key stakeholders including Court staff and Police in a professional manner in order to develop positive working relationships, address issues or negotiate to resolve problems.
- 7.2.5 As required the worker informs the woman of the appropriate complaint process regarding her representation in Court or her treatment by other agencies, professionals or groups providing Court assistance or support.

#### PRACTICE HINTS FOR WORKERS WHO PROVIDE COURT ASSISTANCE

- The worker negotiates with the key stakeholders to ensure processes are streamlined in particular:
  - access to the Court list prior to Court;
  - to ensure Court staff direct women applicants to the court assistance premises or court assistance worker;
  - to ensure effective and efficient service of summons as necessary; and
  - to ensure follow-up action on breaches as necessary.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The worker develops professional and collaborative relationships with other relevant professionals and agencies and where applicable, other groups providing court assistance or support.
- The worker ensures any advocacy on behalf of a client is conducted in a professional manner. The worker advocates without the presence of the woman, when the worker is aware that it would increase the woman's stress by undermining her confidence in the process.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

**7.3 Services advocate for the needs of women and children affected by domestic and family violence in collaboration with relevant government and community agencies, with a view to influencing policy and legislation.**

### Minimum Practice Standards

7.3.1 The service participates in policy and law reform activities.

7.3.2 The service has a mechanism for feedback from women regarding issues affecting their ability to seek protection under the Domestic Violence legislation.

7.3.3 The service responds to relevant discussion papers and submissions as required.

### PRACTICE HINTS

- The service seeks feedback from women on gaps in the domestic and family violence service delivery system.
- The service is able to identify and articulate external policy issues that affect the ability of women to seek legal protection, to address domestic and family violence or recover from domestic and family violence. This includes providing advice to relevant government agencies on specific issues.
- Workers appropriately challenge, and work to ensure policies, procedures and practices which:
  - are in the best interests of women;
  - are equitable;
  - promote women's access to services;
  - are not in any way oppressive, disempowering or culturally inappropriate; and
  - do not demonstrate unfair discrimination.
- The service advocates either individually or collectively through networks regarding identified positive change required.

### Good Practice

- The service provides support to women who wish to advocate for change in the service or more broadly in the sector.

## PRINCIPLE 8: PREVENTION

### A culture of intolerance about domestic and family violence is developed in communities and individuals.

Raising community awareness of domestic and family violence is an important way of preventing domestic and family violence occurring. Services may need to provide opportunities for the community to gain information about the how domestic and family violence can be prevented.

Community education activities must support the principles outlined in this document and reinforce positive messages about prevention.

Note: the approved activities for SAAP funded services are counselling, drop-in social support, general service availability, crisis accommodation, transitional accommodation, needs assessment and management of case/service plans, social and personal development, accommodation placement and support and individual advocacy. (See the *Queensland Government Community Services Funding Book*.)

It is recognised that there are limited opportunities for workers who provide Court assistance to engage in community awareness activities. Where services are able to conduct and/ or engage in community awareness activities the following standards apply.

### PRACTICE STANDARD

#### 8.1 Services develop strategies to raise community awareness about domestic and family violence.

##### Minimum Practice Standards

8.1.1 The service has a community awareness strategy.

8.1.2 The service reviews, monitors and updates its community awareness strategy on a regular basis to ensure that it is effective and to determine future directions.

8.1.3 The service distributes relevant information regarding the prevention of domestic and family violence to women and the broader community.

##### PRACTICE HINTS

- The service liaises and networks with the community to build credibility and gain the community's consent to work with them.
- The service actively targets community misconceptions around domestic and family violence, for example, the misconception that domestic and family violence is a private and not a public issue.
- The service liaises with key agencies and stakeholders as well as community members to determine priorities and identify target groups for its community awareness strategies.
- The service develops and implements a strategy to raise community awareness of domestic and family violence, which reflects the needs of the community.
- When appropriate the service liaises on an ongoing basis with funded perpetrator programs and other men's programs.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 8.2 Services plan and conduct community education activities.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 8.2.1 The service has a community education plan responding to domestic and family violence.
- 8.2.2 The service provides community education and training activities as requested.
- 8.2.3 The service participates in community education activities including Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Week activities in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The service encourages the involvement of relevant target groups, including women from diverse backgrounds, in activities during the annual Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Week.
- The service liaises with key stakeholders and community members to determining priorities and target groups for its community education campaign.

#### Good Practice

- The service encourages the involvement of survivors of domestic and family violence in developing activities for the annual Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Week.
- The service develops training kits on domestic and family violence and the prevention of domestic and family violence.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 8.3 Community Education activities promote the prevention of domestic and family violence.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 8.3.1 Community education activities of the service promote positive and healthy relationships.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The service develops campaigns and events that promote the prevention of domestic and family violence and encourage the community to reject domestic and family violence.
- Activities undertaken must support the principles outlined in this document and must, in particular:
  - reinforce the right of all people to live in an environment free from violence;
  - promote positive and healthy relationships;
  - acknowledge that many forms of domestic and family violence are criminal offences and should be dealt with as such where appropriate (see definition of **family violence**); and
  - reinforce the principle that the responsibility for the violence lies with the perpetrators of domestic and family violence.

