



# Homelessness and Housing Support Guidelines 2025

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## Acknowledgement



The department acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the land and acknowledges and pays respect to their Elders, past and present.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal self-determination is a human right and recognise the work of many generations of Aboriginal people.

The department is committed to safe and inclusive workplaces, policies and services for people of LGBTIQ+ communities and their families.

## Housing and Homelessness Support Guidelines 2025

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Except where otherwise indicated, the images in this document show models and illustrative settings only, and do not necessarily depict actual services, facilities or recipients of services. This document may contain images of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

ISBN 978-1-76130-769-0 (pdf/online/MS word)

Available at [Homelessness And Housing Support Guidelines](https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/policies-and-procedures) <<https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/policies-and-procedures>>

### **Review of the Homelessness and Housing Support Guidelines 2025**

The Homelessness and Housing Support Guidelines 2025 will be routinely reviewed every five years. Should there be significant changes to the Victorian Homelessness System before the scheduled review, the Homelessness and Housing Support Guidelines 2025 will be updated to reflect these changes.

### **Version and Review History**

Version	Approved by	Date	Next Revision Due
Version 1.0	Deputy CEO, Homes Victoria	November 2025	November 2029

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# 1 Glossary

Acronym	Description
<b>ACCO</b>	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
<b>AHHF</b>	Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum
<b>AIHW</b>	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
<b>API</b>	application programming interface
<b>APRAP</b>	Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program
<b>APSS</b>	Agency Performance and System Support
<b>ATAR</b>	Aboriginal Tenants at Risk Program. It was formerly known as the Indigenous Tenants at Risk Program.
<b>BHHP</b>	Better Health and Housing Program
<b>CAV</b>	Consumer Affairs Victoria
<b>Child</b>	A person 0 to 15 years of age
<b>CMS</b>	customer management system
<b>CHP</b>	Council to Homeless Persons
<b>Clients</b>	Individuals and families seeking housing and support
<b>DFFH</b>	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, also referred to as 'the department'
<b>Dwellings</b>	any dwelling and any private outdoor space leased to a Renter under a Rental Agreement, located in a Premises
<b>FAC</b>	Funded Agency Channel
<b>FSV</b>	Family Safety Victoria
<b>FVISS</b>	Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme
<b>HCC</b>	Housing Call Centre: the dedicated unit within DFFH responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>receiving requests for maintenance and repairs; and</li> <li>issuing work orders for Urgent Repairs, Responsive Repairs, Preventative Maintenance or Operational Vacated Maintenance to the maintenance contractors.</li> </ul>
<b>HEF</b>	Housing Establishment Fund
<b>HRSAP</b>	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan
<b>IAP</b>	initial assessment and planning
<b>ISE</b>	information sharing entity
<b>JUI</b>	Joined-Up Initiative
<b>LASN</b>	Local area service network
<b>LGBTIQA+</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer questioning and asexual

<b>mainstream homelessness service</b>	Use this term for non-ACCO SHS until other terminology is introduced
<b>MARAM</b>	Victorian Family Violence Multi-Risk Assessment and Management Framework
<b>NASSH</b>	National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness
<b>OC</b>	Owners Corporation
<b>ODF</b>	Opening Doors Framework
<b>Operational Vacated Maintenance</b>	the repair, essential safety checks, and other maintenance works to be carried at the end of a Rental Agreement and prior to the commencement of a new Rental Agreement with the new Renter, to ensure the Dwelling meets minimum standards in accordance with the RTA and all relevant Legislative Requirements.
<b>Performance Standards</b>	the Performance Standards determined by the Minister for Housing in accordance with section 93 of the <i>Housing Act 1983</i> (Vic) which set out the standards that registered agencies are required to meet under the Housing Act 1983 (Vic).
<b>PRAP</b>	Private Rental Assistance Program
<b>Preventative Maintenance</b>	regular maintenance works and activity to maintain the amenity and condition of the Premises and Dwellings in order to reduce the likelihood of Responsive Repairs.
<b>Renter</b>	A household which has a right to occupy a dwelling under a Rental Agreement, and where the context requires, any such household which has been allocated a dwelling in accordance with all applicable Legislative Requirements.
<b>Responsive Repairs</b>	day-to-day maintenance, repair or replacement of or to Dwellings to keep and maintain an item or component in good working condition, including due to any form of Renter damage and/or neglect.
<b>RTA</b>	<i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997</i>
<b>RTR</b>	Residential Tenancies Regulations 2021
<b>service users</b>	Individuals and families seeking housing and support
<b>SHIP</b>	Specialist Homelessness Information Platform
<b>SHS</b>	Specialist homelessness services. SHS receive funding from the Victorian Government. They include ACCOs and ACCHOs that deliver homelessness services.
<b>SHSC</b>	Specialist Homelessness Services Collection
<b>THM</b>	Transitional Housing Management
<b>Urgent Repairs</b>	has the meaning set out in the RTA
<b>VAHHF</b>	Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework
<b>VCAT</b>	Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
<b>VHR</b>	Victorian Housing Register



## Housing and Homelessness Support Guidelines 2025

<b>VISHN</b>	Victorian Indigenous State-wide Homelessness Network
<b>VMS</b>	Vacancy Management System
<b>young person</b>	A person aged 16 to 24 years inclusive

## 2 Introduction

The Homelessness and Housing Support Guidelines 2025 (2025 guidelines) define the terms for organisations that deliver homelessness services funded by the Victorian state government (state government). They are clear guidelines for services to assist people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The 2025 guidelines supersede the previous version from May 2014. It was known as the Homelessness Services Guidelines and Conditions of Funding.

The main aim of the 2025 guidelines is to establish the requirements for funded homelessness activities in Victoria. This will ensure consistent and high-quality service delivery among specialist homelessness services (SHS).

### 2.1 How to use these guidelines

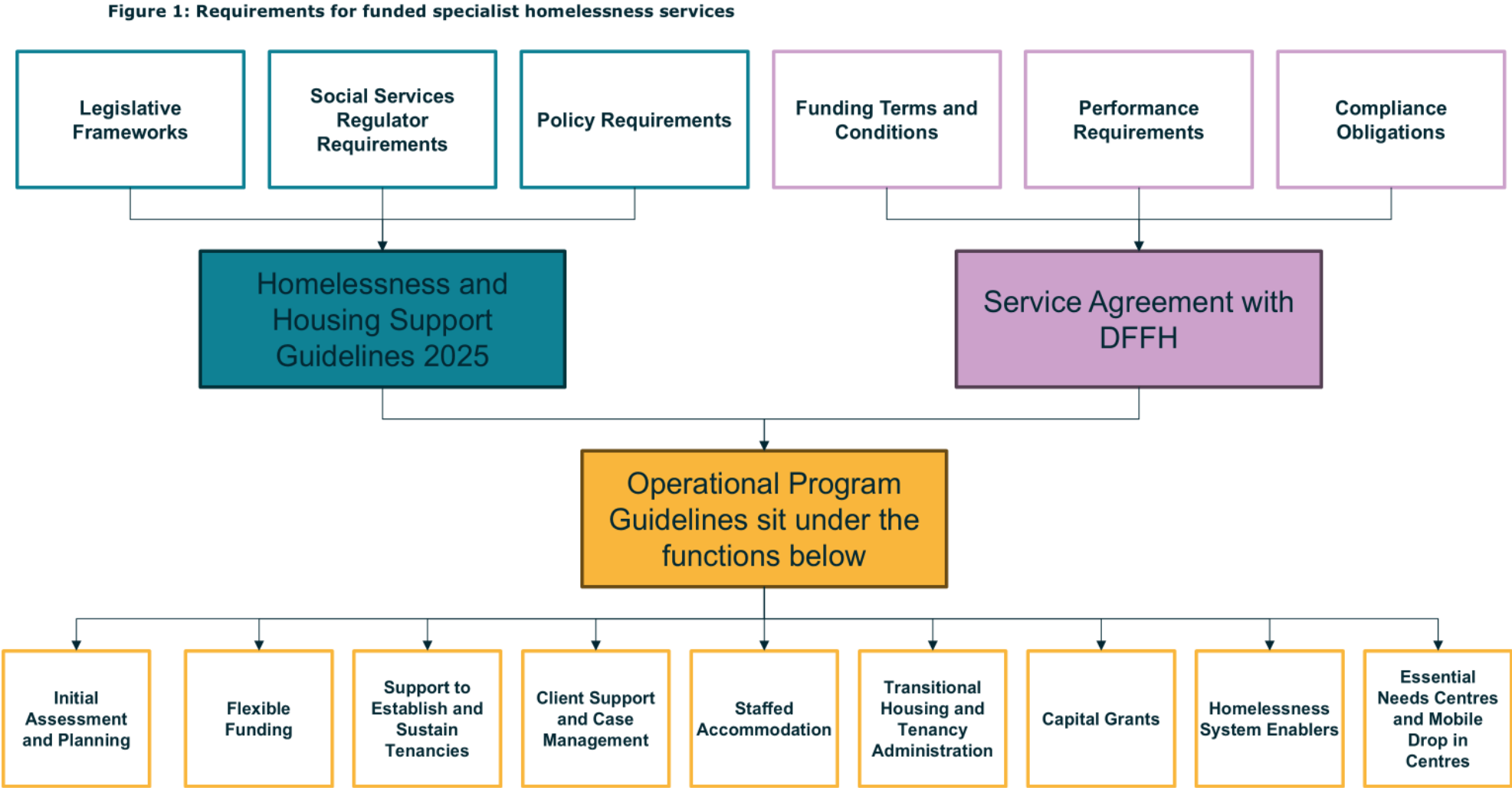
Use the 2025 guidelines with the service agreement that every SHS has with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department). See Figure 1 below.

The service agreement outlines the legislative requirements that each SHS must follow. It has a list of program requirements. These include complying with the Social Services Standards set by the *Social Services Regulation Act 2021*.

Each organisation's service agreement includes the 2025 guidelines and specific program guidelines.

Social Services Standards under the *Social Services Regulation Act 2021*  
<https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-social-services-standards>

Figure 1. Requirements for funded specialist homelessness services



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## 3 Roles of government entities

### 3.1 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

The department works to create a more inclusive society. The department funds SHS and delivers services. It also works with commissions, peak bodies and other community organisations to provide support.

The 2024–28 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing strategic plan details the department's vision, outcomes, key focus areas and priority initiatives. Its goal is to empower communities to create a fairer and safer Victoria.

The strategic plan features the department's outcomes framework with five focus areas:

**1. Aboriginal voice, knowledge and cultural leadership drive Aboriginal policy, legislation and system reform**

Self-determination enables the wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians. The Victorian Aboriginal community are partners and lead efforts to change systems and structures that limit self-determination.

**2. Children, young people and families are safe, strong and supported**

Victorian families, carers and individuals have supportive and respectful relationships. They are safe from harm, fear and neglect in their homes.

**3. Victorian communities<sup>1</sup> are safe, fair, inclusive and resilient**

Victorians are active in their community and participation contributes to their wellbeing. Communities foster social inclusion and participation. They celebrate and enable diversity. Victorians from intersectional communities are safe to identify with their culture. They can express their identity and build support networks with people they trust. Communities are strong and resilient in times of emergency.

**4. All Victorians have stable, affordable and appropriate housing**

Victorians have safe homes that provide emotional and physical sanctuary. Victorians have security of tenure in housing. Housing is accessible, appropriate, affordable and tailored to individuals. This outcome includes supports to address and reduce housing insecurity and homelessness. The goal is suitable housing for all.

**5. Our social services system is integrated, effective, person-centred and sustainable**

The social services system connects well. It provides safe and effective services that respond to the needs, preferences and circumstances of Victorians. Our corporate functions and IT systems allow efficient service delivery, administration and oversight. Our workforce is sustainable and skilled. We nurture strong

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<sup>1</sup> As well as the Victorian community as a whole, the department works with communities including women, culturally diverse people, LGBTQIA+ communities, Aboriginal Victorians, veterans, seniors, youth, people with disability, survivors of institutional care and abuse, victim-survivors of family violence and more.

partnerships with funded agencies. We deploy data and evidence to keep improving.

[Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Strategic Plan](https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/dffh-strategic-plan)

<https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/dffh-strategic-plan>

### 3.1.1 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing local areas

The department operates across Victoria through 17 local areas. The department local area Agency Performance and System Support (APSS) teams manage SHS service agreements. This includes negotiating funding to improve outcomes for people seeking support.

The department local areas are responsible for:

- service agreement negotiation and monitoring
- overseeing local area resources and planning
- assisting SHS to meet their statutory obligations
- service agreement requirements
- other relevant departmental or state government requirements.

You can view the local area map on the department website.

[Department of Families, Fairness and Housing local area map](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/dffh-division-local-area-lga-map)

Note: this link is for a pdf document.

<https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/dffh-division-local-area-lga-map>

### 3.1.2 Homes Victoria

Homes Victoria was established under Section 9 of the *Housing Act 1983* (Vic). It is a business unit that sits within the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. Homes Victoria oversees Victoria's social housing portfolio. This includes:

- public housing
- community housing
- crisis accommodation
- transitional accommodation
- affordable housing.

Homes Victoria develops and delivers policies, programs and services. These aim to ensure all Victorians can access safe, secure and affordable housing.

Homes Victoria acknowledges that a safe, secure and affordable home that meets one's needs is the foundation of strong and healthy individuals and families, and resilient communities.

Homes Victoria works collectively with SHS and the wider housing and community services sectors to break the cycle of homelessness by:

- intervening early
- housing people as fast as possible
- ensuring the homelessness service system is responsive to client needs.

## 4 The homelessness service system

There are over 120 specialist homelessness services (SHS) that receive funding to provide a wide range of housing and support programs. Among these, 17 are Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). They provide homelessness responses for Aboriginal people.

Homes Victoria recognises that there is no single definition of homelessness. Each person's situation is unique and can differ by culture. For some it will mean not having a secure tenure or having a home that is inadequate or places them in unsafe environments, such as domestic violence.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines a person to be homeless in Australia if they:

- are in a dwelling which is inadequate
- have no tenure or the tenure is short and not extendable
- Do not have control of and access to space for social relations; provide a sense of security, stability, privacy or safety; or provide the ability to control living space.

The peak body representing organisations and individuals in Victoria with a commitment to ending homelessness, Council to Homeless Persons (CHP), define homelessness as:

- Homelessness is far more than "rooflessness". Homelessness means being without a secure stable and private space to live.
- The majority of people without a home live in temporary, insecure, or unsafe housing situations such as rooming houses, cars, or government-funded crisis accommodation. Other people live in severely overcrowded accommodation or are couch surfing with family or friends.
- This is often called "hidden homelessness" because, while more common than rough sleeping, it typically goes unnoticed or is misunderstood.

Aboriginal homelessness in Australia did not exist until colonisation. The historical injustices, stemming from colonisation, have profoundly impacted access to housing and are a catalyst for the homelessness crisis experienced by Aboriginal Australians today. (Parity, October 2024 Volume 37, Issue 8 The urgent need to address Aboriginal Homelessness In Victoria).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people recognise the importance of understanding connection to Country, family and kinship responsibilities in considering the concept of homelessness within a cultural framework.

For Aboriginal people, homelessness can be spiritual, as a result of being disconnected from one's homeland, separated from family or kinship networks, or not being familiar with one's cultural heritage (Brackertz et al. 2018; Memmott et al. 2004).

Further information on Aboriginal Homelessness can be found in the documents below.

[Housing & homelessness - AIHW Indigenous MHSPC](https://www.indigenoumhspc.gov.au/Topics/Housing-homelessness#aboutthistopic)

<https://www.indigenoumhspc.gov.au/Topics/Housing-homelessness#aboutthistopic>

[Information Paper: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Perspectives on Homelessness, 2014](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4736.0Main%20Features32014?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=4736.0&issue=2014&num=&view=)

<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4736.0Main%20Features32014?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=4736.0&issue=2014&num=&view=>

Priority groups drive the demand for homelessness services in Victoria. These groups and circumstances include:

- Aboriginal Victorians
- people experiencing family or domestic violence
- people experiencing mental ill health
- people with disabilities
- drug and alcohol challenges
- sleeping rough
- financial difficulties
- children
- people in care and protection
- young people (aged 16 to 24)
- older people (aged 55+).

