

**INTERAGENCY COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK
FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN**

October 2003

**developed by the
Interagency Child Protection Coordination Committee (ICPCC)**

The Minister for Community Development established the Interagency Child Protection Coordination Committee in February 2002 with representatives from government departments, community agencies, the Aboriginal and ethnic communities.

INTERAGENCY COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN

PART 1 - INTRODUCTION

Child Protection

Child protection in its broadest sense is achieved when individuals, families, professionals, community groups, leaders and agencies and government departments share the responsibility for protecting children from harm. Although the players may have different roles, all need to work together in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation for the benefit of the children and young people in the community.

Services which support child protection include:

- universally available services that support all children, young people and their families
- targeted services provided by community based organisations to help families overcome problems and reduce personal and social stresses which can lead to family breakdown and/or child abuse
- statutory intervention to protect children and young people from child abuse and
- treatment services to address issues arising from child abuse and to prevent the cyclical nature of abuse.

Children and young people are most effectively protected when the community, relevant agencies and individuals work together in the context of a common understanding of the rights of the child and a shared view of their responsibility for protective action.

Background to this framework

The Minister for Community Development established the Interagency Child Protection Coordination Committee in February 2002 with representatives from government departments, community agencies, the Aboriginal and ethnic communities.

The role of the committee is to develop a framework to ensure effective coordination and collaboration in child protection across relevant government and community agencies. The recommendations of the "Inquiry into the Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities" have been considered in the development of the framework.

Context

The State Government is committed to addressing a range of social issues in an inclusive whole of government and community approach. To date the following initiatives have been developed by Government with an impact on this area:

- The Statement of Commitment – Building a New and Just Relationship between the Western Australian Government and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission – October 2001.
- Putting People First – The Government’s response to the State Homelessness Taskforce – May 2002.
- Putting People First – The Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy – August 2002.
- Putting People First – The Western Australian Government’s State Action Plan for Addressing Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities – November 2002.

The Department for Community Development

The protection of children and young people is a major responsibility of the Department for Community Development. As one key task, the Department is facilitating the interagency committee developing this Interagency Collaborative Framework for Protecting Children. In addition, the Department is:

- developing an internal strategic framework to protect children and young people
- working with other government agencies and the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission to implement the Government Response to the Gordon Inquiry and
- working with community and government organisations to develop an Action Plan to respond to family and domestic violence.

The Vision

Children and young people have the opportunity to achieve their full potential in a safe and supportive environment. They are best protected from harm when the community, community agencies and government collaborate effectively.

Purpose

To strengthen collaboration and partnerships between individuals, families, professionals, communities, community agencies and government departments to enable children, young people and their families to receive the most appropriate services and support to ensure their safety.

Guiding Principles

The principles which underpin the development of the framework are as follows:

1. Protecting children and young people is a shared responsibility of individuals, families, communities, community agencies and government.
2. Strong local networks that positively engage individuals and families and link them to community supports enhance the protective capacity of the community.
3. The needs of children are best provided for by their families unless their safety and wellbeing are at risk.
4. Children and young people should be able to participate in decisions likely to have a significant impact on their lives.
5. Services and supports are responsive to the individual needs of all children and young people, taking into consideration their location, Aboriginality, cultural diversity or disability.
6. Agencies have appropriate knowledge and skills in child protection to safeguard children and young people from harm.
7. Agencies own and understand their roles and responsibilities.
8. Agencies have an in-depth understanding of the roles and responsibilities of other agencies.
9. Relevant information will be shared across agencies to safeguard children and young people from harm.
10. Collaboration and partnerships between the community, agencies and government are based on agreed frameworks and a shared knowledge of contemporary child protection practice.
11. Services are evidence based and supported by effective data collection and ongoing evaluation processes.

Outcomes

The framework is intended to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Coordinated responses that ensure the safety and protection of children.
2. All agencies have clearly articulated their roles and responsibilities with respect to interagency child protection.
3. All agencies, whilst maintaining the integrity of their service, share information to protect children.
4. Children and young people are included in processes that directly affect them.
5. Community-based solutions aimed at improving safety and protection of children are developed, building on the capacities and strengths of individuals, families, communities and local agencies.
6. Local services and supports are coordinated in response to identified needs.
7. Coordinated, community-based, culturally appropriate services are developed in all areas.
8. Specific community based interagency teams and coordination strategies ensure the safety and protection of children.

Evaluation

The Interagency Collaborative Framework for Protecting Children will be reviewed, evaluated and refined through established mechanisms as it is progressed.

PART 2 - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT FROM GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY AGENCIES

Government and community agencies will work with each other and in partnership with individuals, families and local communities to support, nurture and protect children from harm.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL AGENCIES

The government agencies which have made a commitment to this framework are:

- Department for Community Development
- Department of Education and Training
- Department of Education Services
- Department of Health, including Office of Aboriginal Health
- Department of Justice
- Disability Services Commission
- WA Police Service.