#### Good Practice

- Activities are tailored to women from diverse backgrounds and designed to be culturally acceptable to the relevant target group.

## PRINCIPLE 9: ACCOUNTABILITY

### Women receive quality service from appropriately skilled workers.

Working in the area of domestic and family violence may be very stressful, and potentially dangerous for workers. Workers must have relevant competencies and must be provided with support and resources to be able to carry out their job effectively and safely. Workers must also be able to access opportunities for training, supervision and debriefing.

Organisation and Management Committees must undertake a planned approach to service delivery. This includes ensuring that aims are well developed and outcomes are clearly identified. Strategies to achieve these aims must be articulated in the service's strategic plan and regularly monitored and updated.

Evaluation is essential for the provision of quality services and the continuous improvement of services. Evaluation must occur at both an individual client level and at a service level. Services must meet all accountability requirements of the funding body, and they must also seek feedback from clients on the service provided and on ways the service can be improved.

### PRACTICE STANDARD

**9.1 Workers have skills to work with women affected by domestic and family violence, as set out in the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence (PADV) competency standards.**

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 9.1.1 Each worker has the relevant competencies required for their position. (See **Appendix 5 - Staff Competencies**).
- 9.1.2 The service has an induction and in-service training plan.
- 9.1.3 The service provides induction training on all relevant policies and procedures.
- 9.1.4 The service provides regular supervision and has team meetings.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- The service's practice and procedure manual is available to all workers.
- Workers are able to access training that is relevant to their work eg. interviewing techniques, crisis intervention, witness coaching etc.
- Workers have a commitment to ongoing professional development and keep up-to-date with research, literature on domestic and family violence and new interventions.
- Workers develop relationships with specialist staff who work with women with specific needs eg Aboriginal women and Torres Strait Islander women, lesbians, bisexual and transgender women and migrant and refugee women and when necessary contact workers from those specialist services to seek direction or supervision regarding complex practice issues concerning those groups.
- Workers model positive relationships and are positive, respectful and responsive in their interactions with the woman, each other and representatives from other agencies.

- Workers model positive conflict resolution strategies.
- Workers have access to debriefing (as required).
- Workers have access to regular supervision from a supervisor who has appropriate skills and experience. Workers use this supervision to evaluate their own work practices.

### Good practice

- Mechanisms are in place to allow urgent access to supervision in situations where the safety of women, their children, workers or members of the community are at risk. This ensures that workers are supported when making critical decisions.
- Performance appraisals or training needs analysis are used to identify workers training needs.
- Workers take part in peer support networks.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 9.2 Services have mechanisms for regular monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement of the service.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 9.2.1 The service meets the funding body's requirements regarding data collection, financial accountability monitoring and evaluation of the service.
- 9.2.2 The service has mechanisms to encourage feedback from clients, key stakeholders and referral agencies.
- 9.2.3 The service has a complaint mechanism that is made available to women and other stakeholders.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- As requested the service provides regular reports to the funding body, any other relevant funding body and the management committee.
- The service and the funding body regularly review and update service agreements.
- The service uses processes and tools for evaluation that are relevant to the service model.
- The complaint process is 'user-friendly' and easy to understand. Women and other stakeholders are made aware of the complaint process through a brochure or notice in plain English placed prominently at the premises detailing the right to make a complaint.

### Good Practice

- Ongoing processes for feedback about the service are established between the Department and the service.
- A copy of the *Minimum Practice Standards for Working with Women Affected by Domestic and Family Violence* is made available to women.



## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 9.3 Services have a strategic plan and regularly review and update the plan, as set out in the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence (PADV) competency standards

#### Minimum Practice Standards

9.3.1 The service has a strategic plan.

9.3.2 Strategic planning ensures program and project activities reflect the objectives of the service.

9.3.3 The strategic plan is regularly reviewed to ensure its goals reflect client needs.

9.3.4 The service's operational plan and workplans are linked to the strategic goals identified in the strategic plan.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- Strategic planning is guided by information received through the service's evaluation mechanisms including feedback from women and key stakeholders.

## PRINCIPLE 10: SERVICE ENVIRONMENT

### Women access a service environment that enables effective service provision.

The service environment is crucial to effective service provision. Management and administration systems must be in place to ensure that services provide a quality and consistent response to women, children and young people affected by domestic and family violence. This includes developing written policies and procedures to ensure this consistent response is maintained regardless of changes in workers or Management Committee members.

The Management Committee must ensure that the service complies with all applicable Commonwealth, State and Local government laws, ordinances and regulations.

Systems must be in place to ensure the recruitment and retention of experienced and diverse workers with the relevant skills to work with people affected by domestic and family violence. Systems must also be in place to recruit and support an enthusiastic and committed Management Committee.