Homelessness can have a devastating and lasting impact on people's lives. It affects physical and mental health, and connection to family and friends. This can then affect a person's ability to take part in their community.

There is no single solution to addressing homelessness. So, the programs funded range in duration and intensity to meet diverse needs.

SHS work with clients to secure housing options in the short, medium and long term. Their goal is to provide direct support. They work with mainstream and specialist health, welfare, legal and educational services. Together, they aim to create safe and sustainable living environments.

Programs delivered by SHS sit within the health promotion pyramid of prevention, as both secondary prevention (early intervention) and tertiary prevention (crisis intervention), which include the following responses:

- case management
- crisis accommodation
- supportive housing
- Housing First programs.

[Section 12](#) of these guidelines, details the nine functions of the Victorian Homelessness Service System. It also lists the specific funded programs. Each function identifies the related program and funded homelessness activity:

1. Initial assessment and planning
2. Brokerage
3. Support to establish and maintain tenancies

4. Client support and case management
5. Staffed accommodation
6. Transitional housing and tenancy management
7. Capital grants
8. System capacity and enablers
9. Essential needs centres and mobile drop-in centres.

#### Program types which sit within the nine functions

Under these nine functions, individuals, groups and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of losing their housing can connect to advice and support through specific **homelessness entry points**. Entry points offer a safe and welcoming environment for people to seek support. Individuals, groups and families work with an intake and assessment worker. They complete a comprehensive needs assessment together of the barriers each person faces. This allows individuals, groups and families to connect with the most suitable supports. The aim is to achieve their housing and wellbeing goals.

**Early intervention programs** help people at risk of homelessness. They offer proactive, vital support. These programs focus on building their resilience and capacity.

**Financial support** helps renters understand their rights and responsibilities. It can help them catch up on rent arrears or tackle issues to protect their tenancy. SHS can support communication and mediation between renters and rental providers. This helps resolve issues and prevent eviction. Programs may teach clients skills to maintain independent housing, including budgeting and conflict resolution.

SHS provide accommodation and support for people who need immediate support. This includes buying emergency accommodation for a short stay in a hotel while looking for other housing.

**Congregate crisis accommodation programs** provide short-term supported accommodation. It is mostly with shared facilities, along with essential support services. Case managers and support staff help residents with essentials. They provide meals, budgeting and service referrals.

**Transitional housing programs** include medium-term and crisis accommodation. These programs offer a bridge to permanent housing. They give individuals and families time to stabilise their situations. They also help them develop skills for independent living.

**Supportive accommodation** programs provide safe housing with on-site support services. These may include mental health counselling, life skills training and employment support. This support helps clients with complex needs who may need ongoing help to keep their tenancy.

SHS also deliver programs based on **Housing First** principles. These are for people with complex needs. The programs prioritise securing long-term housing accompanied by client-directed multidisciplinary support services. This approach addresses underlying needs within a secure housing environment. It aims to build a foundation for long-term stability and independence.

Victoria's SHS recognise the diverse needs of people experiencing homelessness. So, they offer **tailored support programs** and **safe accommodation**. Dedicated services exist for women escaping family violence, Aboriginal people and LGBTIQ+ Victorians. These services provide support that is culturally sensitive and inclusive.



Homes Victoria extends this commitment to all backgrounds. The goal is to empower individuals and families to access resources for a stable future.

## 4.1 Service delivery principles

Homes Victoria supports SHS to achieve best practice and implement evidence informed approaches. SHS must follow key service delivery principles for high-quality and effective support.

Each person or family engaging with SHS has unique circumstances. The client must be able to tell their story without judgement. Support workers can use a range of approaches to make clients feel valued, in control and not retraumatised.

### 4.1.1 Principles for delivering a homelessness response

Service delivery should provide the following.

#### 4.1.1.1 A person-centred approach

Service delivery must be person-centred. Focus must be on a person or family's circumstances and goals in a safe, welcoming space, free of judgement. Services must offer clear information. Support workers engage people by building trust. People feel free to ask questions and are welcome to make their own decisions on their options. Support workers encourage individuals or families to connect with their communities and participate in society.

#### 4.1.1.2 A trauma-informed approach

SHS must deliver trauma-informed practices, acknowledging clients accessing homelessness services have often experienced trauma. Trauma-informed practice is an approach that is holistic, empowering, strengths-focused, collaborative and reflective. It promotes physical, emotional, spiritual and cultural safety<sup>2</sup>. DFFH has published the [Framework for trauma-informed practice](https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/framework-trauma-informed-practice).

[Framework for trauma-informed practice](https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/framework-trauma-informed-practice)

<https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/framework-trauma-informed-practice>

#### 4.1.1.3 A strengths-based approach

Service delivery must be strengths-based. The focus is on the individual or family's strengths, resilience and social networks. SHS must foster a sense of ownership and accountability in the support process. Part of this is realistic goalsetting by developing a personalised plan together.

#### 4.1.1.4 Equity, dignity and respect

SHS must offer inclusive and accessible services to all Victorians experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This includes individuals and families from all backgrounds, regardless of ethnicity, ability, gender identity, sexual orientation or circumstance. The SHS must ensure services are culturally sensitive and available when needed.

SHS also prioritise treating all individuals and families with dignity and respect. This fosters a safe, supportive and collaborative environment. Individuals and families will

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<sup>2</sup> Framework for trauma-informed practice, supporting children, young people and their families.

feel empowered to make positive changes to their lives. The system recognises and values the unique experiences of each individual or family.

#### 4.1.1.5 Aboriginal cultural safety

Culturally safe practices are best practice to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. Aboriginal cultural safety must be central in all service delivery. This ensures Aboriginal people feel secure and valued in social service settings. SHS must remove barriers to housing. SHS should challenge racism and unconscious biases through advocacy and support. All SHS must offer culturally safe practices.

Aboriginal Victorians must have the choice to decide on the supports they need. Mainstream services must not assume all Aboriginal Victorians want support from ACCOs.

#### 4.1.1.6 Holistic support and service integration

SHS recognise the multifaceted needs of clients experiencing homelessness. These include:

- mental health support
- addiction recovery programs
- employment support
- life skills development programs.

SHS are to prioritise a collaborative approach, working with other SHS. This ensures individuals and families receive coordinated care plans. It eliminates service gaps and fosters seamless transitions between programs. This model allows access to all the support services needed to achieve goals.

#### 4.1.1.7 Evidence-based practice and continuous improvement

SHS must use evidence-based interventions and best practices to deliver effective services. Service delivery must have ongoing monitoring and evaluation. This will help identify improvements and ensure services meet evolving community needs. SHS must embed a culture of information sharing and collaboration among SHS. This allows sharing best practices and promoting continuous improvement across the system.

#### 4.1.1.8 Preventative and early interventions

Aim to reduce the number of Victorians entering homelessness by providing early intervention and support services. Help people to keep their housing through ongoing support and tackling the underlying causes of homelessness. SHS must minimise the effects of homelessness by providing quick access to safe and secure housing.

## 4.2 Peak bodies and system coordination

These are the key organisations and networks that coordinate Victoria's homelessness system.

### 4.2.1 Council to Homeless Persons

Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) is the peak body representing homelessness organisations and individuals and families in Victoria. CHP runs programs and campaigns to change how people view homelessness. CHP advocates for systemic changes to raise awareness and end homelessness in Victoria.

These efforts help inform the public and stakeholders about the effects of homelessness. They also show how to tackle its causes and support individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

CHP offers the following services:

- Peer education support is a volunteer program. It has opportunities for individuals and families who have experienced homelessness to get involved and improve Victoria's homelessness services. The goal is to create a more responsive, compassionate and effective system.
- Live training, self-directed eLearning courses and online resources for sector development and learning. This grows the capacity of Victoria's homelessness services.
- Policy and advocacy leadership on preventing and ending homelessness, through campaigning and developing evidence-based policies and practices. The aim of this advocacy is to create change and lasting impact.
- *Parity* magazine, Australia's premier homelessness publication, examining homelessness from personal, local and global perspectives.
- Homelessness Advocacy Service (HAS), providing referrals to individuals experiencing disputes with homelessness services. The goal is positive, beneficial resolutions for both consumers and service providers.

[Council to Homeless Persons](https://chp.org.au/)

<https://chp.org.au/>

### 4.2.2 Community Housing Industry Association Victoria

The Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA Vic) is the peak body that represents the not-for-profit community housing sector in Victoria. CHIA Vic advocates for and supports the community housing sector to grow and thrive as part of a housing system where all Victorians have the dignity of an appropriate, secure and affordable home.

Community housing organisations provide more than 25,000 homes to Victorians poorly served by, or excluded from, the private rental and ownership market.

CHIA Vic is committed to supporting the expansion of this sector through policy representation, training, and raising the profile of community housing as a solution to housing stress and homelessness.

### 4.2.3 Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum (AHHF)

The AHHF unites ACCOs and Traditional Owner and Aboriginal Trust groups that deliver or aim to provide housing and homelessness services. The AHHF works with government partners to progress the strategic work of *Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort: Every Aboriginal person has a home*, the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework (VAHHF).

The AHHF respects the unique role of ACCOs and Traditional Owners in their communities. They provide spaces for community to engage in strategic planning, take action, share information and build capacity.

The AHHF represent the views of the Aboriginal community. It presents these views to the AHHF Implementation Working Group. The group is co-chaired by the CEO of Aboriginal Housing Victoria and the CEO of Homes Victoria. The working group includes members from the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

[Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework](https://vahhf.org.au/)

<https://vahhf.org.au/>

#### 4.2.4 The Blueprint Steering Committee

The Blueprint for an Aboriginal-specific homelessness system in Victoria (the blueprint) was launched at the Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Summit in 2022. It provides a design of an Aboriginal-specific homelessness system. The blueprint outlines the system features essential for an Aboriginal-specific homelessness system that is future-focused, connected and culturally safe.

Responsibility for the implementation of the blueprint sits with the Blueprint Steering Committee. It is co-chaired by Homes Victoria and Aboriginal Housing Victoria. The committee delivers, develops, drives and oversee the blueprint's implementation plan.

The committee includes ACCOs, mainstream SHS, and partners from government. The committee holds the knowledge, expertise and experience of the current Aboriginal homeless system.

The steering committee is a sub-committee of the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Implementation Working Group (VAHHF-IWG). VAHHF-IWG aims to deliver the VAHHF. It also oversees the achievement of its goals, objectives and targets.

[Blueprint for an Aboriginal-Specific Homelessness System in Victoria](https://vahhf.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Blueprint.pdf)

Note: the link below is for a pdf document.

<https://vahhf.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Blueprint.pdf>

#### 4.2.5 Local area service networks

Local area service networks (LASNs) help SHS share information. They work as a group in local areas to improve outcomes and opportunities for people experiencing homelessness.

##### Role of local area service networks

LASNs assist in maintaining service coordination across local areas. The role of the LASN includes:

- **Facilitating collaboration.** LASNs bring together the SHS in a local area to collaborate and communicate and they try to create a unified response to homelessness, this includes forward planning for extreme weather events for people sleeping rough.
- **Coordinating services.** The LASN help coordinate services among the SHS in a local area. This may include the service coordination pathways between Aboriginal-specific SHS and mainstream SHS.
- **Building capacity.** Some LASNs work to build the capacity of SHS. They provide training and resources for workers to improve service delivery.

- **Monitoring and evaluation.** The LASN has access to local area based data and reporting to help track the effectiveness of services and evaluating outcomes for clients. Some LASNs also use this information to identify improvements.
- **Advocacy.** LASNs can give Homes Victoria and the department evidence-based recommendations about local needs. This ensures that policy and services consider the voices of those experiencing homelessness.

LASN membership must have a senior representative from each SHS in the local area. Representatives include:

- ACCOs delivering SHS
- a representative from the local department office
- the Homelessness Networker
- the Children's Resource Coordinator
- the local Orange Door service.

LASNs may benefit from inviting local service providers such as mental health services and alcohol and other drug organisations to join the LASN.

Each LASN develops the local homelessness model for their local area. This will include how the prioritisation guide and how the LASN allocate their resources. All local models must align with these guidelines.

#### 4.2.6 Victorian Indigenous State-wide Homelessness Network

The Victorian Indigenous State-wide Homelessness Network (VISHN) aims to tackle the systemic issues that contribute to homelessness and housing insecurity in Aboriginal communities. VISHN creates a platform for inclusive discussions and collaboration for ACCOs. It develops reliable and consistent practice and service outcomes throughout Victoria. VISHN promotes the strength of community to create a society that values Aboriginal peoples' voices. It helps members advocate to mainstream organisations for the homelessness and housing needs of their communities.

VISHN ensures Aboriginal communities have access to safe and sustainable housing. It advocates, builds capacity, shares best practices, training and quality of service delivery practice.

Ngwala Willumbong Aboriginal Cooperative receives funding to deliver the VISHN. The VISHN members are from the ACCO which are funded to deliver a range of homelessness programs.

### 4.3 Information sharing and privacy

Victorian information sharing schemes prescribe SHS as Information Sharing Entities (ISE). ISE are organisations and responses that provide services and support to victim survivors and perpetrators in response to family violence. Supports include both specialist and universal services.

The Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) and the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) work together to improve information sharing between organisations. This allows them to share a wider range of information in more ways than before.

These information sharing schemes complement each other. They work together to achieve the same goal, enabling services to share information. This helps services respond to the complex needs and risks of children and families.

The two Victorian information sharing schemes include standards for collecting, storing, accessing, transmitting, disclosing, using and disposing of information and do not impact on these other permissions to share. This includes the *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic) and the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic). These two Acts regulate handling personal and health information.

[Child Wellbeing and Safety \(Information Sharing\) Regulations 2018 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/child-wellbeing-and-safety-information-sharing-regulations-2018/004)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/child-wellbeing-and-safety-information-sharing-regulations-2018/004>

[Family Violence Protection \(Information Sharing and Risk Management Regulations\) 2018 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/family-violence-protection-information-sharing-and-risk-management/005)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/family-violence-protection-information-sharing-and-risk-management/005>

[Health Records Act 2001 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/health-records-act-2001)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/health-records-act-2001>

[Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/privacy-and-data-protection-act-2014)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/privacy-and-data-protection-act-2014>

## 4.4 Tenancy laws

The *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* (Vic) (RTA) governs rental agreements in Victoria. It details the rights and responsibilities of renters and residents, rental providers, owners of rented properties, rooming houses, caravan parks, residential parks and specialist disability accommodation (SDA).

Temporary crisis accommodation as defined in the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* and Regulation 6 of the *Residential Tenancies Regulations 2021* is exempt from the requirements of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*.

The RTA has regulations attached that further define rights and responsibilities. Together, these are often referred to as 'renting law' in Victoria.

[Residential Tenancies Act 1997 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/residential-tenancies-act-1997/)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/residential-tenancies-act-1997/>

[Residential Tenancies Regulations 2021 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/as-made/statutory-rules/residential-tenancies-regulations-2021-0)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/as-made/statutory-rules/residential-tenancies-regulations-2021-0>

[Residential Tenancies \(Rooming House Standards\) Regulations 2023 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/residential-tenancies-rooming-house-standards-regulations-2023/001)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/residential-tenancies-rooming-house-standards-regulations-2023/001>

[Residential Tenancies \(Specialist Disability Accommodation\) Regulations 2019 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/residential-tenancies-specialist-disability-accommodation-regulations-2019/001)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/residential-tenancies-specialist-disability-accommodation-regulations-2019/001>

## 2021 Victorian rental laws changes

New rental laws passed in 2021. They expanded the rights and responsibilities of renters and rental providers in Victoria. The changes apply to all tenancies. They include private rentals, caravan parks, residential parks and rooming houses.

Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) outlines these changes.

[Consumer Affairs Victoria \(CAV\) 2021 rental law changes](https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing/renting/2021-victorian-rental-laws-changes)

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing/renting/2021-victorian-rental-laws-changes>

## 4.5 Housing legislation

Registered agencies, like community housing providers and housing associations, must follow the Performance Standards and other legislative requirements of the *Housing Act 1983* (Vic).