The Ethnic Communities Council of WA and Western Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS) participated on the committee as peak bodies representing the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) communities and community agencies respectively. Dawn Wallam represented Yorganop an Aboriginal agency.

Each agency has its own roles and responsibilities which are documented individually. There are shared responsibilities to which all agencies commit. These are stated below.

As employers:

Staff are aware of the agency's commitment to working collaboratively and cooperatively to address child protection in the community.

A wide range of screening processes including police clearances are undertaken for all employees, volunteers and students who have contact with children and young people.

All relevant staff have training in recognising indicators of child abuse and neglect.

All relevant staff are aware of their obligation to report suspected risk of harm to children and young people and are aware of the agreed protocols between agencies.

Documented procedures are in place to respond to situations where employees, volunteers or students of the agency are alleged to have harmed children or put them at risk.

As a service provider:

Situations where children and young people are believed to be at risk of harm or neglect are identified and reported to the relevant agencies.

Preventive steps are taken to reduce the likelihood of children and young people being abused or neglected when receiving services from the agency.

The commitment to working collaboratively and cooperatively at all levels to protect children in the community is integrated into all policies and practice.

High quality services which are accessible, client focused and reflective of local community needs are provided.

As a funding or regulatory body:

Organisations funded or regulated by the agency are advised of their responsibilities to:

- work in a collaborative way to protect children and young people and
- report children at risk to the appropriate authority or agency.

As an inter-agency partner:

Work is undertaken with other government and non-government agencies to plan and provide services to strengthen and support families.

Work is undertaken with other agencies within agreed, coordinated procedures to plan for and provide services for the care and protection of children and young people.

Support is given to programs and structures that improve collaboration, coordination and leadership at the individual case level.

Relevant information is exchanged to assist investigations, assessments and case planning as permitted by the current legislation.

Agencies provide and/or participate in across-agency training to protect children and support families.

Standards agreed by the partners are complied with.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

ROLE

The role of the Department for Community Development in child protection is prescribed by the Child Welfare Act (1947), inclusive of Amendments (2002). When children and young people are at risk of harm the Department has responsibility to ensure the safety of children and young people by:

- responding to allegations of maltreatment
- working with families of children who have been maltreated
- working to reunite children to their families when it is safe to do so and
- providing out-of-home care services when children cannot remain safely with their families.

Through the Child Welfare Act 1947, Welfare Assistance Act 1961 and Community Services Act 1972 the Department also has broader statutory responsibilities for the development of frameworks and responses and the provision of services that strengthen and build the capacity of families and communities to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Department has the key responsibility for the protection of children and young people and to ensure there is coordination and collaboration where intervention is necessary to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

As a service provider:

- Respond effectively to reports about children and young people that are at risk of maltreatment, or have been harmed.
- Respond effectively to requests for assistance by children, young people and families.
- Plan, conduct and manage joint investigations of child sexual abuse and serious physical abuse reports with the Western Australian Police Service.
- Gather evidence and initiate care and protection proceedings in the Children's Court of Western Australia.
- Inform reporting agencies of the progress and outcomes of assessments and investigations as permitted by law.
- Ensure children and young people as far as possible are able to participate in decision making processes to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

- Engage and work with families and communities to support them to ensure the safety and well being of children or young people.
- Provide, fund and monitor high quality and safe out-of-home care and support services for children, young people and their families.
- Support the provision of appropriate resources that strengthen the capacity of families and communities to ensure the safety of children and young people.
- Raise community awareness and responsibility about the safety and well being of children and young people.
- Develop and implement educational and preventive programs aimed at protecting children and young people.

As an employer:

- Ensure all relevant staff have access to and are aware of Departmental policy and procedures in respect to their role in the protection of children.
- Provide training and developmental opportunities for staff in the implementation of contemporary practice approaches and Departmental policy and procedures in respect to the protection of children.
- Provide support and supervision for staff in their work with children, young people, families and communities.
- Investigate and respond to allegations of abuse and neglect by Department for Community Development staff, volunteers or carers.

As a funding body:

Ensure organisations funded by the Department are aware of:

- their responsibilities to protect children and young people and
- the protocols for reporting children at risk to the Department.

As an interagency partner:

- Develop information systems that enable the efficient exchange of information to ensure the best outcomes for children, young people and families.
- Identify and assess emerging trends in child protection and ensure the dissemination of this information to other agencies.
- Develop and maintain systems that support collaboration and partnerships in the delivery of services.

- Provide leadership in collaborative work with other agencies in areas where the Department has a statutory role.
- Support the development of preventive and educational programs for other agencies and the community to raise awareness of the need to promote the safety and well being of children, young people and families.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN POLICE SERVICE

ROLE

The role of Western Australian Police Service (WAPS) in child protection is to provide a safe and secure society for children: by collaborating and cooperating with stakeholder agencies and the community; by investigating incidents of suspected child abuse (physical and sexual); and by monitoring emerging trends and undertaking pro-active strategies to reduce the incidence of reported crime.