### PRACTICE STANDARD

#### 10.1 Services have effective management and administration systems.

##### Minimum Practice Standards

- 10.1.1 The organisation has a well-developed structure in place to undertake a bi-annual planning and evaluation process of the organisation's framework for practice.
- 10.1.2 The service has a policy and procedures manual that guides service provisions.
- 10.1.3 All policies of the service make safety the first priority.
- 10.1.4 Workers attend training on policy and procedures manuals.
- 10.1.5 The service employs a qualified and experienced person who is accountable for resources, planning and human resource management.
- 10.1.6 The service encourages client participation in management and design of services.
- 10.1.7 The service adheres to all legal requirements including:
  - Workplace Health and Safety;
  - Award implementation
  - Professional indemnity insurance;
  - Public liability insurance; and
  - Service Delivery.

##### PRACTICE HINTS

- Effective written policies and procedures are in place to guide service management and delivery. Policies cover service administration and management as well as service delivery, and include:
  - Membership and meetings;
  - Financial management;
  - Occupational health and safety;

- Office procedures;
- Confidentiality;
- Record keeping;
- Suspected child abuse and neglect;
- Criminal history checks for workers;
- Planning and evaluation;
- Staff management;
- Performance appraisals and diminished performance; and
- Health and Safety Guidelines for Accommodation Services (see appendix)
- There is a clear divide between staff and organisational management. The service has a policy that staff employed within the organisation cannot hold an office bearing position of the Management Committee or board.

### Good Practice

- The service regularly monitors and reviews all policies, in line with emerging trends and practices.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 10.2 Services have effective processes for the recruitment of workers and Management Committee members.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 10.2.1 The service has policies and procedures in place for the appropriate recruitment of workers.
- 10.2.2 Position descriptions and selection criteria are based on minimum competencies, and are regularly reviewed.
- 10.2.3 All vacancies are widely advertised amongst diverse cultural groups in the community.

#### PRACTICE HINTS

- Recruitment processes encourage Management Committee membership from people from diverse cultures.
- Selection panel members are experienced in working with women affected by domestic and family violence.

### Good Practice

- Selection procedures are periodically reviewed to ensure that they promote diversity.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 10.3 Services maintain appropriate employment conditions.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 10.3.1 Workers receive award salaries and conditions of employment.
- 10.3.2 Workers attend in-service training regarding conditions of employment.
- 10.3.3 The service has policies and procedures in place for the management of work performance, worker grievances and termination of employment.

## PRACTICE STANDARD

### 10.4 Management Committee members receive relevant information and resources.

#### Minimum Practice Standards

- 10.4.1 An induction program/package is provided to the incoming Management Committee of the service.
- 10.4.2 Information on domestic and family violence is provided to Management Committee members on induction by the service.
- 10.4.3 The service provides information on roles and responsibilities to Management Committee members on their induction.
- 10.4.4 Management Committee members of the service receive information from relevant representatives of the funding body.

#### Good Practice

- Management Committee members are trained in the policy and procedures that relate to their areas of responsibility.
- Management Committee members have access to training dealing with responses to domestic and family violence.
- Management Committee members are provided with information on different models of management.



# APPENDIX 1

## DRAFT - STATEMENT OF CLIENT RIGHTS

As a client of this service you have the right:

### SAFETY

- To live without fear of violence
- To have access to an environment free from violence
- To be assisted to recognise and respond to your safety needs

### RESPECT

- To be treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity
- To be treated as an individual with your own specific needs
- To be heard and have your views and experiences acknowledged
- To be assisted to meet the needs you have recognised and identified

### ACCESS AND EQUITY

- To obtain service regardless of your cultural or linguistic background, age, sexual preference, disability, mental health issue, economic status, religious or other affiliation or individual difference; or the fact that you have children.
- To have your specific needs recognised and responded to.

### EMPOWERMENT

- To receive information that is accurate, timely, relevant and easy to understand
- To be empowered to make informed decisions and to be supported to follow through with decisions made

### CONFIDENTIALITY

- To have the confidentiality policy of the service explained to you
- To confidentiality and privacy, recognising that this right may be limited in the following circumstances:
  - where your safety or the safety of any children or young people, staff members, or any other person is at risk;
  - where there are allegations of child abuse or neglect; or
  - where staff reasonably believe that a serious criminal offence has occurred or is likely to occur.
- To give informed consent to have information about you shared with any other person or agency
- To have your records kept secure

### COORDINATION

- To easily access accurate information on other services that may be able to assist you
- To have services that are involved in responding to people affected by domestic and family violence, work professionally and with each other to assist you



## **ADVOCACY**

- To be assisted to advocate for your rights and/or the rights of your children
- To request that a worker advocate for your rights on your behalf

## **PREVENTION**

- To be informed about ways to prevent domestic and family violence
- To have information on the prevention of domestic and family violence promoted in the community
- To be provided with information on a perpetrator program for your partner where a program is available and appropriate

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

- To have access to professional, experienced and skilled workers
- To give constructive feedback on the service received
- To contribute ideas on improvement of the service

## **SERVICE ENVIRONMENT**

- To have access to an effectively managed and administered service
- To request information on the policies of the service
- To be able to complain about any service received and to have the issues responded to and resolved in good faith and with the participation of all parties involved where this is appropriate

## APPENDIX 2

### DRAFT SAFETY/ RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL

The following is a checklist of information that should be gathered on intake in order to make an accurate safety/risk assessment. Note: Not all information will be required, in all instances, to make an accurate assessment of safety or risk.