The Victorian Housing Registrar provides regulatory oversight of the registered housing agencies. It monitors and enforces compliance with the *Housing Act 1983* (Act) and Performance Standards.

[Housing Act 1983](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/housing-act-1983/080) (Vic)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/housing-act-1983/080>

[Performance Standards](https://www.vic.gov.au/our-compliance-process)

<https://www.vic.gov.au/our-compliance-process>

## 4.6 Family violence

The Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) and Information Sharing Schemes prescribe SHS. They must follow Part 11 of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic).

Part 11 of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* requires that organisations prescribed under MARAM align their policies, procedures, practice guidance and tools with the authorised framework. It also requires understanding the legal and operational aspects of information sharing laws. This supports effective risk assessment and management as relevant to their service.

Section 5.2 has more information about the MARAM framework.

[Family Violence Protection Act 2008](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/family-violence-protection-act-2008) (Vic)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/family-violence-protection-act-2008>

## 4.7 Children and young people

The *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic) (CYF Act) details the responsibilities of organisations that help children and young people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. The CYF Act highlights the importance of proper support to ensure their wellbeing, safety and development.



SHS must work with allied services like Child Protection and health services. These collaborations ensure a holistic approach to supporting children and young people.

The CYF Act defines a homeless person as a person living in crisis, transitional or other accommodation under the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994* (Cath) (SAAP Act). It also includes people with inadequate access to safe and secure housing, as defined in the SAAP Act.

[Children, Youth and Families Act 2005](#) (Vic)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/children-youth-and-families-act-2005/121>

## 4.8 Public health

The Victorian Government created a [management framework](#) for pandemics in the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*. If the Premier of Victoria declares a pandemic, the Minister for Health can issue pandemic orders to protect public health. All SHS must follow measures contained within these pandemic orders. Further information is at the Department of Health's Pandemic Order Register.

[Pandemic Management Framework](#)

<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/covid-19/victorias-pandemic-management-framework>

[Pandemic Order Register](#)

<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/covid-19/pandemic-order-register>

[Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008](#)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/public-health-and-wellbeing-act-2008/063>

## 4.9 Human rights

Victoria's *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* requires public authorities to uphold the human rights in the charter. This includes Victorian state and local governments, as well as organisations providing services on behalf of government. The charter aims to protect and promote the human rights of all Victorians. By following the charter, SHS ensure that individuals and families get services that respect their basic rights and dignity.

[Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006](#) (Vic)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/charter-human-rights-and-responsibilities-act-2006/015>

## 4.10 Disability discrimination

SHS must follow the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Ch). The Act aims to make services easier to access. It also aims to prevent discrimination against people with a disability.

[Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#) (CT)

<https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A04426/2018-04-12/text>



## 4.11 Equal opportunity

The *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic) aims to make public life free from discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation. The Act makes it illegal to discriminate against a person because of a protected personal characteristic.

The Act covers discrimination in:

- employment
- education
- accommodation
- clubs
- sport
- goods and services
- land sales and transfers
- local government.

It also covers sexual harassment. Under the Act, all SHS must keep their environments and services safe. They should be non-discriminatory and free from sexual harassment and victimisation. This responsibility requires more than reactive measures. It demands proactive action to prevent discriminatory behaviours.

[Equal Opportunity Act 2010 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/equal-opportunity-act-2010/030)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/equal-opportunity-act-2010/030>

## 4.12 Social services regulation

All SHS must follow requirements under the *Social Services Regulation Act 2021* (Vic), which came into effect on 1 July 2024, overseen by a new independent Social Services Regulator.

The framework requires mandatory registration for SHS of social services under the new scheme.

There is a set of requirements all registered social service providers must meet. The requirements include six Social Service Standards (the standards). These are:

1. Safe service delivery. Social services are safely provided based on assessed needs.
2. Service user agency and dignity. Social services are person-centred, and respect and uphold service user rights and agency.
3. Social service environment. Social services occur in a safe, secure and fit-for-purpose environment.
4. Feedback and complaints. Service users receive support to share feedback, complaints or concerns about service safety.
5. Accountable organisation governance. Effective governance and organisational systems support safe social service delivery.
6. Safe workforce. The social services workforce has the knowledge, capability and support to provide safe social services with care and skill.

The Social Services Regulations 2023 (Vic) prescribe outcomes and service requirements that correspond to each of the six Social Service Standards. Further information on the standards is in [Section 11](#).

The framework sets clear reporting requirements for social services under the new scheme, including SHS. Further information is in [Section 6](#).

The framework has a graduated set of monitoring and enforcement tools. These tools help with early intervention and allow the Regulator to respond to risk.

As stated in the Ministerial Statement of Expectations, the Regulator will first focus on support and guidance. This helps SHS to understand and meet their obligations while keeping service users safe.

**Information provided in the 2025 guidelines about obligations under the social services regulatory scheme is not exhaustive.**

For more information about obligations under the scheme, refer to the *Social Services Regulation Act 2021* (Vic) and the Regulator's guidance.

<a href="#">Social Services Regulator</a> <a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/about-social-services-regulator">https://www.vic.gov.au/about-social-services-regulator</a>
<a href="#">Social Services Standards – Social Services Regulator's guidance</a> <a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-social-services-standards">https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-social-services-standards</a>
<a href="#">Reporting a notifiable incident</a> <a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/ssr-reporting-notifiable-incident">https://www.vic.gov.au/ssr-reporting-notifiable-incident</a>
<a href="#">Social Services Regulator registration</a> <a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-registration">https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-registration</a>
<a href="#">Social Services Regulation Act 2021 (Vic)</a> <a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021/001">https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021/001</a>
<a href="#">Social Services Regulations 2023 (Vic)</a> <a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/002">https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/002</a>
<a href="#">Ministerial Statement of Expectations</a> <a href="https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/statement-expectations-regulators">https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/statement-expectations-regulators</a>

## 4.13 Compliance under the Social Services Regulatory Framework

All SHS must familiarise themselves with obligations under the social services regulatory scheme. The *Social Services Regulation Act 2021* and the Regulator's published guidance establish the obligations.

### 4.13.1 Social Services Standards

The Social Service Standards are a set of obligations for social service providers in Victoria. The *Social Services Regulation Act 2021* embeds these standards in law.

SHS need to show they provide safe social services by meeting the six standards listed above in [Section 5.10](#).

As noted above, outcomes and service requirements prescribed in the Social Services Regulations 2023 complement each standard. These requirements detail what SHS must do to comply. The expected outcomes for service users show what happens when providers follow these requirements. Under the *Social Services Regulation Act 2021*, a registered social service provider who meets the service requirements complies with the relevant Social Service Standards.

The Regulator's website has information about each standard. This includes suggestions for documents, evidence and success indicators to help SHS show how they meet the standards.

[Social Service Standards – Social Services Regulator's Guidance](#)

<https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-social-services-standards>

[Social Services Regulation Act 2021 \(Vic\)](#)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021/001>

[Social Services Regulations 2023 \(Vic\)](#)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/002>

#### 4.13.2 Registration with the Social Services Regulator

SHS must register with the Social Services Regulator. There is no cost to register.

For more information on registration, visit the Social Services Regulator website.

[Social Services Regulator](#)

<https://www.vic.gov.au/about-social-services-regulator>

[Social Services Regulator registration](#)

<https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-registration>

[Social Services Regulation Act 2021 \(Vic\)](#)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/as-made/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021>

#### 4.13.3 Reporting notifiable incidents

Registered SHS must report all serious incidents that occur or may pose a risk to service users during service delivery. Notifiable incidents include those that cause serious harm to a service user or are likely to do so.

SHS must notify the Regulator of these incidents within three days. If SHS use the Client Incident Management System (CIMS), they can generally report to the Regulator through CIMS. Some critical incidents must be reported immediately, by the end of the next business day.

Information about how to report notifiable incidents is on the Regulator's website.

[Client Incident Management System](#)

<a href="https://cims.vic.gov.au/#/introduction">https://cims.vic.gov.au/#/introduction</a>
<a href="https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/client-incident-management-guide-cims-word">Client incident management guide</a> <a href="https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/client-incident-management-guide-cims-word">https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/client-incident-management-guide-cims-word</a>
<a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021/001">Social Services Regulation Act 2021 (Vic)</a> <a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021/001">https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021/001</a>
<a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/002">Social Services Regulations 2023 (Vic)</a> <a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/002">https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/002</a>
<a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/ssr-reporting-notifiable-incident">Guide to Reporting a notifiable incident – Social Services Regulator</a> <a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/ssr-reporting-notifiable-incident">https://www.vic.gov.au/ssr-reporting-notifiable-incident</a>

#### 4.13.4 Incident reporting

CIMS is an incident reporting and management framework. It focuses on the safety and wellbeing of individuals and families who access SHS. CIMS enables clients, SHS and the department to report, investigate and manage incidents.

SHS must report all incidents that qualify as a CIMS incident type in CIMS. A list of incident types is at Appendix 1 of the Client Incident Management System: policy and guidance (Dec 2024), linked in the table below. SHS must manage the response and actions for all client incidents. They should follow their incident management processes. You must report client incidents to the department's divisional office via the department's CIMS IT platform within three business days. This applies from when the incident occurs or when SHS become aware of it. SHS must follow the privacy provisions in their service agreements and/or the department privacy policy.

SHS must ensure the immediate safety and wellbeing of service users during an incident.

Registered SHS must also report all serious incidents that occur or could be a risk to service users during service delivery. Serious incidents cause significant harm or are likely to cause serious harm. SHS must notify the Regulator of incidents within three days. SHS using CIMS, and under the Regulator's scope, can generally use CIMS to submit reports under the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 (Vic).

The Regulator requires immediate reporting on a small group of notifiable incidents. Those reports are due by close of the next business day because of the nature of the harm or risk. Information about how to report critical incidents and their scope is at the Regulator's website.

See [Section 11](#) for further information about the social services regulatory scheme.

<a href="https://cims.vic.gov.au/#/introduction">Client Incident Management System</a> <a href="https://cims.vic.gov.au/#/introduction">https://cims.vic.gov.au/#/introduction</a>
<a href="https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/client-incident-management-guide-cims-word">Client incident management guide</a> <a href="https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/client-incident-management-guide-cims-word">https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/client-incident-management-guide-cims-word</a>
<a href="#">Client Incident Management System: policy and guidance (Dec 2024)</a>

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/client-incident-management-system-policy-and-guidance-word>

[Guide to Reporting a notifiable incident – Social Services Regulator](#)

<https://www.vic.gov.au/ssr-reporting-notifiable-incident>

[Social Services Regulation Act 2021 \(Vic\)](#)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021/001>

[Social Service Regulations 2023 \(Vic\)](#)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/002>

## 4.14 Governance and management

Organisations must follow the policies and guidelines in their service agreement. They also need to follow state and national laws relevant to their funded services. Strong governance processes are essential for safe service delivery and the ongoing viability of the organisation.

For more information on governance and management please refer to the department's website.

[Governance for community organisations](#)

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/governance-community-organisations>

## 4.15 Child Safe Standards

All SHS offering services or facilities for children must follow the Child Safe Standards. The Child Safe Standards aim to protect children and young people. They need SHS to enact policies, procedures and processes to prevent and respond to abuse.

The Social Services Regulator regulates the Child Safe Standards for the social services sector. Further information on the Social Services Regulator is in Section 4 and in Section 11.2.

[Child Safe Standards](#)

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards>

# 5 Policy requirements

Policies and frameworks guide SHS. Key resources for SHS to follow are below.

## 5.1 Aboriginal housing and homelessness

Culturally safe and tailored responses to Aboriginal people at risk of or experiencing homelessness are a priority for Homes Victoria. SHS must acknowledge and respect the unique cultural identities, histories and experiences of Aboriginal people.

SHS must provide culturally safe services that meet the unique needs of Aboriginal Victorians. This commitment supports self-determination, ensuring Aboriginal people control the services they use.

### Self-determination

Self-determination is the right of a 'people' to control and decide on issues that affect them. Self-determination intersects with cultural safety and individuals receive respectful treatment and take part in decision-making.

Key areas to consider for effective implementation include:

- **Cultural safety.** SHS must ensure all staff undergo regular Aboriginal cultural training. A continual learning process will help SHS staff understand the contexts and historical factors that contribute to homelessness among Aboriginal communities. This includes recognising the impact of colonisation, systemic racism and intergenerational trauma. But improving cultural safety goes beyond training. It requires intentional critique of service offerings and decolonising approaches to service delivery.
- **Choice and empowerment.** Aboriginal people should have the autonomy to choose the best services for them. If an ACCO and a mainstream SHS are both available in a local area, then SHS practitioners should offer Aboriginal people seeking a service the choice of either option. It is up to the person if they want to engage with an ACCO or a mainstream SHS. Automatic referrals of Aboriginal people from mainstream SHS to Aboriginal services is not permitted.
- **Collaboration with ACCOs.** Building strong partnerships with local ACCOs is essential. This includes ACCOs that don't delivery homelessness responses. These organisations have the cultural knowledge and community connections needed to provide culturally safe and effective support. SHS should work with ACCOs to tailor services to the needs of Aboriginal individuals and families.
- **Holistic support.** Homelessness is often intertwined with other issues, such as health, education and employment. Recognising that, SHS should adopt a holistic approach to support. This includes connecting clients with a range of services that address their wellbeing.
- **Community engagement.** Engaging with Aboriginal communities in the design and delivery of services is vital. This involves getting input from community members, respecting cultural practices, and making sure services are accessible and relevant.
- **Feedback mechanisms.** Setting up feedback options lets Aboriginal individuals and families share their experiences and suggest improvements to services. This feedback should guide ongoing service development.
- **Advocacy and representation.** SHS should advocate for the rights and needs of Aboriginal people within the broader homelessness system. This includes making sure Aboriginal voices feature in decision-making.

Homes Victoria recognises the right to self-determination of Aboriginal peoples. Homes Victoria has a commitment that a minimum of 10 percent of all homelessness funding will be contracted directly to ACCOs by 2029. To reach this minimum funding share, all prospective contracting will include a minimum 10 per cent allocation to ACCOs. This will need to be complemented by recontracting of some historical funding allocations over the medium-term to reach this goal, in consultation with funded agencies who may be impacted.

### 5.1.1 Aboriginal cultural safety and inclusion

SHS have specific requirements about cultural safety and inclusion under the *Social Services Regulation Act 2021* (Vic).

Social Services Standard 1, Safe Service Delivery, includes important requirements for Aboriginal cultural safety. SHS need to take steps to manage risks and ensure they meet inclusion service requirements. These include identifying and managing risk, and considering cultural safety, including ensuring that Aboriginal service users get social services that are culturally safe.

Further information about the Social Services Standards is in Section 11.2 of these guidelines.

For more information about obligations under the scheme refer to Section 4.9 of these guidelines.

[Social Services Regulator](https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator)

<https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator>

[Social Services Regulation Act 2021 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021/001)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021/001>

[Social Services Regulations 2023](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/002)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/002>

[Social Services Standards – Social Services Regulator’s guidance](https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-social-services-standards)

<https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-social-services-standards>

### 5.1.2 Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort: Every Aboriginal person has a home

Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort is also known as the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework (VAHHF). The VAHHF lays the foundation for Aboriginal housing and homelessness reform in Victoria. The VAHHF reflect the objectives and priorities of the Victorian Aboriginal community. It provides a 20-year plan to tackle the unique housing and homelessness challenges faced by the Victorian Aboriginal community.

[Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework](https://vahhf.org.au/)

<https://vahhf.org.au/>

### 5.1.3 Blueprint for an Aboriginal-specific homelessness system in Victoria

The Aboriginal community developed the Blueprint for an Aboriginal-specific homelessness system (the blueprint). It details a plan for creating a culturally safe Aboriginal homelessness system which meets the unique and specific needs of the Aboriginal community. Most importantly, it ensures community can support community.

Aboriginal Victorians experiencing homelessness face complex and intersecting challenges. Housing availability is insufficient and often geographically mismatched with demand.

It is important to recognise the unique experience of homelessness for Aboriginal people. It links to a history of colonisation, dispossession and dislocation.

The current system lacks cultural safety. It also suffers from fragmentation, with services operating in isolation. Individuals and families often struggle to navigate a system that lacks intensive, culturally appropriate case management.