RESPONSIBILITIES

As a service provider:

- Investigate and identify causal factors in incidents of suspected child abuse involving criminality.
- Investigate and identify causal factors in reports of missing children and young people.
- Investigate and identify causal factors in incidents of domestic violence that involve children and young people.
- Investigate and make referrals relating to children at risk of harm or in need of care and protection.
- Support collaborative agencies by the provision and use of information and intelligence to prevent incidents of crime and manage children and young people at risk.
- Utilise multimedia and education strategies to improve community and industry awareness of child protection.

As an employer:

- Ensure that specialist employees and police officers are appropriately skilled, trained and resourced to ensure quality service delivery, including service to remote country areas.
- Ensure that processes, systems and strategies that influence our attitudes to better child protection are communicated across the agency.
- Ensure that our officers understand and reflect the principles of inter-agency cooperation and information exchange to enable a holistic approach to child protection.

As a regulatory body:

- Enforce statute law and, through operational practice, research and analysis, identify emerging trends and influence legislative change where possible.

As an interagency partner:

- Conduct investigations and make referrals to agencies for children at risk of harm or in need of care and protection.
- Provide information and intelligence to identify and support agencies in managing children and young people at risk.
- Utilise information and management systems to ensure the best outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- Utilise information technology and information strategies to exchange intelligence with relevant agencies.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

ROLE

The role of the Department of Education and Training in child protection is to provide a safe and secure environment for children, ensure that staff report concerns and collaborate with other agencies to meet the needs of children.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Department recognises the fundamental right of students to be protected from neglect and physical, emotional or sexual maltreatment whether at home, at school or in the community. Everyone working in a school is responsible for the care and protection of the students and is also responsible for reporting concerns of neglect or emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

As a service provider:

- Provide a safe and secure environment.
- Ensure protection of children from abuse and neglect and increase the awareness of the need to promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children, young people and families.
- Encourage life skills training in protective behaviours and opportunities to manage personal safety.
- Provide access to qualified confidential counselling support.
- Provide support for abused children and young people through modification of curriculum and confidential counselling.
- Liaise with the Department for Community Development in order to provide the most appropriate support to children and young people.
- Provide access to Department for Community Development staff and police officers for interviews.

As an employer:

- Develop and implement processes to deal with disclosure and suspicion in each school setting. Communicate with employees' needs and expectations with regard to reporting responsibilities.
- Promote an understanding of confidentiality and its boundaries.

- Ensure access to professionally trained personnel to advise on all forms of abuse.
- Provide ample training opportunities for all staff in child protection.
- Develop educational leaders' knowledge of child abuse indicators.
- Provide support networks to inform employees.
- Provide individual support to employees who are subject to court proceedings.
- Ensure employees understand the issues and processes to enable the proper documentation of a case.

As an interagency partner:

- Have protocols in place for the appropriate exchange of information to progress investigations, assessments and case management.
- Work with other agencies to plan and provide services for the care and protection of children and young people, and to strengthen and support families.
- Negotiate interagency links to ensure speedy and effective communication of appropriate information so child protection concerns can be addressed.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SERVICES

ROLE

The role of the Department of Education Services in child protection needs to be interpreted within the operating context for non-government schools. The roles of the Minister for Education and Training and the Department, vis-à-vis the *independent* status of non-government schools and systems, require the adoption of complementary and supportive procedures.

Similarly, the Department's role in relation to child protection through the various statutory and non-statutory providers of educational study courses for full fee international students (to the extent that children under the age of 18 years are enrolled) requires the adoption of complementary and supportive procedures.

The Department of Education Services' role is to:

- ensure that each non-government school registered under the *School Education Act 1999* has developed and implemented an appropriate child protection policy as an integral component of a school's duty of care obligations to its students,
- ensure that each provider registered under the *Education Service Providers (Full Fee Overseas Students) Registration Act 1991* (to the extent that children under the age of 18 years are enrolled), has developed and implemented an appropriate child protection policy as an integral component of a provider's duty of care obligations to its students,
- complement the actions taken by non-government schools and education service providers should particular child protection cases be brought to the notice of the Department (or Minister for Education and Training),
- intervene and, if necessary, contact the Department for Community Development or the WAPS Child Abuse Investigation Unit when a child is at immediate risk.

RESPONSIBILITIES

As a service provider:

Although the Department is not a provider of schooling or educational services direct to students, it performs a quality assurance role through the relevant legislative functions of registering schools and registering education service providers. The responsibilities of the registered schools, systems and providers in matters of child protection are summarised below:

- **Catholic schools**

The policy and procedures that apply to all Catholic schools are contained within the Catholic Education Commission's *Policy Statement on Child Abuse and Child Protection Guidelines: Guidelines and Procedures for Catholic Schools in Western Australia*. This manual outlines procedures

for the identification and notification of child abuse and neglect; procedures for dealing with allegations of misconduct and serious misconduct against lay employees in Catholic schools; and principles and procedures in responding to complaints of abuse against personnel of the Catholic Church of Australia.