- Client details
- Perpetrator details
- Dependent details
- Details of any other relatives or associates affected by the domestic and family violence
- Immediate safety requirements of the woman
- Immediate safety requirements of any dependents, relatives, or associates
- Immediate referral for medical treatment for physical injuries and/or sexual assault
- Requirements for access to safe accommodation including refuge or safe house
- Requirements for information on Police emergency contact number and the Domestic and Family Violence Access and Support Service and its 1800 telephone number
- Safety planning requirements
- History of contact with the legal system, including:
  - Previous Police involvement;
  - Previous applications for domestic violence protection orders;
  - The existence of current domestic violence protection orders;
  - The perpetrator's current or previous criminal charges and/or convictions; and
  - Family Law history, including the existence of any family Court orders.
- Relationship history, including history of current or previous separation.
- History of abuse and violence and details of type of abuse/violence perpetrated.
- History of financial abuse by perpetrator.
- Details about the perpetrator's possession and/or use of firearms/weapons.
- Details about the perpetrator's behaviour post separation including threats to commit violence, what access the perpetrator has to the woman, her children and associates, and changes to his behaviour such as giving away property.
- Client's medical history, including history of drug and/or substance abuse, depression, anger.  
*The gathering of particular medical information about a woman should not preclude her access to service and/or assistance.*
- Perpetrator's medical history including mental health and substance abuse.
- Threats or attempts to self-harm by the client.
- Child protection issues, including an assessment of ability to protect self and children from further harm.

## APPENDIX 3

### DRAFT GUIDELINES FOR GROUP WORK

#### CHILD MINDING

- Where possible, groups offer child minding.
- Where possible toys are provided and children have a specific space for play.
- If possible, child care facilities are used.
- Qualified workers are used to care for children.
- All workers are supervised.
- The appropriate ratio of children per worker is maintained. (This is dealt with in detail in the *Kids & DV Practice Standards for Working with Children Affected by Domestic and Family Violence*.)
- Facilitators meet with childcare workers after the group to ensure any concerns with children are discussed or identified, particularly where children display serious behavioural problems. The group facilitator then brings these concerns to the attention of the mother for discussion with her.
- A policy is developed to deal with children who are upset or want their mother whilst being cared for.
- Groups should agree that it is not appropriate to have children in a group.

#### RULES


- All group members and facilitators participate in the development of group rules at the commencement of each group.
- Rules should include:
  - confidentiality and circumstances where confidentiality will be limited;
  - children - develop a rule about dealing with them;
  - boundaries and safety issues; and
  - what to do when women come to a group under the influence of drugs or alcohol or otherwise affected by an illegal substance.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

- Women are advised not to exchange surnames/phone numbers before halfway through the group.
- Women are given the opportunity to exchange names and phone numbers at the end of the group.
- Reunions /get-togethers are offered after the conclusion of the group.

#### GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Courses are offered at a variety of times - night, morning, during school terms.
- Coordination occurs with other group facilitators to ensure that groups offered do not overlap.
- Groups are accessible to all women, and advertised to maximise accessibility.
- Facilitators determine each woman's suitability to attend groups.
- Facilitators make contact with the women individually prior to the group to make a professional assessment of their suitability either by telephone or in person. Ideally, this assessment will involve more than one interview.  
(This may not be necessary if referred from other workers eg where the group exists within the framework of a counselling service.)
- Facilitators do not work with any issue beyond their capacity or professional competence.
- Facilitators sensitively deal with group dynamics.
- Where possible, facilitators are women.
- With the group's consent, new facilitators sit in on the group prior to facilitating a group.
- All sessions are structured and facilitators have a plan session.
- Attendance records are kept (without information identifying participants in the group).

- 
- Facilitators use appropriate tools / exercises.
  - Facilitators have skills and mechanisms to deal with distress or crisis.
  - Groups have a regular break.
  - Groups are planned to be empowering. Choices are provided to participants.
  - Participants have input into the topics and guest speakers.
  - Facilitators are non-judgmental (eg, facilitators offer the opportunity to stay or leave the relationship, and women are not pressured to leave the relationship).
  - Facilitators are aware of the policy regarding suspected child abuse.
  - Facilitators model respectful and non-violent behaviour.
  - Facilitators have the opportunity to debrief after each session.
  - All groups are evaluated on completion.
  - Facilitators encourage participation.
  - Facilitators have an awareness of cross-cultural issues.
  - When required the facilitator will ensure that language or sign interpreters are available.
  - Group work venues must have disability access.