The blueprint aligns with the vision and principles outlined in the VAHHF. The blueprint aims to tackle fragmentation and provide more comprehensive support for Aboriginal Victorians experiencing homelessness.

[Blueprint for an Aboriginal-specific homelessness system](https://vahhf.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Blueprint.pdf)

Note: the link below is for a pdf document.

<https://vahhf.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Blueprint.pdf>

#### 5.1.4 Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework for the Specialist Homelessness Sector

Establishing and developing an Aboriginal-specific homelessness system is an important step. But this highlights the need for the whole homelessness system to install culturally safe services.

The *Aboriginal Homelessness: An Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework for the Specialist Homelessness Sector* (framework) aims to support SHS to enhance their engagement and support for Aboriginal Victorians experiencing homelessness. The framework:

- offers guidance rather than requiring specific competencies or accreditations
- encourages organisations to examine their own practices and apply effective strategies and actions
- is a roadmap for SHS to evolve into culturally safe organisations.

This will ensure their service delivery acknowledge and respects Aboriginal people's specific needs and cultural contexts.

The framework aids organisations be more inclusive and culturally responsive to homelessness in the Aboriginal community.

Principles underpin the framework that are consistent with the principles in *Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort*, the VAHHF. The principles are:

- Aboriginal self-determination
- rights based (the right to well-designed and delivered services)
- Housing First
- outcome driven
- transparency and accountability
- cultural safety
- access
- strengths-based
- people centred
- reciprocity



- economic opportunity and innovation.

[Aboriginal Homelessness: An Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework for the Specialist Homelessness Sector](https://chp.org.au/publication/an-aboriginal-cultural-safety-framework-for-the-specialist-homelessness-sector/)

<https://chp.org.au/publication/an-aboriginal-cultural-safety-framework-for-the-specialist-homelessness-sector/>

#### 5.1.4.1 Community Housing Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework

The Community Housing Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework aims to enhance the capacity of community housing organisations to collaborate effectively with Aboriginal communities in Victoria. It emphasises the importance of cultural safety in housing services. It also encourages SHS to assess their existing Aboriginal cultural safety practices.

This framework is a practical tool to assist SHS to reflect on practices. It also guides them to improve engagement between SHS and Aboriginal Victorians seeking housing. It includes a reflection tool with strategies to build cultural safety across organisations.

[Community Housing Industry Association Victoria – Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework](https://chiavic.com.au/resources/aboriginal-cultural-safety-framework/)

<https://chiavic.com.au/resources/aboriginal-cultural-safety-framework/>

## 5.2 Family Violence Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework

The Family Violence Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework aims to increase the safety and wellbeing of Victorians by supporting services to identify, assess and manage family violence risk. MARAM was a response to the findings of the 2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence. MARAM established in law under Part 11 of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*. A comprehensive overview of the MARAM Framework is in [Appendix 1](#) and on the MARAM framework website.

MARAM and the Information Sharing Schemes prescribe SHS. This means that SHS have a legal obligation to align their policies, procedures, practice guidance and tools to MARAM. Resources are available to understand responsibilities for aligning to the MARAM framework and put MARAM into practice for direct service delivery staff.

[MARAM Framework](https://www.vic.gov.au/report-on-implementation-of-the-family-violence-risk-assessment-and-management-framework-2018-19/maram-framework)

<https://www.vic.gov.au/report-on-implementation-of-the-family-violence-risk-assessment-and-management-framework-2018-19/maram-framework>

The MARAM Framework has four conceptual pillars. Leaders of SHS must align their practices with these policies, procedures, practice guidelines and tools. Each pillar has its own objective and requirement for alignment. Please refer to [Appendix 1](#) for detail.

### Useful resources

[Frequently asked questions about information sharing and MARAM](https://www.vic.gov.au/frequently-asked-questions-about-information-sharing-and-maram)

<https://www.vic.gov.au/frequently-asked-questions-about-information-sharing-and-maram>

[Information sharing guides, templates and tools](#)

<a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/guides-templates-tools-for-information-sharing">https://www.vic.gov.au/guides-templates-tools-for-information-sharing</a>
<a href="#">MARAM Framework</a> <a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/report-on-implementation-of-the-family-violence-risk-assessment-and-management-framework-2018-19/maram-framework">https://www.vic.gov.au/report-on-implementation-of-the-family-violence-risk-assessment-and-management-framework-2018-19/maram-framework</a>
<a href="#">MARAM framework: summary for organisational leaders</a> <a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-framework-summary-organisational-leaders">https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-framework-summary-organisational-leaders</a>
<a href="#">MARAM practice guides and resources</a> <a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources">https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources</a>
<a href="#">Training for the information sharing and MARAM reforms</a> <a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/training-for-information-sharing-and-maram">https://www.vic.gov.au/training-for-information-sharing-and-maram</a>

## 5.3 Opening Doors Framework

*The Opening Doors Framework: Better access for homeless people to social housing and support services in Victoria* (ODF) represents a coordinated, client-centred approach to homelessness services in Victoria. By addressing barriers and enhancing collaboration, the ODF aims to improve outcomes for individuals experiencing homelessness and ensure that they receive the support they need in a timely and effective manner.

The key features of the ODF include:

- **Client-centred system response.** The ODF emphasises the need to put clients at the centre of service delivery. This means understanding their unique needs, preferences and circumstances, and tailoring responses.
- **Consistent initial assessment and referral.** Skilled and supported workers conduct an initial assessment for anyone seeking help with homelessness in Victoria. Assessments identify the person's risks and safety concerns. Consistency in this process streamlines support and reduces confusion for people seeking support.
- **Clear entry points.** The ODF established clear entry points for individuals and families to access services. Clarity ensures that individuals know how to navigate the system and where to go for help.
- **Formal service coordination.** The ODF promotes formalised coordination among SHS, which enhances collaboration and communication. This ensures comprehensive support and that services are not duplicated.
- **Local area service networks (LASNS).** These networks enable collaboration among local agencies. They ensure all SHS in local areas take collective responsibility for addressing homelessness. LASNs are important in fostering partnerships and improving service delivery. Further information on the LASN role is in [Section 4.2.5 of these guidelines](#).
- **Collective responsibility.** The framework encourages all agencies within a local area to take responsibility to address the needs of individuals and families seeking support. This collective approach should enable a cohesive response where sharing resources to support individuals and families to access services.
- **Recognition of supply shortfall.** The ODF acknowledges the limitations in available resources and services. By recognising this shortfall, agencies can

better work within the constraints and prioritise the most urgent needs and manage demand

[Opening Doors Framework](https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/opening-doors-framework)

<https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/opening-doors-framework>

## 5.4 Addressing gambling harm

A range of community organisations provide Gambler's Help services. The services offer resources and support services for people at risk of or experiencing gambling-related harm, spanning those who gamble or affected others. SHS can identify people affected by gambling and assist them to seek help.

SHS should:

- **Be aware of the signs.** People who gamble can sometimes hide their behaviour. But symptoms like financial difficulties, changes in mood or behaviour, and social isolation may be indicators.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** During client intake or discussions about financial challenges, explore potential gambling habits. Refer to the resource Reducing stigma: a guide to talk about gambling.
- **Provide support and referrals.** If you have concerns, provide appropriate referrals and encourage the client to seek help. Gamblers Help offers free confidential support services and self-help information and resources. SHS can also refer individuals and families to Gambler's Help for further support.

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, the Department of Justice and Community Safety, and the Department of Health have programs for individuals and families with co-occurring gambling harm and homelessness. This collaboration allows for comprehensive screening and referrals to suitable services in mental health, alcohol and other drugs, and family violence support.

[Reducing stigma: a guide to talk about gambling](https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media/new-resource-reducing-stigma-a-guide-for-talking-about-gambling-harm/)

<https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media/new-resource-reducing-stigma-a-guide-for-talking-about-gambling-harm/>

[Gamblers Help](https://gamblershelp.com.au/)

<https://gamblershelp.com.au/>

## 5.5 Other service delivery policy

Other guidance SHS need to be aware of includes:

- The Community services quality governance framework outlines the principles, domains, roles and responsibilities of quality governance. It includes measures of success, and indicators of poor-quality governance.
- The Service agreement requirements is a contractual document that supports the services agreement. It outlines the responsibilities, policies and obligations that all SHS must follow.
- The Client voice framework assists people at every level of a community services to critically assess their current practice in relation to seeking, hearing and responding to the client voice.

[Community services quality governance framework](https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/community-services-quality-governance-framework)

<https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/community-services-quality-governance-framework>

[Service agreement requirements](https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/service-agreement-requirements)

<https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/service-agreement-requirements>

[Client voice framework](https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/client-voice-framework-community-services)

<https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/client-voice-framework-community-services>

## 6 Service delivery requirements

### 6.1 Eligibility

SHS need to be accessible to anyone experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Many SHS have expertise working with specific groups of people experiencing homelessness. These cohorts may include:

- children (when accompanied by an adult)
- families with or without children
- single adults
- victim survivors of family violence
- young people
- Aboriginal people
- people living with a disability
- people living with mental health issues
- people sleeping rough
- people recently exited from institutions
- older adults
- people who are LGBTIQ+
- people from culturally and racially marginalised backgrounds
- refugees and asylum seekers.

While some agencies may have a specific service focus, all SHS must provide clear information on available homelessness services for all people in their area. This includes referral pathways to services that fit individual needs. This is important even if someone is not eligible for the referring agency's programs.

Please note that some individual homelessness programs have their own eligibility criteria. Please see individual program guidelines for further information.

#### 6.1.1 Unaccompanied children aged 15 years and under

When a child aged 15 years and under presents without an accompanying adult at an SHS requesting accommodation, support workers are required to:

1. Undertake a risk and safety assessment to determine the immediate needs of the child. If a young person needs accommodation, try to contact a parent or carer when it's safe and in the best interests of the young person.
2. Gather more information to decide if a report to Child Protection or referral to a support service will help the child and/or the family:

- (a) You can **refer** them to The Orange Door. They assist people experiencing family violence or families who need support with the care and wellbeing of children and young people.
- (b) You can **report** to Child Protection if you have a reasonable belief that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm because of abuse or neglect and their parent has not or is unlikely to protect them from harm of that type.

These referrals or reports ensure the SHS has created a safety net for unaccompanied children aged 15 years and under.

<a href="https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts">Make a report to Child Protection – contacts</a>
<a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/about-the-orange-door">Make a referral to The Orange Door</a>

The department's Child Protection manual also provides further guidance around working with unaccompanied children aged 12 to 17 who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness.

[Child Protection manual: advice for working with children aged 12–17](https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/children-specific-circumstances/unaccompanied-homeless-children-advice)

<https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/children-specific-circumstances/unaccompanied-homeless-children-advice>

#### 6.1.1.1 Accompanied children

Accompanied children experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness are also particularly vulnerable. When children present at an SHS accompanying an adult, an initial assessment should include the safety and risk assessment for the unit head and accompanying children.

#### 6.1.1.2 Children's Specialist Support program

The Children's Specialist Support program operates across several local areas. It provides an enhanced case management approach to children accompanying an adult. This service aims to break the cycle of disadvantage and improve outcomes for children experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Make referrals to this service (in areas where the response operates) when the initial assessment or the case plan identifies a child requires or would benefit from an individual case management response.

#### 6.1.1.3 Referrals to The Orange Door

Refer to The Orange Door if concerned for a child's wellbeing but there is no immediate harm or safety risk. The Orange Door has replaced Child FIRST as the access point for families who need support with the care and wellbeing of children, including those experiencing family violence. If a worker is unsure about the assessment of risk, they must contact Orange Door for guidance.

### 6.1.2 People with no income

No income does not prevent a person from accessing transitional and crisis accommodation. Homelessness or the risk of homelessness is the criterion for entry. People seeking asylum or who are new migrants awaiting residency status are eligible for transitional and crisis accommodation.

When presenting for housing support, assess individuals and families without income for eligibility based on their immediate need for housing and other types of appropriate support, regardless of their financial status.

Along with housing, SHS can support people with no income by:

- improving employment opportunities
- increasing education enrolment
- assisting with accessing government benefits and identification documents.

Refer to the most recent Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) Specialist homelessness services annual report for more information on client income and outcomes.

[Specialist homelessness services annual report](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/contents/clients-services-and-outcomes)

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/contents/clients-services-and-outcomes>

### 6.1.3 Pets

Pets play a significant role in the lives of many people experiencing homelessness. Pets can provide companionship, emotional support and a sense of purpose. The bond between a person experiencing homelessness and their pet is often very strong.

People experiencing homelessness must receive the same rights as any other renter. SHS who provide tenancy management of properties that fall under the RTA must refer to Division 5B of the RTA for guidance on rental premises and pets.

Properties not covered by the RTA may lack the necessary safety requirements to house a pet. Accommodating pets is at the discretion of SHS. But SHS should assist a person to find alternative housing for their pet. You may consider providing financial support for short-term placements for the pet.

[Division 5B of the RTA](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/residential-tenancies-act-1997/)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/residential-tenancies-act-1997/>

## 6.2 Access to services

SHS must make accessing services as easy as possible for people in need. This means offering different ways to connect. This can include in-person visits, phone consultations and outreach programs for people in remote areas or experiencing rough sleeping.

### 6.2.1 Clear points of entry

Entry points must be visible to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and be supported by formal service coordination. SHS must provide support for each client based on their needs. This applies regardless of their previous address, location they seek help from or immigration status. This includes new migrants and asylum seekers. People have the right to choose which service they would like to access. They may choose mainstream or cohort-specific services, like youth-specific or Aboriginal-specific services.

## 6.2.2 SHS operating hours

SHS must provide in-person services during standard business hours all year. Standard business hours are Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. In-person hours for assertive outreach programs may vary to support people sleeping rough. If public holidays differ by location, such as local racing carnivals, the local public holiday replaces the metropolitan holiday.

To ensure people can still get help outside of these hours, SHS must have a phone answering message that:

- clearly states regular business hours
- provides alternative contact options for urgent matters
- includes the statewide homelessness contact number (1800 825 955), which is a free call and available 24/7
- shares other relevant emergency services contact details.

In very rare cases, if any SHS needs to close during normal business hours, the service manager must contact their local department area to discuss and negotiate a change to standard hours.

Examples of reasons an SHS may close during regular business hours include:

- a natural disaster such as a flood
- essential service outage
- critical incident debriefing
- occupational health and safety risk.

There may also be periods of time when an ACCO SHS must close for Sorry Business to attend to cultural protocols and the grieving process associated with the passing of someone in the Aboriginal community.

During National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week, staff at ACCOs may need to attend to community activities as part of the cultural obligations of NAIDOC Week.

### 6.2.2.1 Actions required for SHS when temporarily closing the service

If an SHS needs to close for the day, the SHS must:

- contact the local area department contract manager (Agency Performance and System Support) to discuss the closure
- have a recorded message with an alternative number to call, which may include negotiating with another SHS to include their contact number on the recorded message
- have answering service and voice mails able to record a large volume of messages, this may need SHS to upgrade the answering service as people seeking support must have the ability to leave a recorded message.

Closures must not exceed one business day without approval from contract manager.

### 6.2.2.2 Out of standard business hours services

People requiring support outside of regular business hours can call the Homelessness Statewide After Hours Service (1800 825 955).



Some homelessness programs receive funding to deliver services outside of standard business hours. These include services open on weekends and public holidays, and 24-hour supported housing every day of the year.

### 6.2.2.3 Embargo on VCAT action over the holiday period

Homes Victoria asks all providers of homelessness housing to avoid issuing notices to vacate or executing warrants of possession from 16 December to 6 January each year. Many community and legal services will have limited capacity to provide support during this period. SHS should continue reviewing rental arrears cases to negotiate repayment agreements with renters during this time.

### 6.2.2.4 Extreme weather events

During extreme weather events, the department expects that SHS will work with their relevant local government municipalities to develop a local plan that determines the type of responses which can be provided to people who are sleeping rough.