- **Independent schools**

Each individual independent school is responsible for developing and implementing a child protection policy as an integral component of its duty of care obligation to students. The Association of Independent Schools of WA (Inc) (AISWA) is a professional body that provides support and advice to independent schools on a range of policy and operational matters affecting the schools. Although AISWA cannot direct its member schools to adopt a specific policy or procedure, it has developed guidelines on child protection, *Procedures for Child Protection*, for assisting independent schools to develop their own policies.

- **International education service providers**

Each service provider needs to be responsible for developing and implementing its own child protection policy as an integral component of its duty of care (specifically, in this instance, for students who are under the age of 18 years).¹

As a funding/regulatory body:

Ensure that all registered schools and providers, either at a systemic or individual institution level, have developed and implemented appropriate child protection policies, or are in the process of doing so, as an integral component of their duty of care obligation to students.

As an interagency partner:

Work with other agencies on the protection of children and act according to the Reciprocal Procedures, if and when specific cases are brought to the Department's (or Minister for Education and Training's) notice.

1. As members of school systems, the majority of registered statutory providers are automatically subject to overarching policies and procedures on child protection, eg government schools administered by the Department of Education and Training, and Catholic schools administered by the Catholic Education Commission. Child protection policies and procedures developed by other registered statutory providers (eg TAFE colleges, universities and independent schools) and various registered non-statutory providers (eg private language or private training institutions) are to be checked by the Department when all new applications for registration are processed and when applications to renew registration are made by existing schools and providers. The relevant registration guidelines are being amended to alert providers to this requirement if students under the age of 18 Years are enrolled.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE DISABILITY SERVICES COMMISSION

ROLE

The Disability Services Commission (the Commission) provides and funds services for people with disabilities and their families who meet the Commission's eligibility criteria, and works with other government agencies to ensure that all people with disabilities have access to an appropriate range of services within the community (see Appendix 1). The Commission does not have statutory responsibility for the protection of children with disabilities, but refers to and works with the Department for Community Development (DCD) to ensure the safety of children and young people who receive a service through any of the Commission's provided programs.

The role of the Commission in child protection is to recognise risk of harm to children and young people with disabilities, or to the children of parents with disabilities, and to refer cases of child maltreatment and neglect to DCD or to the Police Service. Commission staff are assisted to recognise potentially harmful situations, the particular vulnerability of children and young people with disabilities, and to protect children and young people in receipt of Commission services from harm. The Commission has a role to ensure that organisations it funds are made aware of their responsibility to protect children and young people and to report cases of suspected risk of harm. The Commission has a role to work with government agencies to ensure that issues of disability are considered in child protection responses.

RESPONSIBILITIES

As a service provider:

- Respond to requests for support by eligible parents with disabilities; children and young people with disabilities; and their families.
- Identify and report to the appropriate authorities situations where there is suspected risk of harm or neglect of children and young people.
- Collaborate with other government and community agencies to ensure the safety of children and young people with disabilities and children of eligible adults with disabilities, where there is suspected risk of harm.
- Provide specialist consultation and information regarding the increased vulnerability of children and young people with disabilities to maltreatment or neglect.
- Contribute to the development and funding of a range of options to provide a safe environment to meet the care and support needs of children and young people with disabilities who are unable to live with their families.

- Although there is no entitlement to the limited preventive services the Commission will provide a range of preventive services for children and young people with disabilities and for eligible adults who are responsible for the care of children; to assist them to develop awareness of harmful situations and to develop skills to manage situations where there is risk of harm.

As an employer:

- Ensure all relevant staff are aware of the indicators of child maltreatment and neglect.
- Ensure all relevant staff are aware of the particular vulnerability to maltreatment and neglect of children and young people with disabilities.
- Ensure all staff are aware of the obligations and procedures to report suspected risk of harm or neglect of children and young people and are aware of agreed protocols for implementing care and support action.
- Provide training and development for staff to increase awareness of appropriate working relationships and professional standards in regard to relationships with children and young people with disabilities and parents with disabilities.
- Apply appropriate safeguards in employment practices and conducting checks to minimise risk of harm in the employment of staff to work with children and young people with disabilities, including students and volunteers.
- Ensure that the Commission's "Procedures for Managing Staff Performance Issues and Allegations" are implemented appropriately to safeguard the safety of children and young people where allegations are made of staff misconduct.

As a funding body and regulatory body:

The Commission does not regulate Commission funded organisations in relation to child protection standards and procedures. The Commission requires that the organisations it funds:

- ◆ have in place documented procedures to ensure that its consumers are protected from abuse, neglect and exploitation
- ◆ notify the Commission of any death or non-trivial injury (including physical, mental and sexual abuse or neglect) and
- the Commission initiates appropriate action where further investigation is required in relation to reports of death or non-trivial injury made by organisations funded by the Commission.