**Women with serious drug/alcohol or mental health issues, or suicide risk** must be assessed prior to attendance and must be receiving treatment and sober for the session. Facilitators must ensure that the behaviour of any participant does not infringe on any other person's rights. If a woman is not suitable to attend the group then the facilitator either offers individual counselling or refers on appropriately.

## APPENDIX 4

### LIST OF SUGGESTED REFERRALS

- Medical treatment
- Assistance to make an application for a Domestic Violence Protection Order
- Police assistance - to make criminal complaint, report breach of DVPO
- Legal Advice - Legal Aid Queensland, Solicitor, Women's Legal Service, Community Legal Centre
- Accommodation - Domestic and Family Violence Access and Support Service 1800 Number, Community Rent Scheme, Housing Service
- Transportation
- Financial assistance- emergency relief, income support, financial advice
- Counselling / Therapy
- Advocacy
- Specialist service for specific need. See the definition of **diversity** in the definition section of the practice standards
- Group Work
- Survivor support group
- Details of perpetrator programs
- Children's or young people's services/programs including child protection agencies

## APPENDIX 5:

### STAFF COMPETENCIES:

#### Minimum staff competencies include (all service providers)

- Understanding of safety issues for women and children affected by domestic and family violence and staff assisting them.
- Knowledge of the appropriate procedure for dealing with safety risks and critical incidents.
- Understanding of the power and gender issues in domestic and family violence.
- Understanding of the effects of domestic and family violence on women.
- Understanding of the effects of domestic and family violence on children and young people, and a knowledge of the infrastructure available for:
  - dealing with children and young people's issues;
  - referring children and young people to other agencies; or
  - notifying the Department of Families or the Police in cases where child abuse or neglect is suspected.
- Ability to work cross-culturally.
- Understanding of the rights of women and children.
- A good general knowledge of the legal system.
- A good understanding of the Court process and procedure involved in making an application for a Domestic Violence Protection Order
- A general knowledge, or the ability to rapidly acquire a general knowledge, of all relevant legal processes and legislation relevant to domestic and family violence including:
  - *The Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989.*
  - *The Family Law Act 1975*, particularly Division 11 and the impact on the *Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989.*
  - The Domestic Violence Provisions in the Migration Regulations.
  - *Child Protection Act 1999.*
  - The criminal justice system.
  - Assault and wilful damage laws.
  - Stalking laws.
  - *Peace and Good Behaviour Act.*
  - *Criminal Offence Victims Act.*
  - *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991.*
- A comprehensive knowledge of the relevant referral agencies and the ability to refer appropriately.
- Crisis intervention skills.
- Counselling skills.
- Highly developed interviewing skills.

- Recognition of one's professional limitations, and when to refer on.
- Recognition of one's professional boundaries (to prevent inappropriate relationships developing with the woman).
- Awareness of one's own values, attitudes and experiences in response to violence, particularly domestic and family violence, and how these impact on one's work
- Knowledge of the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), AUSLAN and NAATI and the ability to use interpreters.
- An understanding of the concept of family violence as used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Knowledge of some of the specific issues facing migrants and refugees who experience domestic and family violence.
- Knowledge of some of the specific issues facing people in same sex relationships whom experience domestic and family violence.
- An awareness and understanding of homophobia.
- An awareness of the specific needs of people with a disability who are affected by domestic and family violence.
- An understanding of the effects of imprisonment on women's behaviour and responses to domestic and family violence.

#### **Good practice staff competencies include:**

- Knowledge of the challenges facing people with mental health issues who are affected by domestic and family violence.
- Knowledge of the issues facing people with an intellectual disability who are affected by domestic and family violence.
- An understanding of the effects of drugs and alcohol on behaviour.
- Skills in communicating with people with a sensory impairment who are affected by domestic and family violence.
- Knowledge of the challenges facing women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, who are affected by domestic and family violence.
- Knowledge of the specific challenges facing lesbians, who are affected by domestic and family violence.

#### **Specialist Minimum competencies - Coordinator**

- Knowledge of policy development and implementation.
- Knowledge and skills in staff supervision and management.
- Knowledge of compliance requirements, eg, Workplace Health and Safety etc.
- Knowledge and skills in financial management.
- Knowledge and skills in service planning.