LASNs play a key role in coordinating a plan and response for extreme weather events and this should be documented in the local model to ensure people sleeping rough are accommodated safely, have access to food and water. For frost and extreme storm weather this will include blankets and warm clothing. For heat related extreme weather events this will include access to spaces to keep cool. Response to extreme weather events needs to be inclusive of public holidays.

## Referrals across DFFH local areas

There are no geographical boundaries for people seeking homelessness support.

All SHS share the responsibility of assisting individuals and families at their first point of contact with the homelessness service system. This support should be available no matter where a person reaches out. Clients should receive support at the first point of contact to address their immediate needs. Refer to [Appendix 2](#) for information on making referrals across department local areas.

### 6.2.3 Inclusive service delivery

SHS must ensure their services are accessible, appropriate and responsive to the needs of diverse communities. This means presenting information in a way that is:

- **welcoming** – create a comfortable and inclusive environment
- **linguistically diverse** – cater to clients with various language backgrounds
- **culturally sensitive** – respect and acknowledge different cultural practices and beliefs
- **easy to understand** – use clear and simple language for all individuals and families
- **safe for LGBTIQ+ clients** – create visibly safe and inclusive services and spaces for people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

This commitment extends to specific groups including Aboriginal individuals and families, culturally and linguistically diverse populations, culturally and racially marginalised populations and the LGBTIQ+ community. SHS should develop partnerships and protocols with culturally specific support services to enhance their understanding and service delivery.



SHS must also provide access to training for all staff to build skills to deliver appropriate services. This training gives employees the knowledge and skills to deliver culturally sensitive practices.

#### 6.2.4 Disability inclusion

The department's Disability Action Plan 2024–2025 aims to advance disability inclusion and address the barriers people with a disability face in accessing services and facilities. SHS should refer to this plan to improve access for people with a disability to homelessness services.

[Disability Action Plan](https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/disability-action-plan)

<https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/disability-action-plan>

SHS must provide access to training for all employees, so all staff understand inclusive practice.

#### 6.2.5 Language and communication support services

SHS must adhere to the department's language services policy. SHS should also develop local language services policies and procedures consistent with this policy and legislative requirements. Carers of individuals and families, where appropriate, may also need the language services.

Services cannot deny clients support where they need an interpreter or translator.

[Language services policy and guidelines](https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/language-services-policy)

<https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/language-services-policy>

### 6.3 Intersection between homelessness programs

#### 6.3.1 Cooperation between SHS

As the front end of service delivery, effective operation of the services system relies on all SHS to apply their unique insight and expertise. SHS must be active players in the local area service networks. They must share knowledge, operate cooperatively and take part in sector capability building and reform initiatives and opportunities.

SHS fund different homelessness responses through the department's local areas. There are four primary service types in the responses:

- assessment
- support
- housing
- flexible brokerage.

The department funds programs to assist people experiencing homelessness to access housing and support. These programs are in Section 12.

All SHS are members of an LASN, which is the coordination point for homelessness services in the area.

All SHS must log all department-funded resources on the Vacancy Management System (VMS). This allows each SHS to view the range of funded programs. When an SHS has

a vacancy, update the VMS to reflect this vacancy. Vacancies can include an available THM property, support capacity or flexible funding.

### 6.3.2 Interface between Aboriginal and mainstream SHS

Both ACCO SHS and mainstream SHS receive funding to support Aboriginal people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Victoria. Currently ACCOs receive funding for a smaller range of responses than mainstream services and may experience unmet demand to a greater degree than mainstream services. Homes Victoria is working with ACCO's and Aboriginal people to rectify this discrepancy through the VAHHF (see section 5 of the VAHHF) Aboriginal people accessing SHS can choose between an Aboriginal SHS or mainstream SHS for their homelessness response.

Each LASN must ensure local culturally safe pathways for Aboriginal individuals and families to access homelessness services. All SHS should know how to register a person for a resource allocation.

There can be benefits for members of LASNs from creating a practitioner working group or communities of practice (CoP) between ACCO and mainstream SHS. CoP can deepen the knowledge and skills for working in a culturally safe way with Aboriginal people. They also promote joint accountability to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Victorian Homelessness Networkers and the VISHN Networker should work together to identify coordinated pathways and service gaps. They can then explore approaches to close those gaps and improve coordination and outcomes for Aboriginal people.

[Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework](https://vahhf.org.au/)

<https://vahhf.org.au/>

## 6.4 Interface between SHS and allied services

People at risk of or experiencing homelessness often use a range of other government-funded services. These may include mental health, family violence, health, child protection and justice programs.

SHS should ensure they have strong partnerships with local and statewide allied services. This allows SHS to have a more integrated service system and improve access to services.

A collaborative approach to shared clients should include creating protocols between the LASN or individual SHS and allied services. Protocols should include:

- a mutual understanding of the aims of service intervention type
- shared understanding of good practice
- a defined referral pathway with individuals and families at the forefront
- clear communication processes
- clear division of roles and responsibilities, including the role of the case coordinator
- how demand can be best managed
- an in-built annual review of the protocol.

SHS may develop protocols together with allied services, or as part of an LASN with local allied services. Using an LASN protocol helps establish clear, local referral pathways. This reduces the need for SHS to create many protocols.

## 6.5 Feedback and complaints

SHS have specific requirements to manage feedback and complaints under the *Social Services Regulation Act 2021* (Vic).

Standard 4 of the Social Service Standards relates to feedback and complaints. It ensures service users can give feedback, raise concerns and make complaints about the safety of a social service, confidentially, within agreed timeframes and without reprisal. To meet Social Service Standard 4, an SHS must meet service requirements about:

- feedback
- systems and processes
- responding to feedback, complaints and concerns
- dispute management.

SHS should refer to the *Social Services Regulation Act* and the Regulator's published guidance for more information about their obligations. Refer to Section 4.9 of these guidelines.

### 6.5.1 Feedback

SHS must seek feedback from service users or their support persons about the safety of the service. The Regulator's guidelines have directions on how to seek feedback.

### 6.5.2 Systems and processes for complaints and feedback

SHS must install and maintain systems and processes to:

- help service users and support persons to give feedback, make complaints or raise concerns about the safety of a social service
- investigate, respond to and resolve any feedback, complaints or concerns raised by service users and their support persons about the safety of a social service
- report on feedback, complaints or concerns raised by service users and support persons about the safety of a social service
- report on the SHS response to or resolution of the feedback, complaint or concern.

SHS must also inform social service users about their right to raise safety issues with the Regulator or to make a complaint to any other entity.

### 6.5.3 Response to feedback, complaints and concerns

SHS should acknowledge and respond to feedback, complaints or concerns of service users and their support persons in a way that:

- is confidential
- is appropriate and accessible to service users
- is without reprisal to the service user or their support person
- meets timeframes agreed with the service provider or support person.

SHS are also required to use the feedback, complaints and concerns of service users and support persons to inform continuous improvements to safe service design and delivery.

#### 6.5.4 Dispute management

If requested, an SHS must assist service users and their support persons to access services to manage and resolve disputes between the service user and SHS about the delivery of services.

<a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-social-services-standards">Standard 4: Feedback and complaints</a>
<a href="https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/managing-complaints">Managing complaints</a>
<a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021/001">Social Services Regulation Act 2021 (Vic)</a>
<a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/002">Social Services Regulations 2023 (Vic)</a>

#### 6.5.5 Feedback to Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

SHS, individuals, families or a support person can make an online complaint or compliment straight to the department.

Complaints and compliments should go to the service in question. The DFFH online feedback form is also an option for those who don't want to contact the service or haven't had a satisfactory response when they did provide feedback to the service in question.

<a href="https://feedback.dhhs.vic.gov.au/layout.html#/DFFH">DFFH online feedback form</a>
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#### 6.5.6 Victorian Ombudsman

The Victorian Ombudsman handles complaints about actions or decisions made by Victorian public organisations. This includes Victorian Government departments and organisations, councils and publicly funded community services.

<a href="https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/">Victorian Ombudsman</a>
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### 6.6 Occupational health and safety

SHS must be aware of their occupational health and safety obligations as employers. They should have a documented system in place for showing compliance.

## 6.7 Social Services Regulation – Safe Service Environment Standard

According to the *Social Services Regulation Act* (2021), SHS must ensure their premises, facilities and equipment are safe and fit for purpose. This includes:

- identifying and reducing hazards and risks to service users
- ensuring premises, facilities, equipment, furniture and fittings are suitable and accessible for service users
- ensuring premises, facilities, equipment, furniture and fittings are safe and in good condition
- where occupying but not owning the premises
  - entering into any arrangements or agreements necessary to follow the above requirements
  - implementing and maintaining practices to manage risks to ensure safe service delivery at that place.

SHS also need to install and maintain practices to:

- secure service users' personal and private property
- manage the risk of harm in an emergency
- provide clear directions to service workers and service users on what to do in an emergency.

SHS should refer to the *Social Services Regulation Act* and the Regulator's published guidance for more information about their regulatory obligations.

[Standard 3: Safe service environment on the standards page](https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-social-services-standards)

<https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-social-services-standards>

[Social Services Regulation Act 2021 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021/001)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021/001>

[Social Services Regulations 2023 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/002)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/002>

## 6.8 Acknowledging Victorian Government funding

All documents and data created by SHS while delivering services funded by Homes Victoria belong to Homes Victoria.

Under a service or funding agreement, organisations must acknowledge Victorian Government funding. By acknowledging this support, organisations show the community how they are spending public funding. Refer to the Acknowledgement and publicity guidelines for Victorian Government funding support for further information.

[Acknowledgement and publicity guidelines for Victorian Government funding support](https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/acknowledgement-and-publicity-guidelines-victorian-government-funding-support)

<https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/acknowledgement-and-publicity-guidelines-victorian-government-funding-support>

## 7 Agency performance arrangements

### 7.1 Targets

The department's local area APSS teams and Homes Victoria negotiate targets with SHS. Their goal is to maximise resources and meet state and national performance targets.

SHS must meet the performance measures in the activity description of each service plan. Each activity description includes at least one performance measure. In some cases, SHSs can negotiate targets against each performance measure with the local department APSS team.

### 7.2 Performance and monitoring arrangements

#### 7.2.1 Performance and monitoring

The department's local area APSS teams meet regularly with SHS to track performance. This is part of the service agreement between each SHS and the department contract management role. An annual desktop review is also undertaken. Some programs may have centralised contract management and monitoring.

SHS must deliver services against the outputs outlined in their service plans. There may be instances where they negotiate new targets with the department's local area.

Performance measures communicate performance expectations and measure outcomes of activities performed by SHS. These measures are quantifiable service goals for funded activities under the Service Agreement. They provide the basis for assessment of services' performance against agreed targets.

The relevant APSS team will manage issues with performance and/or monitoring. They can use their local area guidance to ensure arrangements are appropriate.

#### 7.2.2 Budget allocation

SHS must work within their allocated budget each financial year. Where SHS experience significant demand or challenges affecting budget allocation, including significant over or underspend, SHS must notify their APSS manager as soon as possible.

## 8 Homelessness services data collection

### 8.1 Data collection and reporting

Client data and manual reporting capture service delivery. This includes:

Service delivery tracking (SDT) via the Funded Agency Channel and the monthly submission of two extracts from the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform (SHIP) or equivalent client management system as certified by the AIHW to include SHS client data. The two extracts are:

1. The **SHS extract**, submitted to both AIHW via Validata and the Department via the Homelessness secure data exchange. The SHS extract should only be submitted to the department once it has been validated by Validata.

2. The **HDC extract**, submitted to the department via the Homelessness secure data exchange after the SHS extract has been approved by Validata.

SHS-funded activities within the SHS collection must submit SHS and HDC extracts by the tenth working day of the month after the reporting month. For example, submit April data by the tenth working day in May.

SHIP may not collect client data related to funded activities not in scope for the SHS collection. Ad hoc data requests may arise for program monitoring and evaluation, such as evaluation required when funding is due to lapse.

## 8.2 Manual data collections

Sometimes, manual reports might be needed. This happens when SHS data is insufficient for monitoring, reporting and evaluating a program. These reports usually involve extracts from SHIP or other relevant client management systems. Extra administrative data entry may be necessary for further metrics.

Where possible, procurement service contracts for a program will outline if manual collections are necessary. Extra manual collections may be needed for ad hoc evaluation or reporting. For example, further evidence of program success to secure lapsing funding. In such cases, the department and SHS will discuss an agreement on possible reporting commitments.

## 8.3 Managing client data

Schedule 1 of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* contains the Information Privacy Principles (IPPs). The IPPs are the core of privacy law in Victoria. They set the minimum standard for how Victorian public sector organisations manage personal information.

If an organisation collects and holds personal information about an individual, it must let the individual with access to the information upon request by the individual, unless an exception applies. See IPP 6 – Access and correction for more information.

In line with the department's commitment to progressing Aboriginal sovereignty, SHS may share de-identified data for Aboriginal individuals and families with the appropriate self-determined governance forums. This complies with obligations under the *Health Records Act 2001*.

### [Information Privacy Principles](https://ovic.vic.gov.au/privacy/resources-for-organisations/information-privacy-principles-full-text/)

<https://ovic.vic.gov.au/privacy/resources-for-organisations/information-privacy-principles-full-text/>

### [Health Records Act 2001](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/health-records-act-2001/049) (Vic)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/health-records-act-2001/049>

## 9 Tools

SHS should have tools available to support people seeking support for homelessness. The tools listed in this section can help SHS meet service agreement requirements. They also improve coordination of resources.



## 9.1 Funded Agency Channel

The Funded Agency Channel (FAC) has information on policies and procedures, templates, systems, training and guides. These help SHS meet service agreement requirements.

Funded Agency Channel

<https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/>

## 9.2 Vacancy Management System

The Victorian Homelessness Service System prioritises efficient service coordination. This way, individuals and families experiencing homelessness receive the most appropriate support. A key tool in achieving this goal is the Vacancy Management System (VMS).

The VMS is a central platform for all SHS to share information about available resources. This includes advertising vacancies in both housing and support programs, along with detailed program descriptions and referral processes.

### Benefits of the VMS

The VMS offers advantages for both SHS and individuals and families within the SHS. These include:

- The VMS streamlines the referral process by providing real-time information on available resources. This helps match clients to the most suitable program based on their specific needs and eligibility. The VMS provides clear and consistent program descriptions and referral processes for all SHS.
- The VMS fosters transparency and collaboration across the SHS. All SHS have access to the same information. This allows them to find resources best suited to their clients, regardless of their location or program options. This approach promotes efficient services and ensures clients get the support they need.
- By using the VMS, SHS can connect clients with the right programs. The detailed information empowers entry points to make well-informed referrals. This leads to more effective service delivery and improved client outcomes.

Homes Victoria requires the use of the VMS by all SHS. This ensures consistent and standardised resource sharing across the system. The VMS is available through SHIP or through a specific licence for non-SHIP users. CHP provide training on the VMS, for further information please refer to the SHS Learning Hub.

CHP SHS Learning Hub

<https://chp.org.au/sector-learning-and-development/shs-learning-program/>

For access or more information, email Housing and Homelessness Support branch at Homes Victoria.

Homes Victoria Housing and Homelessness Support branch [email](mailto:HHS@homes.vic.gov.au)

[HHS@homes.vic.gov.au](mailto:HHS@homes.vic.gov.au)



## 9.3 Electronic Referral System

The Victorian Specialist Homelessness Service System prioritises a secure and efficient referral process. This helps individuals and families get timely access to the right services. A key tool of this system is the electronic referral system (e-referral).

Benefits of e-referral are:

- enhanced security for sensitive client information shared between SHS
- improved efficiency as the electronic format streamlines the referral process, saving time for agencies
- clear and concise communication of client needs and relevant information.

### Accessibility for all SHS

All SHS must have access to and use the e-referral system. For agencies using SHIP, the e-referral function is available in the platform.

### Non-SHIP users

SHS that don't use SHIP can still take part in the e-referral system. These agencies can integrate the e-referral function into their current CMS using an application programming interface (API). For help with API access, email the Housing and Homelessness Support Branch at Homes Victoria.

Homes Victoria Housing and Homelessness Support branch [email](mailto:HHS@homes.vic.gov.au)  
HHS@homes.vic.gov.au

## 9.4 MARAM tools in the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform

The Specialist Homelessness Information Platform (SHIP) empowers SHS to align their practices with the MARAM Framework. SHIP offers MARAM risk assessment and risk management tools, including safety planning resources.