As an inter-agency partner:

- Exchange relevant information to progress investigations, assessments and case management as permitted by law.
- Work with other agencies within agreed, coordinated procedures, to plan and provide services where appropriate for the care and protection of children and young people with disabilities, and to strengthen and support the family, especially those with additional needs because of disability issues.
- Provide consultation and information regarding issues of disability in relation to specialist assessment of alleged maltreatment or neglect of children and young people with disabilities.
- Respond to requests for services from DCD in a timely manner, according to Commission policies and agreed responsibilities.

Appendix

Access to Services

The Disability Services Commission has developed a three-tier system of eligibility for services related to functional responsibilities.

Level	Eligibility	Access to Services
Level 1 Access to Commission roles and functions	Available to all people with disabilities – approximately 381,000 people and their families and carers	Covers the Commission functions of policy and planning, legislation, advisory bodies, standards, community education, advocacy support, information and referral and Disability Service Plans
Level 2 Access to funded and provided disability services	Based on assessment of need – applies to approximately 66,100 people with a profound or severe disability (where the disability manifests and assistance is sought before age 60) and their families and carers	Services include Local Area Coordination, Community-based Support, Health and Individual Support, Day Options and Accommodation Services funded by the Commission
Level 3 Access to Commission provided services	Based on a diagnosis of intellectual disability or for a person of pre-school age, a confirmed diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder 13,147 people registered with the Commission are eligible for these services	Access to Commission-provided services (previously provided by the Authority for Intellectually Handicapped Persons) to people with an intellectual handicap or autism on an eligibility and needs basis, includes Commission provided community-based support and accommodation services

**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE – JUVENILE JUSTICE, COMMUNITY
CORRECTIONS, COURT SERVICES, JUVENILE CUSTODIAL SERVICES
AND PRISON SERVICES**

ROLE

All staff working for the Department of Justice and in contact (either directly or indirectly) with children or young people have a role in child protection. They should bear in mind the welfare of children, irrespective of whether they are working primarily with adults or with children and young people.

RESPONSIBILITIES

As a service provider:

Community Justice Services

Community Corrections Officers and Juvenile Justice Officers have a statutory duty to supervise offenders effectively in order to reduce offending and to protect the public. In the execution of that duty these officers will be in contact with or supervising offenders who have convictions for offences against children. They have responsibilities to assess the risk posed by adult or juvenile perpetrators and to collaborate with the Department for Community Development in managing the risk of these offenders and that posed by prisoners and detainees due for release into the community under supervision.

Community Corrections Officers and Juvenile Justice Officers also work with individuals who have dependant children, and those who have convictions relating to domestic violence. They are likely to become aware of a broad range of children's needs in their daily work and should work closely with the Department for Community Development and other relevant agencies to assess the risk posed either to children of individuals (adult or juvenile) under supervision orders in the community or to those young people involved in the Juvenile Justice system. Juvenile Justice Officers should consult with the Department for Community Development prior to the placement of a young person in a family where one of the carers or adults is known to have maltreated children, or to have committed offences against children regardless of the child's relationship to that person. The officer should also advise Department for Community Development when there are concerns that a young person involved on the criminal justice system may pose a risk to any children who reside or regularly visit that home.

Community and Juvenile Justice Division staff have a role in the provision of advice to sentencing and releasing authorities to ensure they are fully informed about the risks posed by individuals. They also have a role in the provision of advice to other government departments, in particular the Department for Community Development.

If a victim of sexual offences or family violence is under the age of 18 years and their case is referred to the Victim-Offender Mediation Unit then the case

officer would check with the Department for Community Development to determine if the case is currently open. If it is, whatever recommendation they make regarding the level of contact (if any) between the offender and the victim is then endorsed by the Victim-Offender Mediation Unit. If the case is not open, then out of duty of care for the victim, a referral would be made to the relevant Department for Community Development office and pursued accordingly.

Prisons Division

Prisons Division has a responsibility, in regard to perpetrators of abuse, to assess the risk posed by adult offenders who have convictions for abuse of children prior to their release and to collaborate both within the Department of Justice and with the Department for Community Development in managing the risk posed by these offenders.

Prisons Division also has a responsibility in strengthening families to prevent incidence of child abuse. A significant number of women in custody are primary carers of children and many have a history of past abuse or abuse as a child. The cost of imprisonment to the individual women, their children and their families is significant. Imprisonment of women can lead to breakdown of families, which, in turn, places a burden on social support systems such as health, education and welfare.

Prisons Division recognises the importance of maintaining contact with families and children and provides a range of options to ensure contact with family including long term residency, overnight and short term visits.