### **Specialist minimum competencies - Counsellor**

- High level skills in crisis intervention
- High level skills in all areas of case management especially assessment, planning and coordination
- Comprehensive knowledge of theoretical perspectives of counselling
- High level skills and ability in counselling
- Skills in grief and loss counselling

### **Specialist minimum competencies - Group Worker**

- Comprehensive knowledge of theoretical perspectives of group work
- High level skills in group facilitation, including co-facilitation
- Highly developed interpersonal skills

### **Specialist minimum competencies - Community Development Worker**

- Comprehensive knowledge of theoretical perspectives of community development
- High level skills in group facilitation

### **Specialist minimum competencies - Community Education Worker**

- High level skills in the development and implementation of community education strategies
- High level skills in training

# APPENDIX 6

## DRAFT CODE OF ETHICS

### Workers of the service will:

- Promote the safety of women, their children, relatives and associates and colleagues;
- Observe the highest standard of professional conduct;
- Promote the self-determination and autonomy of women, actively seeking to enable them to make informed decisions on their own behalf;
- Strive to continually improve service delivery and ensure that the services provided meet clients' expressed needs;
- Maintain and expand their knowledge base, theory and skills through continuing education and supervision, to provide quality service and accountable practice;
- Seek to ensure that services are offered and delivered in a culturally appropriate manner;
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries and not engage in inappropriate relationships with clients or colleagues. Inappropriate relationships include sexual relationships or other relationship (such as lender/borrower) where the potential for conflict of interest arises;
- Work with honesty, integrity, courtesy and respect for clients and colleagues and seek to understand differences in viewpoints and practice;
- Ensure that assessments made and information given is within the scope of their professional training or role;
- Be aware of Occupational Health and Safety issues;
- Not participate in any wilful act of misconduct or neglect of duty. Misconduct includes:-
  - Stealing
  - Breaches of confidentiality
  - Offensive language or behaviour,
  - Misappropriation of monies or goods.
  
- Appropriately challenge, and work to improve, policies, procedures, practices and services which:
  - are not in the best interests of women
  - are inequitable
  - are in any way oppressive, disempowering or culturally inappropriate
  - demonstrate unfair discrimination.
  
- Respect clients and colleagues right to privacy and confidentiality.

Adapted from *Australian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics*.

# APPENDIX 7

## DRAFT

## POLICY IN RELATION TO SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

### Policy

The service has a commitment to the physical and emotional safety of children and young people, and there are clear links between child abuse and domestic and family violence. Workers have a responsibility to promote the safety of children and young people and must inform the Department of Families or the Police of any suspected child abuse or neglect. Workers should not attempt to deal with any suspected case of child abuse or neglect. Service policy should therefore be directed to procedures around notifying the Department of Families or the Police where child abuse or neglect is suspected. No attempt to deal with or investigate cases of suspected neglect or abuse should be made. If the child does not have a parent or guardian who is able and willing to protect the child the workers must take steps to notify the Department of Families to protect the child.

### Procedure

When issues regarding the actual or potential harm to children are identified workers will consult either the Coordinator, a Senior Worker or a nominated Management Committee member as approved by the Management Committee to establish a plan for referring the issue. Where there are sole workers they should discuss the issue with their supervisor or seek advice from a key professional working in the area of child protection.

An assessment must be made to determine whether it is appropriate to involve the mother/guardian/co-parent of the child or young person in the notification of the suspected child abuse or neglect.

If it is determined that the mother/guardian/co-parent should be involved, the following procedure applies:

1. Explain the service's policy on suspected child abuse or neglect to the mother/guardian/co-parent;
2. Discuss the issue with the mother/guardian/co-parent of the child or young person to advise that there are concerns regarding the safety and well-being of the child or young person;
3. Encourage and support the mother/guardian/co-parent to notify the Department of Families or Police herself;
4. Where the mother/guardian/co-parent refuses to notify, the service is to advise the woman that the service will make the notification.
5. The worker continues to offer support to the woman regardless of the woman's decision about notification.

If it is determined that it is not appropriate to discuss the notification with the mother/guardian/co-parent of the child or young person, the service is to contact the Department of Families or Police directly.

The worker must recognise that Aboriginal women and Torres Strait Islander women may have a distrust of authority and fear of child protection agencies. Where there is a case of suspected child abuse or neglect, the worker should seek the assistance of a specialist child protection professional who works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

**The staff member is not to engage in any investigation of the suspected child abuse or neglect and is to refer the investigation to the Department of Families and/or the Police.**

# APPENDIX 8

## DRAFT CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

### Policy

All women using the service are entitled to have their personal information treated confidentially. The service will protect confidentiality wherever possible, and will create an environment of respect and privacy for clients. Confidentiality applies to verbal information, written information and information stored on computers.

Clients will be informed during initial contact of the details of the confidentiality policy. In particular the worker will explain the limited confidentiality provisions including:

1. that information will be shared at internal case conference meetings;
2. that non-identifying information will be shared across agencies involved in coordinated community responses to domestic and family violence;
3. that the service has procedures regarding safety risks and that confidentiality will not be observed in the following circumstances\*:
  - a. where the safety of the woman, her children, the staff member, other clients or any other person is at risk;
  - b. where there is suspected child abuse or neglect ; or
  - c. where it is believed that a serious criminal offence has occurred or is likely to occur.

\* In these cases the worker will follow the relevant policy eg Safety Policy, notification of suspected child abuse or neglect, notification of alleged criminal offence.

### Procedure

All attempts will be made to hold interviews in a private space.