Benefits of SHIP's MARAM tools:

- **Standardised approach.** These tools reflect the latest evidence-based practices and MARAM requirements. This ensures consistent risk assessment and management across the SHS.
- **Ongoing improvement.** The tools are regularly updated to reflect evolving evidence and changing MARAM requirements.

For SHIP users, relevant MARAM training is available through the Council to Homeless Persons' SHS Learning Hub.

## 10 Training

A skilled workforce is fundamental to the success of homelessness service delivery. The department funds training options for both SHS and department staff and in addition to this, specific capacity building initiatives are funded for fixed-terms to support the implementation of new and emerging practices.

## 10.1 Training opportunities

Homes Victoria subsidises Council to Homeless Persons (CHP)'s SHS training program. This makes it accessible and affordable. It ensures all staff can develop their skills and expertise. Homes Victoria requires SHS to provide access to this training program to all employees.

### Comprehensive Learning Program

The CHP delivers the foundational SHS Learning Program on behalf of the department. This program offers a comprehensive and flexible learning experience with five main elements:

1. **Live training (online and face-to-face).** Interactive sessions led by SHS and allied services experts. This allows learners to engage with peers and instructors.
2. **Self-directed eLearning courses.** Self-paced online modules providing foundational knowledge and skills development.
3. **Complementary prerequisite packages.** Combined eLearning and live training options for specific topics.
4. **Webinars.** Timely and focused discussions on emerging issues or specific areas of practice.
5. **Reflective practice.** Guided sessions with subject matter experts for deeper learning and application of knowledge.

### Streamlined access

You can sign up for live training sessions and eLearning courses at the Council to Homeless Persons' SHS Learning Hub. This platform simplifies access to professional development opportunities for the entire SHS workforce.

[CHP SHS Learning Hub](https://chp.org.au/sector-learning-and-development/shs-learning-program/)

<https://chp.org.au/sector-learning-and-development/shs-learning-program/>

## 10.2 LGBTQIA+ Homelessness Capacity Building Training

Specialist LGBTQIA+ homelessness program Pride in Place developed the LGBTQIA+ Homelessness Capacity Building Training. It provides guidance to SHS about effective and inclusive responses to LGBTQIA+ people.

LGBTQIA+ Homelessness Sector Capacity Building learning - visit [CHP Learning Hub](#) to access modules from late 2025.

## 11 Compliance

### 11.1 Service agreement requirements

The department's Service Agreement Requirements document details the responsibilities, policies and obligations for all funded organisations with a service

agreement. It provides information for understanding policies and other information aligned with service delivery.

[Service Agreement Requirements](https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/service-agreement-requirements-dffh-and-dh)

<https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/service-agreement-requirements-dffh-and-dh>

## 11.2 Compliance under the Social Services Regulatory Framework

The 2025 guidelines on obligations under the social services regulatory scheme are not exhaustive. For more details, SHS should refer to the *Social Services Regulation Act* and the Regulator's published guidance.

### 11.2.1 Social Services Standards

The Social Service Standards are obligations that social service providers in Victoria must meet. The *Social Services Regulation Act 2021 Act* embeds these standards in law.

SHS must show they provide safe social services by meeting the service requirements of the six standards:

1. **Safe service delivery.** Social services are safely provided based on assessed needs.
2. **Service user agency and dignity.** Social services are person-centred, and respect and uphold service user rights and agency.
3. **Social service environment.** Social services offered in a safe, secure and fit-for-purpose environment.
4. **Feedback and complains.** Service users receive support to share feedback, complaints or concerns about service safety.
5. **Accountable organisation governance.** Effective governance and organisational systems support safe social service delivery.
6. **Safe workforce.** The social services workforce has knowledge, capability and support to provide safe social services with care and skill.

Each standard has a set of outcomes and service requirements prescribed in the Social Services Regulations 2023. The service requirements are tangible actions that SHS must take to comply with the standards. The outcomes reflect the expected outcomes for service users when SHS follow the service requirements. Under the *Social Services Regulation Act 2021*, a registered social service provider is assumed to follow the Social Service Standards if they meet the service requirements.

The Regulator's website has information about each standard. It has suggestions for documents, evidence and indicators of success to help SHS show how their compliance.

[Social Service Standards – Social Services Regulator's Guidance](https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-social-services-standards)

<https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-social-services-standards>

[Social Services Regulation Act 2021 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021/001)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021/001>

[Social Services Regulations 2023 \(Vic\)](#)

<a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/002">https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/002</a>
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### 11.2.2 Registration with the Social Services Regulator

SHS must register with the Social Services Regulator. There is no cost to register.

<a href="#">Social Services Regulator</a>
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<a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/about-social-services-regulator">https://www.vic.gov.au/about-social-services-regulator</a>
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<a href="#">Social Services Regulator registration</a>
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<a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-registration">https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-registration</a>
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<a href="#">Social Services Regulation Act 2021 (Vic)</a>
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<a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/as-made/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021">https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/as-made/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021</a>
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### 11.2.3 Reporting notifiable incidents

As noted in Section 6.2, organisations registered with the Social Services Regulator (the Regulator) must report all serious incidents or risks to service users during delivery of a social service. Serious incidents include serious harm to a service user or any incident that may cause serious harm.

SHS must notify the Regulator about incidents within three days. SHS that use CIMS for reporting can generally use CIMS to make these reports to the Regulator. SHS must report some incidents to the Regulator immediately, by the end of the next business day.

Information about how to report critical incidents is on the Regulator's website.

<a href="#">Client Incident Management System</a>
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<a href="https://cims.vic.gov.au/#/introduction">https://cims.vic.gov.au/#/introduction</a>
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<a href="#">Client incident management guide</a>
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<a href="https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/client-incident-management-guide-cims-word">https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/client-incident-management-guide-cims-word</a>
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<a href="#">Social Services Regulation Act 2021 (Vic)</a>
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<a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021/001">https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/social-services-regulation-act-2021/001</a>
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<a href="#">Social Services Regulations 2023 (Vic)</a>
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<a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/002">https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/social-services-regulations-2023/002</a>
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<a href="#">Guide to reporting a notifiable incident to the Social Services Regulator</a>
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<a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/ssr-reporting-notifiable-incident">https://www.vic.gov.au/ssr-reporting-notifiable-incident</a>
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## 11.3 Governance and management

Organisations are accountable against the policies and guidelines under the service agreement. They must follow state and national laws that apply to their funded services. Organisations need strong governance processes to ensure safe service delivery and ongoing viability.

There is more information on governance and management on the department's website.

[Governance for community organisations](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/governance-community-organisations)

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/governance-community-organisations>

## 11.4 Child Safe Standards

All SHS that provide services or facilities to children must follow the Child Safe Standards. The Child Safe Standards aim to protect children and young people. They compel SHS to enact policies, procedures and processes to prevent and respond to abuse.

The Social Services Regulator regulates the Child Safe Standards for the social services sector. Further information on the Social Services Regulator is in Section 4 and in Section 11.2 above.

[Child Safe Standards](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards)

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards>

## 12 Functions of the homelessness service system

This section provides an overview of functions funded by the Victorian Government. These programs assist individuals and families at risk of or experiencing homelessness. This section also directs readers to more detailed program guidelines when available.

In 2025, Homes Victoria will begin a review of funded program guidelines. It will update Section 12 when new program guidelines are published. If there are program guidelines or extra guidance, you can find a link in the table for funded programs.

### 12.1 Initial assessment and planning

#### 12.1.1 Purpose

Initial assessment and planning (IAP) provide the first point of contact to a person seeking homelessness support. These may include:

- IAP site-based assessments at entry points
- IAP response at correctional centres, mental health discharge facilities and courts
- telephone information and referral (site and phone-based assessment)
- State-wide Homelessness After Hours Service (site and phone-based assessment)
- outreach assessment services.

#### 12.1.2 Objectives

IAP programs provide:

- clear entry points into the homelessness service system
- risk and safety assessment

- consistent initial assessment and referral practice by skilled workers
- triage and referral of individuals and families based on their risks and needs
- an allocation of available homelessness resources
- flexible funding to buy services and accommodation
- short-term support for immediate needs
- monitoring client welfare while they wait for access to relevant services.

### 12.1.3 Activities and guidelines

Homelessness activity	Program guidelines or guidance
<b>94589 – Initial assessment and planning</b>	IAP at entry points guidance (not available at time of publication)
<b>94589 – Initial assessment and planning</b>	<a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/policies-and-procedures">IAP in Victorian Prisons - Corrections housing pathways initiative guidelines</a> <a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/policies-and-procedures">https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/policies-and-procedures</a>
<b>94589 – Initial assessment and planning</b>	Mental health pathways (not available at time of publication)
<b>94589 – Initial assessment and planning</b>	Statewide Homelessness After Hours Service
<b>94846 – Aboriginal client support</b>	Aboriginal client support initial assessment at entry point
<b>94841 – Support for people sleeping rough</b>	<a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/assertive-outreach-guidelines">Rough sleeping assertive outreach guidelines</a> <a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/assertive-outreach-guidelines">https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/assertive-outreach-guidelines</a>

## 12.2 Flexible funding

### 12.2.1 Purpose

Homelessness flexible funding offers an effective and timely response to urgent needs, like emergency housing. It can also address the overall goals in a client's case plan. This funding helps individuals and families become self-sufficient. It includes brief and targeted support to divert people from entering the homelessness service system.

This function includes:

#### 12.2.1.1 Program specific brokerage

Brokerage may be offered through specific programs to effectively response to housing and support needs. Program specific brokerage may differ between programs. Please refer to the appropriate program guidelines.

#### 12.2.1.2 Housing Establishment Funds

Housing Establishment Funds (HEF) help meet urgent needs like emergency accommodation, private accommodation and discretionary items to establish housing or prevent a housing breakdown.

Information on client safety in accommodation purchased using flexible funds or HEF, such as hotels or motels, as well as regulation information are in [Appendix 3](#).

### 12.2.2 Objective

Homelessness flexible funding aims to address and prevent homelessness. It offers financial support to people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness or in housing crisis.

### 12.2.3 Activities and guidelines

Homelessness activity	Program guidelines or guidance
<b>94113 – Housing Establishment Fund</b>	<a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/housing-establishment-guidelines-hef">Housing Establishment Funding (HEF)</a> <a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/housing-establishment-guidelines-hef">https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/housing-establishment-guidelines-hef</a>
<b>94851 – Homelessness flexible funding</b>	Refer to the appropriate program guidelines for advice on program specific brokerage.

## 12.3 Support to establish and sustain tenancies

### 12.3.1 Purpose

Support to establish and sustain tenancy programs assist people experiencing or at risk of homelessness to secure, stabilise and ensure tenancies in long-term housing. Such housing includes:

- private rental
- head leasing
- public housing
- community housing.

### 12.3.2 Objectives

Homelessness support to establish and sustain tenancies programs:

- intervene early to stabilise and keep housing arrangements
- reduce eviction risk and its impacts on community connection, employment, schooling and recreation
- remove barriers to accessing private rental
- increase access to medium and long-term affordable housing in areas with very high demand.

### 12.3.3 Activities and guidelines

Homelessness activity	Program guidelines or guidance
<b>94675 – Private Rental Assistance Program</b>	<a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-private-rental-assistance-program-aprap-guidelines">APRAP Guidelines</a> <a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-private-rental-assistance-program-aprap-guidelines">https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-private-rental-assistance-program-aprap-guidelines</a>
<b>94675 – Private Rental Assistance Program</b>	<a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/private-rental-assistance-program-guidelines">PRAP Guidelines</a> <a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/private-rental-assistance-program-guidelines">https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/private-rental-assistance-program-guidelines</a>

<b>94846 – Aboriginal client support</b>	<a href="#">ATAR (includes the program formerly known as ITAR)</a>
<b>91423 – Tenancy Plus advocacy</b>	<a href="#">Tenancy Plus</a> <a href="https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/tenancy-plus-support-program">https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/tenancy-plus-support-program</a>
<b>91424 – Tenancy Plus establishment and intervention</b>	<a href="#">Tenancy Plus</a> <a href="https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/tenancy-plus-support-program">https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/tenancy-plus-support-program</a>
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	<a href="#">Creating Connections - Youth Private Rental Brokerage</a>
<b>94827 – Homelessness head leasing</b>	Head leasing (not available at time of publication)
<b>94841</b>	<a href="#">RSAP Supportive housing guidelines</a> <a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/supportive-housing-guidelines">https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/supportive-housing-guidelines</a>
<b>94841</b>	Journey to Social Inclusion (not available at time of publication)

## 12.4 Client support and case management

### 12.4.1 Purpose

Client support and case management focus on people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The goal is to secure long-term housing and improve health and wellbeing. Client support and case management includes but is not limited to:

- crisis resolution
- life skills training
- information
- advocacy
- support to access training and employment opportunities designed to help people access and sustain long-term housing.

Case workers also provide direct support to meet the goals and outcomes in a person's case plan. A person can receive support regardless of their existing living environment, for example in rooming houses, transitional housing, squats and informal arrangements.

#### 12.4.1.1 Homeless Children's Specialist Support Service

Homelessness and related issues can cause serious and long-lasting issues for children. These effects can include developmental delays, social exclusion, interrupted education, and mental and physical health issues.

The Homeless Children's Specialist Support Service offers various support responses for children and families. These include assessment and case planning support, enhanced case management support and therapeutic group work. The service aims to improve responses for children experiencing homelessness. It also helps the homelessness service sector improve their knowledge, skills and confidence in



supporting children and families. Support responses tailored to children and families include:

- case management
- engagement in and maintaining education (including early education services)
- reducing social isolation by enhancing access to support, social and recreational opportunities within their community
- social and emotional growth opportunities for children, including to increase relational bonds between parents/carers and children.

### 12.4.2 Objectives

Client support and case management responses may vary in resource, cohort, intensity and level of engagement. The principles that underpin responses will remain the same and include:

- intervening earlier to prevent housing breakdowns
- client focused practice which considers the trauma a client has experienced
- flexible and tailored responses
- targeted and specialist support.

### 12.4.3 Activities and guidelines

Homelessness activity	Program guidelines or guidance
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	<a href="#">Homelessness Accommodation Options for Families guidance</a>
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	<a href="#">A Place to Call Home guidance</a>
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	<a href="#">Enhanced Housing Pathways Guidelines</a> <a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/enhanced-housing-pathways-guidelines">https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/enhanced-housing-pathways-guidelines</a>
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	<a href="#">Case management in transitional housing</a>
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	Creating Connections Education Pathways (not available at time of publication)
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	Drug courts (not available at time of publication)
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	Intensive case management (not available at time of publication)

<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	<a href="#">Support for people residing in transitional housing properties guidance</a>
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	<a href="#">Support for Young People Who Really Count guidance</a>
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	<a href="#">Supporting Young Parents guidance</a>
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	<a href="#">Dual Diagnosis Youth Homelessness program guidance</a>
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	Young people life skills (not available at time of publication)
<b>20082 – Case Management and THM Support</b>	<a href="#">Young people leaving care guidance</a>
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	Melbourne Street to Home (not available at time of publication)
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	<a href="#">Family Reconciliation and Mediation Program guidance</a>
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	Creating Connections Education, Employment and Training (not available at time of publication)
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	Families at risk of Homelessness (not available at time of publication)
<b>20082 – Case management and THM support</b>	Better Health and Housing (not available at time of publication)
<b>94846- Aboriginal client support</b>	Aboriginal Client Support Initial Assessment at Entry Point (not available at time of publication)
<b>94846- Aboriginal client support</b>	Aboriginal Corrections Housing Pathways Initiative (not available at time of publication)
<b>94841- Support for People Sleeping Rough</b>	<a href="#">RSAP Supportive housing guidelines</a> <a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/supportive-housing-guidelines">https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/supportive-housing-guidelines</a>
<b>94841- Support for People Sleeping Rough</b>	<a href="#">RSAP Assertive outreach guidelines</a> <a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/assertive-outreach-guidelines">https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/assertive-outreach-guidelines</a>
<b>94841- Support for People Sleeping Rough</b>	Homes First program (not available at time of publication)

## **12.5 Staffed accommodation**

### **12.5.1 Purpose**

The homelessness staffed accommodation response provides crisis and medium to long-term supported accommodation.