Prisons Division has a duty to ensure the safety of children visiting or residing with offenders in custody. Prisons Division is aware of the need to protect the well-being of children and has the discretion to approve residency, disallow any visit to a prisoner by a person under the age of 18 years if such a visit is not in the best interests of the child and where necessary, to stop correspondence by a prisoner to a child. The principle consideration in approving contact must be the best interests of the child. Any concerns about the care of children will be conveyed to the Department for Community Development

If a prisoner is in custody for abuse offences against a child Prisons Division consult with the Victim-Offender Mediation Unit prior to visits being allowed and before release.

Juvenile Custodial Services

Juvenile Custodial Services manages young offenders between the ages of 10-18 years of age who have been sentenced to periods of detention by the courts or have been remanded in detention or are unable to meet their bail requirements.

Juvenile Custodial Services has a responsibility in regard to perpetrators of abuse to assess the risk posed by young offenders who have convictions for abuse of children prior to their release and to collaborate both within the

Department of Justice and with the Department for Community Development in managing the risk posed by these young offenders.

If a detainee is in detention for abuse offences against a child, Juvenile Custodial Services consults with the Victim-Offender Mediation Unit prior to visits being allowed and before release.

Juvenile Custodial Services has a responsibility to provide a safe and secure environment for young people in custody and strengthening families by promoting the young person's contact with their family while in detention. Juvenile Custodial Services recognises that a significant number of young people in detention have a history of abuse and consideration in approving contact must be in the best interests of the young person.

Courts

The Child Witness Service provides a non-evidential, emotional and practical court preparation and support service to children and their families. The Child Witness Service does not provide investigative services, however it does have a duty of care to the children who are receiving the service. Should any issues arise during the child's contact with the Child Witness Service to suggest that a child may be at risk, the information should be clearly documented on the Child Witness Service records. Information should include a record of all discussions with the child and family in relation to the issues of concern. All concerns are to be discussed with the coordinator and forwarded to the Department for Community Development.

The Victim Support Service provides support and counselling to victims of crime including children and their families. Should any issues arise during the child's contact with the service that indicate a child may be at risk, the information should be clearly documented on the Victim Support Service records. All concerns should be discussed with the Manager and forwarded to the Department for Community Development.

The Family Violence Court Service provides a support service for people seeking violence restraining orders in the courts. It is also responsible for the coordination of offenders on court mandated case management programs. The Family Violence Service workers and volunteers will at times have direct contact with children in the course of assisting victims. There are also occasions when the welfare and protection of children will become an issue when either assisting applicants for restraining orders or managing offenders. Should any issues come to the Family Violence Service or Case Management staff's attention which suggests that a child may be at risk, the information should be clearly documented on the Family Violence Service records. Information should include a record of all discussions with victims, offenders and staff in relation to the issues of concern. All concerns are to be discussed with the coordinator and forwarded to the Department for Community Development.

The Family Court Counselling Service provides self referred (minimal) and Court ordered privileged (confidential) conciliation counselling and case management conferences for separated couples contesting residence and contact of children. The Family Court Counselling Service provides Court ordered evidence based family assessment reports to the Court in regard to children and their families contesting residence and contact of children. Whilst the service does not provide investigative services, it does have a duty of care to the families who are receiving the service. Should any issues arise during the family's contact with the Family Court Counselling Service to suggest that a child may be at risk, or notification of risk is received by the Family Court of Western Australia, the information is processed by the Family Court Counselling Service, recorded on the Court file/or in the Family Court Counselling Service case notes. Information includes a record of all discussions with the child and or family in relation to the issues of concern. All concerns are forwarded to the Department for Community Development, processed and fed back to the Family Court Counselling Services and placed on the court files as per the protocols established between the Family Court of Western Australian and the Department for Community Development.

The Coronial Counselling Service provides information, counselling and support to family and friends of a deceased person whose death has been reported to a Coroner. The State Coroner and the Director General, Department for Community Development are signatories to a reciprocal agreement on information exchange following the death of a child in Western Australia. This has increased the effectiveness of Coronial inquiry and added essential data allowing for a child death review process by the Department for Community Development.

Coronial counsellors are involved with families during acute crises and it is practice that any concerns of a child being 'at risk' would be automatically forwarded to the Department for Community Development.

As an employer:

All Departmental staff are responsible for ensuring disclosures of abuse, or information they have received about the risk of harm to children, are reported to the Department for Community Development. All divisions of the Department of Justice where staff have contact with children are to have procedures in place for:

- checking the criminal records of employees
- develop and implement processes to deal with disclosure and suspicion in each workplace and communicate with employees' needs and expectations with regard to reporting responsibilities
- promote an understanding of confidentiality and its boundaries and
- ensuring the exchange of information necessary to protect children, within the confines of existing legislation.

The Department of Justice is responsible for ensuring that staff receives appropriate training and supervision in relation to the issues of abuse of children.