All information gathered is with the consent of the woman.

Workers will keep records of their contact with women as per the records keeping policy. All personal information about clients will be stored in a lockable filing cabinet or within a secure computer system.

Women are able to request and in accordance with the records keeping policy have access to their records held by the service.

Workers may consult with other professional workers about cases when appropriate as agreed in shared protocols eg. Coordinated Community Responses to Domestic and Family Violence. Any information that is shared in consultation with other professional workers will still be kept confidential between those workers.

Workers are authorised to share information with an external supervisor where necessary for the purposes of supervision and debriefing. Information disclosed will be treated confidentially by the supervisor.

When advocating on behalf of a woman, the workers must seek her informed consent prior to releasing any personal information about the woman to any other agency.

(Adapted from Sample policy - VCOSS Management Support & Training Unit, Policy and Procedures Manual, Victorian Council of Social Service, 1997 Edition)

## APPENDIX 9

### DRAFT GRIEVANCE / COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

#### POLICY

Clients have a right to have grievances against workers heard, dealt with in a systematic way and resolved swiftly, and to have their privacy respected. Clients are entitled to be represented at all stages of the grievance or complaints procedure by an advocate of their choice and will be informed of this right when lodging a complaint.

It is the objective of this procedure to ensure that grievances are resolved by negotiation and discussion between the parties, in particular by facilitated discussion between the person making the complaint and the person against whom the complaint has been made. A participant will have the right for a grievance to be dealt with at the most senior level of management if necessary.

Serious allegations (a level three or four complaint, see below) will be addressed within 24 hours, and in the instance of a serious complaint about a worker, that worker will not have contact with the client involved.

#### PROCEDURE

##### A. In the first instance the person making the complaint shall either:

1. Approach the Coordinator or Manager of the service with the grievance;
2. Approach a worker of their choice;
3. Approach a member of the Management Committee;
4. Approach an advocate of their choice to raise the grievance with either the Co-ordinator or a member of the Management Committee; or
5. Approach a representative from the Department of Families.

##### B. The person to whom the complaint is made (“the notified person”) shall determine its level of severity.

- Level 1: Complaints involving misunderstandings or communication breakdowns, or which can be resolved quickly to the satisfaction of the participant.
- Level 2: Complaints involving conflict between service users and/or between clients and workers; or Level 1 complaints which have not been satisfactorily resolved.
- Level 3: Complaints involving serious allegations of harassment, unprofessional conduct, abuse, or mistreatment by a member of staff.
- Level 4: Complaints direct to the Department of Families.

**C. The person making the complaint shall have the right to have an advocate present at all times, and shall be informed of this right.**

*In the case of a complaint at Level 1:*

The notified person shall meet with the person who has made the complaint, and then with the person about whom the complaint has been made, and attempt to resolve the complaint.

The role of the notified person is to facilitate discussion between the parties, not to adjudicate or make judgment about who is in the right. Every effort should be made to bring the two parties to the complaint together to discuss the complaint, unless there has been an allegation of violence. If it can not be resolved at this point, the process shall move to level 2.

*In the case of a complaint at Level 2:*

The person notified of the complaint shall inform the Coordinator/Manager of the service and shall meet with the Coordinator/Manager, the person making the complaint, and the person about whom the complaint has been made where appropriate. In the event that the complaint relates to the Coordinator/Manager, the meeting shall involve the notified person and a member of the Management Committee. If the complaint cannot be resolved at this point, the process shall move to level 3.

*In the case of a complaint at Level 3:*

A meeting shall be held involving the person making the complaint, the person about whom the complaint has been made where appropriate, the Coordinator/Manager of the service, a representative of the Management Committee, and an independent facilitator.

*In the case of complaint at Level 4:*

The Department of Families will follow the appropriate procedure for dealing with complaints. This may involve arranging a meeting with the Management Committee or a representative from the management committee to discuss the complaint and arrange a suitable method for the resolution of the complaint.

*(Adapted from Sample policy - VCOSS Management Support & Training Unit, Policy and Procedures Manual, Victorian Council of Social Service, 1997 Edition)*



## APPENDIX 10

### DRAFT RECORD KEEPING POLICY

#### Policy

All clients' records are kept safe and confidential. Records are to be made available to the client upon request and in accordance with the following procedure.

#### Procedure

Women are advised that with their consent, records are kept by the service.

Workers will record information impartially and accurately, taking care to:

- report only essential and relevant details
- refrain from using emotive or derogatory language
- acknowledge the basis of subjective opinions
- protect women's privacy and that of others involved in the situation.

Women are advised that the Court in relevant circumstances may subpoena records.

Women are advised that they are able to have access to their records, held by the service, upon request. If access to records is requested, workers are to inform women that they may read copies of official documents or workers notes that relate to them on the premises but not take them home.

All files are kept secure in lockable cabinets.

All computer systems are secure and regularly maintained.

Efforts will be made to ensure that only relevant workers have access to client records.

The worker must ensure all diaries and files are locked away when the premises is unattended.