Staffed homelessness accommodation includes 24/7 access to accommodation. These services have differing hours of case management support dependent on service type and funding. This includes upkeep and maintenance of facilities. Support includes trauma-informed and client-centred practices. This approach recognises the need for tailored, strengths-based strategies to help individuals build independence.

Some staffed accommodation receive contributions to facility re-establishment included in the funding model (under the same activity).

#### **Youth refuges**

Youth refuges provide temporary crisis and accommodation for people aged 16-24 (inclusive). Refuges support their social, emotional, and practical needs.

#### **Youth foyers**

Youth foyer models provide extended housing and support are for young people aged 16 to 24 (inclusive) years. Programs are for up to two years, with an emphasis on employment, education and training.

#### **Congregate supportive housing**

Congregate supportive housing (sometimes referred to as Common Ground programs) combines permanent, affordable housing with flexible support services on-site. The services focus on creating paths to independent living. They help develop life skills and provide renter-led support based on individual needs. It targets people experiencing chronic homelessness with high needs. It includes people on low incomes with mental health, drug and alcohol and other concerns. These issues restrict their ability to access secure housing and necessary support or treatment.

#### **Congregate crisis accommodation**

Congregate crisis accommodation provides short-term accommodation for people who have nowhere to live, may be sleeping rough or need immediate access to housing. It is a pathway to long-term housing.

Congregate crisis accommodation connects people to services to stabilise and improve their health and wellbeing. It also addresses issues that prevent independent living.

There are a range of congregate crisis accommodation models across Victoria, including three crisis accommodation centres which are funded to provide a specific therapeutic response. They offer on-site support services like counselling, health care, material aid, and help with income and employment options.

### **12.5.2 Objectives**

Homelessness Staffed Accommodation responses aim to improve client engagement, integrated care and positive outcomes for people through:

- trauma-informed service delivery principles that offer choice, control and continuity of care to people seeking to create or rebuild a life, home and community that they value
- integrated services for individuals and families with complex needs who struggle with treatment or case plans or accessing conventional community-based settings
- improved connectedness to family, education, employment and community
- generating suitable longer-term housing options for individuals and families.

### 12.5.3 Activities and guidelines

Homelessness activity	Program guidelines or guidance
<b>94847 – Youth refuge</b>	<a href="#">Youth refuge guidance</a>
<b>94848 – Youth Foyer</b>	<a href="#">Education First Youth Foyers and Youth Foyer-like models guidance</a>
<b>20081 – Staffed crisis supported accommodation</b>	Therapeutic supported crisis accommodation (not available)
<b>94840</b>	<a href="#">Supportive housing program guidelines</a> <a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/homelessness-supportive-housing-guidelines">https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/homelessness-supportive-housing-guidelines</a>
<b>20081</b>	Better Health and Housing

## 12.6 Transitional housing and tenancy administration

### 12.6.1 Purpose

Transitional Housing and Tenancy Administration manages both THM (Homes Victoria owned and leased properties), and head leased properties managed by community housing providers.

The tenancy administration function includes both tenancy and property management. Here, properties are efficiently tenanted must meet the minimum standards set by the Residential Tenancy Regulations 2021.

Head leasing means housing providers lease properties from the private market under a service agreement with the department. Housing providers guarantee the bond and rental payments to the rental provider. Housing providers then sub-lease to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

In some circumstances Homes Victoria directly head lease properties and provides them to a housing provider on a delegation arrangement.

### 12.6.2 Objectives

Homelessness Transitional Housing and Tenancy Administration provides:

- efficient property management to keep all properties in the portfolio well-maintained
- tenancy support for people who need crisis and transitional accommodation
- support to assist people to maintain their tenancy and meet their obligations as a renter.

### 12.6.3 Activities and guidelines

Homelessness activity	Program guidelines or guidance
<b>94587- Tenancy administration crisis</b>	<a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/homelessness-services-guidelines-and-conditions-funding">Homelessness Guidelines and Conditions of Funding</a> <a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/homelessness-services-guidelines-and-conditions-funding">https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/homelessness-services-guidelines-and-conditions-funding</a>
<b>94588 - Tenancy administration transitional</b>	<a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/homelessness-services-guidelines-and-conditions-funding">Homelessness Guidelines and Conditions of Funding</a> <a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/homelessness-services-guidelines-and-conditions-funding">https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/homelessness-services-guidelines-and-conditions-funding</a>

## 12.7 Capital grants

### 12.7.1 Purpose

Capital grants help to build or improve accommodation to assist people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Funding is also available for other fixed and non-fixed assets to improve the quality and amenity of existing accommodation on private or government-owned land, including self-contained and relocatable accommodation. In most instances, capital grants are funded through a Deed of Agreement with Homes Victoria.

### 12.7.2 Objectives

The function of capital grants is to:

- increase the number of dwellings on private or government-owned land
- improve the amenity of existing homelessness accommodation through one-off funding for small upgrades to existing properties.

### 12.7.3 Activities and guidelines

Homelessness activity	Program guidelines or guidance
<b>94611 – Capital grants</b>	Kids Under Cover studio program (not available at time of publication)

## 12.8 Homelessness system enablers

### 12.8.1 Purpose

Homelessness system enablers provide system-wide and/or state-wide support. At times HV may invest in capacity building for time limited periods where new core skills are required in the sector.

They help improve consultation, planning, policy development, program and service linkages and coordination to community service organisations responding to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

### 12.8.2 Programs

Programs funded under this activity may provide:

- evidence-based advice to the department and community service organisations on addressing homelessness
- training and/or community education sessions
- forums and consultations
- discussion papers and/or newsletters
- systematic advocacy
- education and training on trauma's effects on individuals and families' immediate and long-term emotional and physical wellbeing
- an opportunity to improve the homelessness service system.

**Homelessness networks** include the Victorian Homelessness Indigenous Statewide Network (VISHN) and local area-based Homelessness Network. These networks allow all SHS to collaborate at the local or state-wide levels. Their goal is to improve the system and responses to people including children experiencing homelessness in their local and Aboriginal and culturally diverse communities.

**Homelessness peak bodies** work to improve consultation, planning, policy development, program and service links and coordination. They support community service organisations that respond to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

The Statewide Children's Resource Program Coordinators runs the **Statewide Children's Resource Program**. This program aims to improve the skills of homelessness practitioners working with children. The program provides resources, training, information and secondary consultation to homelessness practitioners.

### 12.8.3 Objectives

System capacity and enablers:

- improve consultation, planning, policy development
- program and service links and coordination to support funded homelessness responses
- improve the knowledge, skills and confidence of SHS to provide support.

## 12.8.4 Activities and guidelines

Homelessness activity	Program guidelines or guidance
<b>20084 – Homelessness system enablers</b>	<a href="#">Council to Homeless Persons</a>
<b>20084 – Homelessness system enablers</b>	Statewide Children’s Resource Program (not available at time of publication)
<b>20084 – Homelessness system enablers</b>	Statewide Homelessness Network Coordinators (not available at time of publication)
<b>20084 – Homelessness system enablers</b>	Statewide systems stewardship for Aboriginal services (not available at time of publication)
<b>20084 – Homelessness system enablers</b>	<a href="#">Victorian Indigenous State-wide Homelessness Network</a>
<b>20084 – Homelessness system enablers</b>	Project coordinators (not available at time of publication)
<b>20084 – Homelessness system enablers</b>	Peer education program (not available at time of publication)
<b>20084 – Homelessness system enablers</b>	<a href="#">Statewide Family Reconciliation Mediation Program guidance</a>
<b>20084 – Homelessness system enablers</b>	Journey to Social Inclusion (not available at time of publication)

## 12.9 Essential needs centres and mobile drop-in centres

### 12.9.1 Purpose and objectives

This program helps people with their mental wellbeing by offering support and community connection. This program receives funding to provide material aid and community connections activities that may include:

- meals programs
- access to showers
- care packages
- laundry facilities
- community activities
- information and referrals
- supports from allied services.

The program’s objectives are to:

- provide essential needs and mobile drop-in centres
- provide access to critical wellbeing supports
- improve economic, housing and health outcomes
- reduce social isolation for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

## 12.9.2 Activities and guidelines

Homelessness activity	Program guidelines or guidance
<b>20083 - Essential needs centre</b>	<a href="#">The essential needs centres and mobile drop-in centres guidance.</a>



## 13 Appendix 1 Overview of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM)

This overview provides a snapshot of the MARAM, to review the full MARAM and additional resources, refer to the MARAM website which is managed by Family Safety Victoria.

[MARAM website](https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-multi-agency-risk-assessment-and-management)

<https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-multi-agency-risk-assessment-and-management>

The **objectives** of MARAM are to:

- increase the safety of people experiencing family violence
- ensure the representation of a broad range of experiences across the spectrum of seriousness and presentations of risk, including for Aboriginal communities, diverse communities, children, and across varying family and relationship types
- keep perpetrators in view and hold them accountable for their actions and behaviours
- guide alignment with MARAM for use across a broader range of organisations and sectors who will have responsibilities to identify, assess and respond to family violence risk
- ensure consistent use of MARAM across these organisations and sectors.

There are three foundational elements of MARAM. These are:

- the 10 MARAM Framework **principles** that underpin practice across the service system
- four **pillars** to support organisations to align their policies, procedures, practice guidance and tools with MARAM
- the 10 **responsibilities** for practice that describe the roles and expectations of framework organisations.

MARAM creates a shared responsibility between prescribed services and sectors. This shared responsibility uses tools based on evidence-based risk factors. It also shares relevant information to reduce risk. This approach provides more options to keep victim survivors safe and perpetrators in view and accountable.

MARAM acknowledges children as victim survivors in their own right. MARAM provides specific evidence-based risk factors and tools to help identify and assess family violence risk to children.

MARAM works with the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS). These schemes let practitioners access a wide range of information to identify risk. The CISS allows a prescribed information sharing entity (ISE) to share information that promotes the wellbeing or safety of a child or a group of children. The FVISS enables authorised workers to collect, use and share relevant information about victim survivors, perpetrators, alleged perpetrators and other people involved in family violence.

**MARAM Framework requirements for each pillar**

Pillar	Framework requirements
Pillar 1: Shared understanding of family violence	<p>Demonstrate understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• family violence risk and impact</li> <li>• spectrum of family violence types</li> <li>• complexity of experiences in community (intersectionality)</li> <li>• use of the evidence-based risk factors to support determination of risk.</li> </ul>
Pillar 2: Consistent and collaborative practice	<p>Apply consistent, collaborative practice through use of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MARAM tools to screen, identify, assess, manage family violence risk</li> <li>• FVISS or other laws to share information</li> <li>• structured professional judgement</li> <li>• victim survivor self-assessed level of fear</li> <li>• evidence-based risk factors</li> <li>• information sharing and collaboration</li> <li>• own professional judgement.</li> </ul>
Pillar 3: Responsibilities for risk assessment and management	<p>Organisational leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand their organisation's responsibilities in family violence risk assessment and management</li> <li>• understand responsibilities that relate to the operation of the information sharing scheme</li> <li>• equip their workforce with the tools, resources and training to meet those responsibilities.</li> </ul>
Pillar 4: Systems, outcomes and continuous improvement	<p>Contribute to understanding of the evidence base by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establishing governance to oversee alignment</li> <li>• collecting consistent information about the evidence-based risk factors from use of the tools and client feedback</li> <li>• leading change management activities to promote continuous improvement.</li> </ul>

### MARAM practice responsibilities and levels of practice

Practice responsibility	Relevant practice levels
1. Respectful, sensitive and safe engagement	Identification, Intermediate, Comprehensive
2. Identification of family violence	Identification, Intermediate, Comprehensive
3. Intermediate risk assessment	Intermediate, Comprehensive
4. Intermediate risk management	Intermediate, Comprehensive
5. Seek consultation for comprehensive risk assessment, risk management and referrals	Identification, Intermediate, Comprehensive

Practice responsibility	Relevant practice levels
6. Contribute to information sharing with other services (FVISS and CISS)	Identification, Intermediate, Comprehensive
7. Comprehensive assessment	Comprehensive
8. Comprehensive risk management and safety planning	Comprehensive
9. Contribute to coordinated risk management	Identification, Intermediate, Comprehensive
10. Collaborate for ongoing risk assessment and management	Identification, Intermediate, Comprehensive

## The 10 MARAM Framework principles

To help achieve a shared understanding of family violence, there are 10 MARAM Framework principles to support each pillar and help guide Victoria's family violence system-wide response. The principles are:

1. Family violence involves a spectrum of seriousness of risk and presentations, and is unacceptable in any form, across any community or culture.
2. Professionals should work collaboratively to provide coordinated and effective risk assessment and management responses, including early intervention when family violence first occurs to avoid escalation into crisis and additional harm.
3. Professionals should be aware, in their risk assessment and management practice, of the drivers of family violence, predominantly gender inequality, which also intersect with other forms of structural inequality and discrimination.
4. The agency, dignity and intrinsic empowerment of victim survivors must be respected by partnering with them as active decision-making participants in risk assessment and management, including being supported to access and participate in justice processes that enable fair and just outcomes.
5. Family violence may have serious impacts on the current and future physical, spiritual, psychological, developmental and emotional safety and wellbeing of children who are directly or indirectly exposed to its effects, and should be recognised as victim survivors.
6. Services provided to child victim survivors should acknowledge their unique experiences, vulnerabilities and needs, including the effects of trauma and cumulative harm arising from family violence.
7. Services and responses provided to people from Aboriginal communities should be culturally responsive and safe, recognising Aboriginal understanding of family violence and rights to self-determination and self-management, and take account of their experiences of colonisation, systemic violence and discrimination, and recognise the ongoing and present-day impacts of historical events, policies and practices.
8. Services and responses provided to diverse communities and older people should be accessible, culturally responsive and safe, client-centred, inclusive and non-discriminatory.
9. Encourage perpetrators to acknowledge and take responsibility to end their violent, controlling and coercive behaviour, and service responses to perpetrators should be

collaborative and coordinated through a system-wide approach that collectively and systematically creates opportunities for perpetrator accountability.

10. Family violence used by adolescents is a distinct form of family violence and requires a different response to family violence used by adults because of their age and the possibility that they are also victim survivors of family violence.

## MARAM responsibilities

Responsibility	Requirements
<b>Responsibility 1 Respectful, sensitive and safe engagement</b>	Understands the nature and dynamics of family violence, facilitate an appropriate, accessible, culturally responsive environment for safe disclosure of information by service users, and to respond to disclosures sensitively. Recognises that any engagement of service users who may be a perpetrator must occur safely and not collude or respond to coercive behaviours.
<b>Responsibility 2 Identification of family violence</b>	Uses information gained through engagement with service users and other SHS (and in some cases, through use of screening tools to aid identification/or routine screening of all clients) to identify indicators of family violence risk and potentially affected family members. Understands when it might be safe to ask questions of clients who may be a perpetrator, to assist with identification.
<b>Responsibility 3 Intermediate risk assessment</b>	Competently and confidentially conducts intermediate risk assessment of adult and child victim survivors using Structured Professional Judgement and appropriate tools, including the Brief and Intermediate Assessment tools.  Where appropriate to the role and mandate of the organisation or service, and when safe to do so, competently and confidentially contributes to behaviour assessment through engagement with a perpetrator, including through use of the Perpetrator Behavioural Assessment, and contributes to keeping them in view and accountable for their actions and behaviours.
<b>Responsibility 4 Intermediate risk management</b>	Actively addresses immediate risk and safety concerns relating to adult and child victim survivors, and undertakes intermediate risk management, including safety planning.  If working directly with perpetrators, attempts intermediate risk management when safe to do so, including safety planning.
<b>Responsibility 5 Seek consultation for comprehensive risk assessment, risk management and referrals</b>	Seeks internal supervision and consults with family violence specialists to collaborate on risk assessments and make active referrals for comprehensive specialist responses if appropriate.
<b>Responsibility 6</b>	Proactively shares information relevant to the assessment and management of family violence risk and

<b>Contribute to information sharing with other services (as authorised by legislation)</b>	respond to requests to share information from other information sharing entities under the Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes.
<b>Responsibility 7 Comprehensive assessment</b>	<p>Trained to comprehensively assess the risks, needs and protective factors for adult and children victim survivors.</p> <p>Trained and equipped to undertake comprehensive risk and needs assessment to determine seriousness of risk of the perpetrator, tailored intervention and support options, and contribute to keeping them in view and accountable for their actions and behaviours. Has an understanding of situating their own roles and responsibilities in the broader system to enable mutually reinforcing interventions over time.</p>
<b>Responsibility 8 Comprehensive risk management and safety planning</b>	<p>Trained to undertake comprehensive risk management through development, monitoring and actioning of safety plans (including ongoing risk assessment), in partnership with the adult or child victim survivor and support agencies.</p> <p>Trained to undertake comprehensive risk management through development, monitoring and actioning of risk management plans (including information sharing); monitoring across the service system (including justice systems); and actions to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. This can be through formal and informal system accountability mechanisms that support perpetrators' personal accountability, to accept responsibility for their actions, and work at the behaviour change process.</p>
<b>Responsibility 9 Contribute to coordinated risk management</b>	Contributes to coordinated risk management, as part of integrated, multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approaches, contribute to coordinated risk management including information sharing, referrals, action planning, coordination of responses and collaborative action.
<b>Responsibility 10 Collaborate for ongoing risk assessment</b>	Plays an ongoing role in collaboratively monitoring, assessing and managing risk over time to identify changes in levels of risk and ensure risk management and safety plans are responsive to changed circumstances, including escalation. Ensures safety plans are enacted.