As a funding and regulatory body:

Non government agencies funded by the Department of Justice are required to ensure that staff employed to work with children are subject to criminal record checks, and are required to notify the Department of Justice of any allegations of abuse against staff.

The Department has a responsibility to ensure that all programs provided for offenders in the community or in custody are screened to ensure they are appropriate and are adequately monitored to ensure they meet established standards and do not increase the likelihood of further offending. This is of particular concern in relation to treatment programs for sex offenders.

As an interagency partner:

The Department of Justice is to:

- have protocols in place for ensuring information relating to abuse of children, or risk of harm, is conveyed to either the Police Service or the Department for Community Development and
- where relevant, participate in interagency solutions and conferences developed to address the safety of children.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

ROLE

Staff working in Health Services are in an ideal position to assist in the early identification of child abuse and neglect, as well as family and domestic violence. Health workers have contact with most of the population for routine child health services, mental health services, services related to pregnancy and services for prevention and management of illnesses and injury.

People who experience family and domestic violence seek health services at a far greater rate than individuals who have not experienced abuse, such as for assault-related injuries and a range of other health needs. For these reasons, Health workers are well placed to engage in early identification and appropriate referral of children and adults who have experienced abuse.

Early contact and intervention can reduce the impact that any abuse may have caused, prevent further abuse and neglect and stop the escalation of abuse to severe and life-threatening levels.

The primary role of the Department of Health is:

- prevention, detection, providing acute health care services for incidents of possible abuse, neglect and/or family violence
- referral of concerns about abuse, neglect and family and domestic violence for further intervention, investigation and/or child protection and
- monitoring and supporting child developmental health and wellbeing.

RESPONSIBILITIES

As a service provider:

- Focus on the prevention of child abuse and neglect.
- Intervene and provide support services for at risk groups.
- Detect and identify child abuse, neglect and family and domestic violence.
- Assess children who may have been abused, including medical examinations, developmental, emotional, social and family assessments.
- Refer suspected child abuse and neglect and family and domestic violence to statutory authorities.

- Provide a range of intervention services to address the needs of children who have been abused, or are suspected to have been abused.

As an employer:

- Provide training, support and clinical supervision for Health workers in the area of child abuse and neglect, family and domestic violence and cross-cultural awareness.
- Ensure that all Health Services² work to written Department of Health protocols, guidelines and policies and the Western Australian law for all activities related to child abuse and neglect and family/domestic violence, including confidentiality and information-sharing.
- Ensure that all Health workers are aware of and understand the relevant Codes and Guidelines for Health Services that outline duty of care and the overarching standards of behaviour that are required by all employees, volunteers and students.
- Designate the most appropriate Health workers who have Health Service expertise in child abuse and neglect to support Health Services.

As a funding body:

- Ensure that services funded by the Department of Health have specifications with clearly defined outputs in relation to the promotion of the wellbeing of children and for reporting child abuse and neglect.

As an interagency partner:

- Actively participate in interagency processes in relation to child abuse and neglect, child protection and family/domestic violence.
- Develop, participate in, and maintain community-based interagency teams that provide regular interagency forums for case discussions, planning to ensure child safety, ensuring that services are available and that intervention is effective and coordinated.
- Designated Health workers who have Health Service expertise in child abuse and neglect take a strategic lead to support community-based interagency teams and work with similar senior workers to provide interagency strategic leadership.

² Health Services – All Western Australian public sector Health services

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMUNITY AGENCIES

Community agencies receive funding from different sources, including State and Commonwealth Government departments. Funding bodies usually have protocols and/or service standards in place with the agencies in regard to child protection issues.

ROLE

The role of community agencies in child protection varies according to the nature and context of their contact with children, young people and their families. An effective child protection system is based on the fundamental principle that a collaborative working process between all parts of the community is required, including concerned individuals, service providers and government agencies with statutory responsibilities. Certain agencies provide specialist assistance and support to children, young people and families, and others provide more general services for the community as a whole. All those who work with children and young people have a duty of care to report suspected risk of harm.

Community agencies are autonomous bodies. While the Department for Community Development does not prescribe child protection guidelines for these agencies, it is expected that they will support and work in accordance with these established principles and framework.

Some key community services provided by agencies for children, young people and families include:

1. **Children's Services**

The role of children's services is to provide care and education for children. They often act as a non-stigmatising form of family support and early intervention. Children's services staff, because of their close contact with children and families, play an important role as part of a safety net of services for recognising and reporting children at risk and in promoting the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children. Services may also provide additional support for families in difficulty through respite care, or access and referral to information and resources.

2. **Family Support Services**

The role of family support services in child protection is to support and assist children, young people and families. Services offer goal focused one-to-one work with individual families providing personal support, counselling, education, resourcing and advocacy. Group activities such as support groups, courses and self help groups are also offered. Family support services are autonomous bodies, with most funded by the Department for Community Development and/or the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services.

Family support services include the following levels:

- **Primary support services**

These are provided across all social – economic groups and often take the form of neighbourhood centres and learning centres.

