



Information Sharing Scheme Procedure

Policy

The Information Sharing Scheme Procedure falls under the Child safety and Wellbeing Policy.

Hawthorn Early Years has zero tolerance for child abuse and any harm resulting from discrimination based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion, sex, intersex status, gender identity or sexual orientation. The Service is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. We understand our responsibilities and statutory duty of care to comply with the Victorian Child Safe Standards, Reportable Conduct Scheme and Information Sharing Scheme to build our capacity to prevent and respond to allegations of child abuse. We have a dedicated Child Safety and Wellbeing Procedure which explains our service's approach to meeting the Child Safe Standards.

We are committed to the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of all children including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and those with a disability. We promote diversity and tolerance and aim to form equitable and positive relationships with children. We ensure children participate in decisions affecting them and listen to and respect their suggestions and ideas. All reports of child abuse and child safety concerns will be treated seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child. All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly, thoroughly and without bias.

The Service strongly opposes any type of abuse against a child and endorses high quality practices in relation to protecting children. All employees understand their roles and responsibilities in protecting children from abuse and neglect and maintain up-to-date knowledge of child protection law. Employees undertake child protection awareness training every 12 months, and whenever significant changes are made to the child protection law or reporting requirements. Employees must comply with our Child Safe Code of Conduct at all times.

Application of Procedure

This procedure applies to all employees, students, volunteers, families, children and others attending the programs and activities of Hawthorn Early Years (the Service).

Key Definitions:

Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS): The Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) assists professionals and organisations to better perform their roles and responsibilities by expanding the circumstances in which they can share confidential information to promote the wellbeing and safety of a child or group of children. The scheme facilitates services working together to identify needs and risks, promote earlier and more effective intervention and integrated service provision and improve outcomes for children and families.



All Victorian children aged birth to 18 years are covered under the scheme. Consent is not required from any person when sharing under CISS. The CISS complements and supports child and family service reforms and other child safety legislation including the Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme. Sharing of information may assist the Information Sharing Entity (ISE) to:

- access and engage with supportive services
- access resources for learning and development
- make a decision, assessment or plan
- start or conduct an investigation
- provide a service relating to a child/children
- manage any risk to a child/children

Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS): The Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) enables the sharing of relevant information between authorised organisations for family violence risk assessment and risk management. ISEs can also share information relevant for a family violence assessment purpose with organisations who are classified as a Risk Assessment Entity (RAE). These include (but are not limited to):

- Child Protection and Child FIRST
- The Orange Door
- Victims Support Agency
- Victoria Police
- State funded specialist family violence services

Information Sharing Entity (ISE): An information sharing entity is an organisation or service that has been prescribed in legislation to request and share information under CISS and FVISS. Information sharing entities can request and share information under the information sharing schemes. Information sharing entities are prescribed under:

- the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme by the Family Violence Protection (Information Sharing and Risk Management) Regulations 2018
- the Child Information Sharing Scheme by the Child Wellbeing and Safety (Information Sharing) Regulations 2018

This means that organisations and services do not need to register as an information sharing entity. All organisations and services prescribed as information sharing entities can also access the online ISE List. The online ISE List is a database that can be used to identify other organisations and services prescribed under the Child Information Sharing Scheme and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme. [View details for ISE | ISE List \(www.vic.gov.au\)](http://www.vic.gov.au)

MARAM: The Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (the MARAM Framework) is the policy framework describing best practice for family violence risk assessment and management based on current evidence and research. MARAM establishes the foundations for a state-wide approach and shared legislative responsibility for identifying and responding to family violence. MARAM guides professionals across the service system (including ECEC services) to better understand their responsibilities to identify, assess and manage family violence risk.



Hawthorn Early Years is committed to:

Supporting the wellbeing and safety of children through the provision of well-established child safety frameworks, policies and procedures. We acknowledge that information sharing and collaboration are vital in identifying risks early and in facilitating early and appropriately targeted support for children.

As an Information Sharing Entity (ISE), our Service is authorised to request and share relevant information under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) and is required to respond to requests from other ISEs. Both schemes recognise the importance of seeking the views and promoting the agency of children and adults (who are not perpetrators of family violence) wherever appropriate, safe and reasonable to do so.

Our Service will use the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) to identify and guide the assessment and management of family violence risk.

The Board of Governance will:

Delegate operational responsibility and day-to-day management of the Service to the Nominated Supervisor/s. The Centre Director and Centre Manager will act as Nominated Supervisors for the Service.

Monitor the performance of the Association, including responsibilities contained in this procedure, through regular reporting and by ensuring appropriate resources are available to carry out the organisation's functions.

The Nominated Supervisor/s will:

Training

Complete professional learning about MARAM and the Information Sharing Schemes (e-Learning Modules).

Identify employees who are likely to form part of an information sharing team and ensure they complete available professional learning on the Information Sharing Schemes. This will usually be classroom leaders (early childhood teachers and team leaders).

Provide additional training to other staff to understand and manage information under the schemes.



Information sharing process

Act as the designated “Information Sharing Coordinator/s” for the Service.

Confirm that any individual requesting information is from an approved ISE organisation before sharing any information. This will be done by checking the on-line ISE list (refer to key references).