*(Adapted from Sample policy - VCOSS Management Support & Training Unit, Policy and Procedures Manual, Victorian Council of Social Service, 1997 Edition)*

## APPENDIX 11

### DRAFT CLIENT FEEDBACK FORM

This service is committed of the provision or quality service to women affected by domestic and family violence. Your feedback will assist us to evaluate and improve our work.

Client details: (optional)

1. Were your safety needs accurately assessed and responded to?

Very well    Well    Not very well    Don't know

2. Were you satisfied with the service you received?

Very satisfied    Satisfied    Not satisfied    Don't know

3. Were you treated with sensitivity and respect for your specific cultural background, family or other specific individual needs?

Very well    Well    Not very well    Don't know

4. Were you able to receive the assistance you expected?

Yes    No

5. Did worker/s understand your needs?

Very well    Well    Not very well    Don't know

6. Was the information provided to you:

easy to understand    Yes    No  
 relevant    Yes    No

7. Did the information provided meet your needs?

Very well    Well    Not very well    Don't know

8. Did you receive support to address your legal needs?

Yes    No    Not applicable

9. Did you receive appropriate referrals to other agencies/services?

Yes    No    Not applicable



## APPENDIX 12

### HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR SAAP FUNDED SERVICES

As well as being safe from violence and abuse, staff and service users need to be guaranteed healthy and physically safe premises and environment.

The safety, security and maintenance of the service are primarily the responsibility of management and staff of the service. However, all adults on the premises have a responsibility to report potential dangers to staff.

Services will adopt health and safety standards that comply with local authority by-laws and zoning requirements.

Health and safety procedures

- a first aid kit must be accessible to service users and staff;
- staff are encouraged to obtain a first aid certificate and regularly update their certification;
- services must ensure premises comply with Queensland Fire Service regulations;
- services must have a procedure in place to respond to emergency situations e.g. fires, bomb or death threats etc, and ensure that all staff and service users are aware of emergency procedures;
- emergency telephone numbers must be clearly displayed and a telephone for emergency calls will be accessible to service users and staff at all times;
- emergency evacuation plans must be clearly displayed in each room and emergency evacuation procedures should be practised regularly and explained to all service users and staff;
- easily understood instructions on how to use fire extinguishers and other safety equipment must be clearly displayed;
- services must have a policy relating to the supervision of children which ensures that suitable arrangements are followed when staff are responsible for supervising children in the absence of their parents. The policy must consider the number of children being supervised, the age of the children, the activity being undertaken, the number of staff required to supervise etc.;
- in the event of any service user or service provider suffering an accident or injury at the service, a written report of the incident must be kept. The written report must detail the circumstances of the incident (e.g. name of person suffering the accident or injury, date, time, incident, people present, any first aid or emergency medical treatment provided, name and signature of person compiling the report and any other relevant details). If the accident or injury involves a child the record must be kept until the child is twenty-one years of age;
- dangerous substances such as poisons, disinfectants, cleaning products, corrosive substances etc. must be clearly labelled and stored out of reach of children;
- any medication kept on the premises must be securely stored out of the reach of children;
- electrical appliances, urns, hot water taps and pipes etc. must not be accessible to children except under adult supervision;

- power points accessible to young children must be fitted with safety plugs;
- playground areas must be fenced and safe for children to play in and must be kept in good repair;
- playground equipment should meet Australian Safety Standards and must be kept in good repair;
- services must have policies and appropriate equipment in place to ensure that the risk from infectious diseases, disposal of syringes and handling of blood products etc. is minimised;
- services must ensure that buildings are vermin free and treated for pests on a regular basis.

### **Vehicles**

- services must ensure service vehicles are regularly maintained and kept in good order;
- when transporting children, child restraints which comply with Australian Safety Standards must be used.

### **Maintenance**

Services must have a policy in place that ensures that regular maintenance checks are documented by the service and carried out by appropriately qualified tradespeople on:

- all electrical and gas appliances in use at the service;
- the physical structure and condition of the building and furnishings;
- the physical environs and grounds of the service;
- children's play areas and equipment.

### **Physical Conditions of Accommodation**

As far as possible:

- services must generally provide a private bedroom for individual families accessing services, however cultural and personal preferences must also be respected;
- services should provide accommodation which is physically accessible to women and children with a disability as funds become available;
- services must have adequate bathroom, kitchen and laundry facilities (including washing machine/s, covered drying areas and/or clothes drier) for the number of residents accessing the service;
- the premises and all furniture, fittings, buildings, equipment, linen, crockery, cooking and eating utensils etc. must be maintained in a safe, clean and hygienic condition, in good repair and in proper working order;
- services accommodating children should provide a safe outdoor play area with adequate shade and cover; a specific indoor play area of adequate size; a range of indoor and outdoor toys and play equipment appropriate to the developmental needs of children accessing the service; and access to a quiet space for older children to study or complete homework.





**Queensland** Government  
Department of **Families**