- **Secondary prevention services**

These are often one to one services provided in the home of the family and include volunteer visiting services.

- **Tertiary prevention services**

These work in a planned, strengths based model with families where there is a serious concern for the safety of the children. Services vary depending upon geographic location, service capacity and their fit with other specialist service providers in the same catchment area.

3. Out-of-Home Care Services

Out-of-home care or supported care services provide 24 hour care for children and young people other than with their parents. Out-of-home care services include foster care, residential care, shared family care and other forms of alternative care. These services care for and support children and young people through case work, advocacy, court support, practical support, counselling, outreach and day to day care and control.

4. Supported Accommodation Services

These services for people who are homeless and/or in crisis include emergency and longer-term refuges for families, single adults, young people and women and children escaping domestic violence. They provide support services such as outreach, advocacy and living skills development. They also link people to other services such as health, welfare and housing.

5. Youth Services

Youth services offer support and programs that reach out to vulnerable children and young people. They provide a broad range of services including drop-in centres, youth health services, specialist youth services, counselling and support, mediation in crisis intervention to assist in averting family breakdown, advocacy, outreach, street work, recreational activities, group work and other activities.

RESPONSIBILITIES

As service providers:

- Provide case planning and/or cooperative case management within a family context.
- Provide care and support services to children, young people and their families.
- Inform children and young people of their rights to be protected from abuse or neglect and of the avenues for support available to them.

- Promote the safety, welfare and well being of children and young people in their agency.
- Identify risk of harm and notify statutory authorities when and if necessary.
- Identify emerging issues and trends and participate in appropriate research and evaluation.

As employers:

- Ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities to report risk of harm and the specific agency procedures for reporting. All staff are aware of indicators of child abuse and neglect.
- Provide access to training and development for staff and volunteers in recognising and reporting risk of harm and neglect.
- Provide access to cross-cultural awareness training in the area of child protection and risk assessment.
- Provide reporting procedures and professional standards for care and protection work generally, and for staff relationships with children, young people and families.
- Evaluate service delivery using competency based evaluation methods.

As interagency partners:

- Work with other agencies within agreed, legislative frameworks to plan and provide services for the care and protection of children and young people, and to strengthen and support the family.
- Ensure transparent information exchange regarding relevant information to progress investigations, assessments and case management as deemed to be in the best interests of the client, within the parameters of privacy legislation status for community agencies.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ETHNIC COMMUNITIES COUNCIL OF WA

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE

The Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia (ECCWA) is the state's peak ethnic umbrella organisation. It is a non-government, non-profit community based organisation, which takes an active interest in all aspects of multiculturalism and ethnic affairs and acts on behalf of all ethnic communities in Western Australia.

The ECCWA:

- provides governments (Commonwealth, State and Local) with information on the needs and concerns of ethnic communities in WA
- provides advice and assistance to government and community agencies to make their programs and services more responsive to the needs of ethnic communities
- facilitates participation of ethnic communities in the decision-making processes of government and community
- provides information and support to member organisations to address policy/program issues of concern to them and
- promotes the contribution of ethnic communities to the social, cultural and economic development of Western Australia.

To fulfil these functions, the ECCWA:

- makes submissions to government inquiries and reviews
- assists in policy development
- participates on major governmental committees and
- organises public seminars on issues that affect the social, economic and cultural life of ethnic people.

The Ethnic Communities Council recognises that all children irrespective of their language, religion or ethnicity have the right to safety and protection in the community. Religion, culture and ethnicity are no excuse for taking away these inalienable rights. At the same time, the Ethnic Communities Council recognises that the practice of child protection is an issue fraught with tensions arising from different cultural understandings on child rearing within various communities.

The Ethnic Communities Council thus sees its role as:

- a cultural consultant to the agencies which are party to the child protection protocols and
- a monitoring body ensuring that the guiding principles both in policy and practice take into account cultural and religious issues.

RESPONSIBILITIES

As a service provider:

As a peak body the ECCWA is not engaged in direct service delivery. With membership from a range of ethnic communities and organisations, the ECCWA maintains contact with a number of people in the migrant and refugee communities who otherwise may or may not have an understanding of child protection as defined in the Framework. In this context, the ECCWA as a service provider has a limited role in ensuring:

- information is made available to its constituency by the various interagency partners that are signatories to the child protection protocols
- emerging issues are identified and participation occurs in appropriate research and evaluation and
- the safety of young people and children is promoted where possible through the development of programs and projects.

As employers:

- Ensure all staff and volunteers of the ECCWA are aware of the existence of the Interagency Collaborative Framework for Protecting Children, protocols and reporting mechanisms.

As interagency partners:

- Work with other agencies to research, plan and evaluate all issues related to child protection.
- Provide appropriate input to other agencies on a consultative basis on cross-cultural issues.
- Work with interagency partners as per its role.