Talk through the request for information to establish the purpose for sharing and that this meets the following thresholds under each scheme:

Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS)

1. Promotes the wellbeing or safety of a child or group of children
2. Sharing may assist another ISE to carry out one or more specified activities
3. The information is not excluded information (see below)

Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS)

1. Sharing is for a family violence assessment purpose or protection purpose –to establish or assess the risk of a person committing family violence or being the subject of family violence.
2. The applicable consent requirements are met to manage family violence risk, including via ongoing risk assessment (protection purpose).
3. The information is not excluded information (see below)

Note: Excluded information includes any information that could reasonably be expected to endanger a person’s life or result in physical injury, prejudice legal proceedings or a coronial inquest or inquiry, or disclose privileged information. For a complete list of excluded information see the CISS Ministerial Guidelines. ISEs are not required to conduct extensive investigations to determine that information is not excluded information before sharing it.

Identify appropriate employees to request and share information on behalf of the Service (establish an Implementation Team).

Meet record keeping obligations under the FVISS and CISS when sharing information with any other ISE or Risk Assessment Entity (RAE) by documenting the following information:

- Record requests to share information.
- Date of request.
- The information requested.
- If refusing a request, the request and the reason why it was refused.

When sharing information (either proactively or on request):

- Record under what scheme the sharing complies with (FVISS, CISS or both).
- Know and record whose information is being shared.
- Record how the threshold for sharing was met.



Record keeping obligations under the FVISS and CISS must also record:

- The information that was shared.
- The date on which the information was shared.
- Who the information was shared with.
- Relevant risk assessments or safety plan that have been prepared for a person at risk of family violence.
- Any complaints made about information sharing under CISS or FVISS.

Ensure all documentation relating to information shared under the Information Sharing Schemes is kept in the relevant child's enrolment file.

Complaints

Document and respond to any complaints or grievances relating to the sharing of information under the Child Information Sharing Scheme or Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme as per our *Complaints and Grievances Procedure*.

Ensure families and all stakeholders have a fair opportunity to be heard including considering the nature of the complaint and the best way to address the complainant's concerns. Any complaint related to CISS or FVISS will be investigated by a Nominated Supervisor who has been appropriately authorised and trained in these schemes.

If a complaint cannot be resolved the Office of the Victorian Information Commission (OVIC) or the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) may be contacted for further investigation.

Risk management

Establish procedures for responding to and managing information sharing requests made under the Information Sharing Schemes.

Establish procedures for responding to complaints made under the Information Sharing Schemes.

Update policies and practices to align with information sharing and MARAM.

Identify changes within the Service required for change management (identification of family violence, response and information sharing, the promotion of children's wellbeing and safety, cultural safety).

Protect the privacy of other individuals when providing a person with access to their information. For example, redacting part of a record to protect the privacy of another person whose information also appears in the record.

Continue to evaluate and monitor the ongoing implementation of the Information Sharing Schemes (record in QIP).



All employees, volunteers and students will:

Read and adhere to this procedure.

Consider the child's best interests at all times.

Promote and protect children's wellbeing and safety in line with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure.

Participate in training about the Child Information Sharing, Family Violence Reforms and Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Management Framework (MARAM).

Direct all requests for information sharing to the "Information Sharing Coordinator/s" (the nominated supervisor/s) who will approve requests for information sharing using the "Decision Tree" (refer to resources).

Maximise the immediate and ongoing safety of all family members at risk of family violence in line with MARAM.

Engage specialist services as required and promote collaborative practice around children and families.

Give precedence to the wellbeing and safety of a child or group of children over the right to privacy by sharing confidential information about any person that meets the threshold for sharing under CISS (where approved by the Information Sharing Coordinator). Information that can be shared is broad and may include:

- professional judgements
- case notes
- contact details
- health information
- sensitive information such as religious and political affiliation and beliefs
- plans and assessments
- information obtained from other sources

Preserve and promote positive relationships between a child and a child's family member/s and/or 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 vulnerability relevant to the child's safety or wellbeing.

Promote the cultural safety and recognise the cultural rights and familial and community connects of children who are Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both.

Seek to maintain constructive and respectful engagement with children and families.

Work collaboratively with other services to support the wellbeing and safety of children and families.



Parents/guardians will:

Report any complaints or grievances in line with the Complaints and Grievances Procedure.

Understand that consent is not required for the Service to share information with other Information Sharing Entities (ISE) under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005) or the Family Violence Protection Act (2008).

See also:

1. Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
2. Child Safety and Wellbeing Procedure
3. Child Safe Code of Conduct
4. Complaints and Grievances Procedure
5. Record Keeping and Documentation Retention Procedure
6. Reportable Conduct Scheme Procedure

Resources:

Child Safe Standards [Child Safe Standards](#)

Decision Tree: Can I share information under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS)?
[ciss-fviss-decision-tree-sharing-information-under-ciss.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](#)

Decision Tree: Can I share information under the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS)?
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/ciss-fviss-decision-tree-sharing-information-under-fviss.pdf>

Victoria State Government. (2021). *The Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM)* [MARAM practice guides and resources](#)