

# Information for Educators using CISS and FVISS

It is important to have an understanding of the requirements of the Child Information Sharing Scheme and the Family Violence Information scheme, as well how to apply it in your direct work with children and their families. Early Childhood Education and Care Services are now Information Sharing Entities (ISEs) which means your service can share information with other ISEs when the requirements of the schemes are met.

## Using the VEYLDF with CISS and FVISS

To ensure that you can implement CISS and FVISS and use them in your work supporting children and families, it is important to understand how they align with the frameworks you use. CISS, FVISS and MARAM complement early childhood approaches aimed at improving child wellbeing and safety.

The VEYLDF states that, *'A key role of each early childhood professional is to build children's confidence, sense of wellbeing and security, and their motivation to engage actively in learning with others.'*

It contributes towards a learning and development environment that prioritises wellbeing and safety using the outcomes, transitions and practice principles.

As educators, you are familiar with the details of each of these aspects as they underpin your program, the environment and all of the relationships within your work.

The following diagram illustrates how these work together:



Source: Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms Contextualised Guidance

### **Partnerships with families**

The Practice Principles all inform your work with the children in your care, however, forming partnerships with families is particularly important here.

Building genuine partnerships with families is an integral part of every educator's work, as is building meaningful relationships with children. Effective learning and development environments for children are those which are developed and designed to meet the individual needs of the child and the family. Determining these needs can only be achieved once a strong, supportive and respectful relationship has been developed with the family.

Educators play an important role in ensuring that families are supported by:

- Providing an environment that welcomes families and encourages participation on any level.
- Communicating information about the child's development in a variety of ways. This could include translating material or engaging an interpreter to communicate with families.
- Having access to relevant information about the child to promote child wellbeing or safety and assess or manage family violence risk.
- Actively assisting families to access any external supports they may need.
- Creating culturally safe environments for culturally diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
- Valuing the knowledge that parents have of their child.
- Sharing insights and perspectives and encourage shared decision-making
- Working as a team within the service and ensuring consistent communication regarding the children in their care.

### **Wellbeing and Safety**

The CISS uses wellbeing and safety of children as the basis for requesting or sharing information. Wellbeing and safety are already a priority for educators working with children and families. As an educator working closely with children and families, you are well-placed to notice any changes in a child or family. As wellbeing is different to an extent for each person and so broad in nature, and because it evolves over time, this part of CISS has not been formally defined, however, CISS refers to factors which contribute to a child's wellbeing and safety.

When working out how to use the new schemes for supporting wellbeing and safety and assessing or managing family violence risk, you are encouraged to use your professional judgement and the existing policies and practices in place to support the wellbeing and safety of children. Your professional judgement comes from your experience, knowledge of child development, as well as the relationship you have with the family. For MARAM, there is a structured professional judgment model that is more specific and includes information sharing. You will use the threshold test for CISS and/or the requirements of FVISS to fully determine whether you can share information and under which schemes.

When supporting child wellbeing and safety, and identifying and responding to family violence, you need to consider that some groups experience increased vulnerability. For example, some groups experience higher rates of and increased barriers due to age, cultural background, location or socioeconomic status. These may include families with someone who has a disability or mental health difficulties, CALD communities, families living in regional, remote and rural communities.

When sharing information to promote children's wellbeing and safety, and/or assess or manage family violence risk, you should:

- consider the child's best interests
- maximise the immediate and ongoing safety of all family members at risk of family violence in line with MARAM, noting safety includes responding to needs and circumstances that promote stabilisation and recovery from family violence. This includes sharing relevant information with ISEs about observable signs of trauma that may indicate family violence and other evidence-based risk factors.
- engage specialist services as required and promote collaborative practice around children and families
- give precedence to the wellbeing and safety of a child over the right to privacy
- preserve and promote positive relationships between a child and the child's family members and persons of significance to the child
- be respectful of and have regard to a child's social, individual and cultural identity, the child's strengths and abilities and any barriers or discrimination relevant to the child's safety or wellbeing
- promote the cultural safety and recognise the cultural rights and familial and community connections of children who are Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both
- seek to maintain constructive and respectful engagement with children and their families.

The new Reforms build on and complement existing child safety obligations. All obligations, existing responsibilities and practices under the Child Safe Standards, mandatory reporting, and other reporting obligations, remain the same.

### **Seeking views and wishes of the child and protective family members**

After you have made the determination that you will share information with an ISE, you also need to decide if it is safe, reasonable and appropriate to seek the views of the protective family members or child. If it is not safe, reasonable and appropriate, you do not have to share information under the reforms, when a child is present (and if there is a safety concern, you would not), however, this is where the relationship with the family becomes important. Communicating with the family about your concerns and intentions, can strengthen the trust between you. Ensure only 'adult victim survivor' family members are consulted in cases of family violence risk but only if you deem there are no safety concerns at the time.

When seeking the views of the child and their protective family member, the discussion should include explaining:

- the requirements that need to be met before information can be shared
- who information can be shared with
- the benefits of information sharing and how information may be used to promote child wellbeing or safety.

It is important to support and encourage the expression of any concerns, doubts or anxieties and respond sensitively, with due consideration of the circumstances children and families may be facing.

Discussing these concerns may help to inform the identification of any risks to children's wellbeing and safety and help to avoid unintended outcomes of information sharing. You should be aware of your own preconceptions and biases when engaging with children and families navigating identities, backgrounds or circumstances different to your own.

### **Resources**

Wellbeing and Safety Decision Tree –CISS [Decision Tree- CISS](#)

Applying the threshold tests CISS [Applying the threshold CISS](#)

Applying the threshold tests FVISS [Applying the threshold FVISS](#)

Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms Toolkit [Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms Toolkit](#)

Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms Contextualised Guidance [Department of Education and Training Victoria](#)

DET Webinars and eLearning [DET training](#)