## 14 Appendix 2 Referrals across DFFH local areas

### First point of contact

At the first entry point a person seeks support from, the initial assessment and planning (IAP) worker must offer an initial assessment. This is regardless of whether the client has links to the local area. You must let the person know that other entry points may exist in areas where they want to live.

Clients should receive financial support for emergency accommodation at the first entry point they contact, regardless of the location.

### Client's local area

Clients have the option to contact an IAP worker in the local area they want services or wish to live. The person seeking support should make the decision. **Turn no person away due to geographical restrictions.**

If the person wishes to live outside the area covered by the entry point they accessed, the entry point must:

- undertake an assessment with the client, unless the client prefers to go to their chosen entry point for assessment
- make a warm referral to the entry point nominated by the client
- use the IAP e-referral tool on SHIP to provide a copy of the initial assessment to the client's chosen entry point
- keep in contact with the client until their entry point has resources available, such as interim response, housing or support
- tell the nominated entry point of any changes that may affect prioritising resources for the client.

### Information and consent for a referral

Always ask individuals and families how much detail to include in the referral. Also ask if there is anything they do not want shared. You need signed consent or acknowledgement of verbal consent about any information transferred between entry points. So the nominated entry point can prioritise the client, e-referrals must include:

- client details
- needs and risks
- housing support provided or planned
- support needed or arranged.

The client's nominated entry point must:

- contact the entry point to acknowledge they have received the referral
- contact the client to make an appointment
- place the client on the organisation's prioritisation list
- contact the client when a resource has become available.

SHS who don't use SHIP must add the e-referral function to the organisation's platform so workers can transfer information between local areas.

## Individuals and families receiving support outside their nominated local area

Clients receiving support outside their chosen local area, like if in crisis accommodation, will stay on their nominated local area's prioritisation list. They will stay there until they secure a resource or their support period ends, based on SHS criteria.

The entry point will inform the client that a referral to their chosen entry point does not guarantee access to housing and support in that area. It does mean they can have an initial assessment and their receiving entry point will contact them.

## 15 Appendix 3 Client safety in purchased accommodation

Flexible funds and HEF buy a range of private accommodation. This includes rooming houses and motels. SHS need to complete due diligence before using private accommodation providers.

Consumer Affairs Victoria and the relevant local government area authorities regulate prescribed accommodation, including those listed below.

SHS must raise concerns about building or facility safety with the local council that issued the occupancy permit.

If there is an issue with an accommodation provider that isn't resolved by reporting the breach to the local council that holds the permit, SHS should email Homes Victoria.

Under the Public Health and Wellbeing (Prescribed Accommodation) Regulations 2020, prescribed accommodation businesses include:

- hotels and motels
- hostels
- student dormitories
- holiday camps
- private rooming houses
- residential accommodation
- labour hire accommodation.

Public health risks can arise from shared use of facilities, high turnover of occupants and/or overcrowding. The aim of the regulations is to set standards to minimise such public health risks. Prescribed accommodation providers must meet hygiene, maintenance and other standards and requirements.

Homes Victoria Housing and Homelessness Support Branch [email](#)

HHS@homes.vic.gov.au

[Public health and wellbeing prescribed accommodation amendment regulations](#)

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/as-made/statutory-rules/public-health-and-wellbeing-prescribed-accommodation-amendment-regulations-0>

For further detail, please also refer to the [HEF program guidelines](#).

[HEF program guidelines](#).

<https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/housing-establishment-guidelines-hef>



## 16 Appendix 4 Program guidance

Homes Victoria are developing and implementing updated individual program. A schedule for the review of program guidelines can be found in the table below.

SHS should refer to the Homelessness and Housing Support webpage or the Funded Agency Channel for existing program guidelines. Reference this appendix for some programs that don't have individual guidelines yet. Appendix 4 is previous program guidance. New program guidelines will replace this guidance.

<a href="https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/">Funded Agency Channel</a>
<a href="https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/homelessness-operational-guidelines">Homelessness Program Guidelines</a>

### A Place to Call Home

A Place to Call Home (APTCH) was a commitment by the Australian Government to deliver 600 extra dwellings across Australia. The initiative started in 2008.

The aim of APTCH is to reduce homelessness in Australia and increase stability. The program works to provide secure housing and remove the need for households to move once their circumstances have stabilised.

#### Access for households

APTCH provides properties for families in need. This includes women and children experiencing family violence, Aboriginal families and families in housing crisis. Potentially any household in THM properties can transfer subject to stock management considerations. There is a cap by division for tenancies that can transfer under the APTCH arrangement.

#### Eligibility criteria

All households must be on an approved homelessness with support segment application. Families should also have or have quickly developed strong links to the local community. This includes children attending local schools or household members accessing specific health, training or work opportunities. For APTCH to succeed, support agencies must be able to keep working with families for up to 14 months. These agencies are best placed to nominate individuals and families eligible for APTCH properties.

### Transitional support

Transitional support provides assessment and referral and case managed support beyond crisis. This may include counselling, crisis resolution, personal care and life skills training. It also covers information and advocacy to help access appropriate long-term housing, and training and job opportunities. Provide transitional support regardless of an individuals' living situation. That may include rooming houses, transitional housing, squats or informal arrangements.

### Homeless persons support centres

Homeless persons support centres (HPSC) provide a range of supports to clients. Supports include meals, living skills, information, counselling, personal care, health

care, shower facilities and referrals. Services may also include providing facilities for other services or programs to offer support such as legal services and health care.

## Family Reconciliation and Mediation Program

Family Reconciliation and Mediation Program (FRMP) is an early intervention approach. It helps SHS work with young people to improve relationships with family. The program aims to enable a return home or to extended family where possible. FRMP provides a state-wide brokerage service to SHS. This is to buy family reconciliation and mediation services from private practitioners, group work and other local supports. It also includes a capacity building component to strengthen understanding and commitment to family reconciliation in homelessness services. This includes establishing and facilitating the family reconciliation network.

## Young People Leaving Care housing and support initiatives

Young People Leaving Care (YPLC) housing and support initiatives in each department division and Aboriginal-specific responses form part of the Regional Leaving Care Alliance response in each division. These initiatives help young people develop living skills and connections to move towards independent living.

## Youth refuge

The department divisions give extra resources, supplementing existing refuge funding. This is to improve the crisis response for young people to prevent them transitioning to adult homelessness. Refuges offer brokerage funds for short-term housing, specialist case management and access to family reconciliation programs.

## Support for Young People That Really Counts

This program helps young people to move from crisis accommodation or intensive support services to more independent housing. It provides extra levels of support, life skills training and a focus on participation in education, employment and training. Accommodation and services are tailored to each young person's needs based on their age, experience, culture, behaviour and self-identification. The support model is flexible for diverse groups, such as young people leaving care or young parents. The main features of the model are:

- a holistic, flexible approach to each young person, linking services and providing specialist support as needed, including a health response
- developing an ongoing relationship between a young person and the case or support worker
- planned pathways and linking a young person to employment, education and training
- providing life skills development opportunities
- a safe environment linked to after-hours support
- providing a 'moving on' strategy and ongoing or follow-up support
- communal facilities and opportunities for training or other activities for local community and project stakeholders
- on-site support.

## Supporting Young Parents program

This program delivers a high level of support to young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness who are pregnant or parenting. The program runs over six months. It connects young parents to relevant health and welfare services. It provides parenting and living skills, and connects to education, employment and training opportunities. The program also promotes social inclusion and access to stable housing.

## Homelessness Youth Dual Diagnosis Initiative

The Homelessness Youth Dual Diagnosis Initiative (HYDDI) works with the youth homelessness sector in Victoria. Nine specialist dual diagnosis clinicians offer direct treatment and referrals for young people with mental health and/or substance use issues. HYDDI clinicians also provide service workers secondary with consultations and capacity building training.

## Foyer models and support for young people

These models focus on supporting young people by providing:

- secure housing
- personal support services
- reconnection to learning
- skills development
- work experience
- access to jobs.

Youth Foyer models need a cross-government and cross-sector response.

## Step Ahead

Step Ahead started as a demonstration project through Youth Homelessness Action Plan 1. It provides a Foyer-like response to help young people aged 16 to 25 years to transition to greater independence. It provides an integrated package of accommodation, living skills casework and access to employment, education and training opportunities. Support connects them to a range of other services.

## Youth Private Rental Brokerage program

The Youth Private Rental programs have two broad key aims. The first is to help young people become independent beyond the homelessness service system. This includes using brokerage funds to secure sustainable tenancy in the private rental market.

The second aim is to develop relationships and advocate for young people with private housing providers. The goal is to reduce barriers and strengthen pathways to the private rental market.

## Private Rental Brokerage Service

Private Rental Brokerage Service (PRBS) assists rooming house residents and those at risk of entering rooming houses establish sustainable tenancies in the private rental market. This initiative targets singles, couples and families.

Housing Establishment Funds are not always available for all families. PRBS aims to support them to access private rental accommodation.

Brokerage can be used to:

- purchase household expenses including utility bills and connection, furniture, repairs to whitegoods or removalists
- alleviate debt
- support to secure longer-term private rental
- purchase accommodation including private rental in advance, private rental arrears and private rental bonds.

## Accommodation Options for Families

The Accommodation Options for Families program (AOF) offers interim support and a range of short to medium-term accommodation to families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The aim is to reduce the need for substandard and unregistered rooming houses.

### Additional Support for Families

Additional Support for Families (ASF) provides support of up to 14 months to families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The aim is to establish and maintain long-term secure housing and to reduce the need to use substandard and unregistered rooming houses.

The AOF and ASF are delivered as a single program for greater efficiency. The program has two distinct service responses: AOF and PRBS.

AOF aims to reduce how many families live in unregistered rooming house accommodation or at risk of entering rooming house accommodation. AOF assists families to find secure longer-term support and more appropriate housing options. This includes public housing, social housing and private rental accommodation. The program is generally managed by Transitional Housing Managers (THM) in partnership with support agencies. Families in unregistered rooming houses receive priority access to the program. The program also supports families at risk of accessing unregistered rooming house accommodation.

Support agencies, along with the THM, find a suitable family that is currently supported and has a homeless with support segment application. All households must meet criteria for homelessness with support segment application. These families tend to live in substandard rooming houses shut down by compliance activity. They may also be in inappropriate housing or at risk of moving into such substandard rooming houses.

## Recording and reporting requirements

Each funded organisation has an annual minimal target based on the amount funded. Agencies must complete requested data reports during a financial year.

## Aboriginal Tenancies at Risk (formally known as Indigenous Tenancies at Risk)

The department provides subsidised housing for low-income Victorians. This support is for those who can't access the private rental or ownership markets and meet the department's eligibility requirements.

The Aboriginal Tenants at Risk (ATAR) program uses an intensive case management and support service model. It assists Aboriginal people living in mainstream, public housing, community housing or Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) properties whose tenancies are at risk because of emerging issues such as financial difficulty, neighbourhood disputes, drug and alcohol and mental health issues.

Households receive help to stabilise their housing and keep their tenancies rather than leave the property or risk eviction. Support workers must act when a public housing tenancy is at risk.

Rent arrears is the major factor putting tenancies at risk. This initiative provides intensive individual support to tenancies identified as at risk and referrals from the department's housing offices. Support can also include other factors, like life skills. Where the issues relate to non-housing programs, make referrals to those programs. ATAR workers must take part in the VISHN meetings, held three or four times a year.

### Flexible brokerage

Primary uses of flexible brokerage funding include:

- household expenses, such as electricity, gas and water bills, repairs to whitegoods
- counselling services, drug and alcohol counselling, grief and loss counsellors, dealing with stress
- life skills such as financial services, cooking courses, cleaning skills
- recreation activities, sporting and fitness activities, dancing classes, gym membership, joining community groups, culture events, children's holiday clubs, camps and after school activities
- education and training, extended learning, language classes, literacy and numeracy, job coaching
- material aid, such as food, travel and clothing expenses
- medical, doctors, dentists, optometrists, podiatrists
- pharmaceutical requirements, glasses, prescriptions where indicated for use by GP
- therapeutic intervention, family counselling, parenting skill courses, anger management and speech therapy.

### Reporting the ITAR brokerage funding

Record and report ITAR brokerage funding spending in SHIP. Generate a report at the end of each financial year. Flexible brokerage expenditure should not duplicate HEF.

The primary uses of HEF are to access or maintain housing by the following:

- private rental bonds
- private rental in advance
- private rental arrears.

You may use also HEF for the following:

- overnight emergency accommodation where there is no acceptable alternative option
- storage costs
- removal expenses
- essential furniture where it's a prerequisite to housing the applicant and there is no acceptable alternative
- bedding
- refrigerators
- health items.

Funding is subject to the delivery of specified targets in performance measures. If actual performance is less than 100 percent of target performance, the funded organisation must justify to the department why it should keep full funding. Funding depends on monthly data from the Service Delivery Tracking Initiative and monthly reporting through the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) to the department and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

## Initial assessment and planning

Initial assessment and planning take place at entry point services and some specialist services that help complex groups. Initial assessment, referral and response comprises the following steps.

### Step 1. Screening

Screening determines whether people seeking support are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

### Step 2. Initial assessment

Initial assessment determines:

- the most immediate homelessness related needs and risks
- options for safe housing for the night
- basic needs for food, hygiene, transport
- indications of need for specialist support
- risks to individuals and families' safety or to the safety of others.

### Step 3. Response

Develop a plan to access services as required. This involves planning, matching resources to client need, active referral to appropriate housing, support and material aid services and, if required, direct service delivery.

Direct service delivery typically includes:

- emergency short-term accommodation, with appropriate access to food, clothing and personal hygiene
- support to secure and/or maintain crisis and transitional accommodation
- support to secure and/or maintain private rental accommodation
- support with applications for priority access to public housing
- support to secure community-managed housing
- financial support for housing-related needs
- support with legal issues
- housing advice and information
- advocacy or liaison
- support with exit planning
- monitoring while the client is waiting for other services
- safety planning
- emotional support.

### Step 4. Determining appropriate housing options

An appropriate housing response will depend on the options available. Factors include:

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- Initial assessment to determine whether private rental or other private housing options are suitable.
- For individuals and families who can access suitable housing options, provide advice and support. This may include referrals to other housing providers, support providers or financial support.
- If private housing is unavailable or unsuitable, check eligibility for transitional housing.
- When a suitable transitional vacancy is available, make a referral for transitional housing.
- If there are no suitable vacancies, make every effort to access alternative short-term accommodation. Examples include staying with friends or relatives, crisis accommodation, private hotels or motels, rooming house or caravan park accommodation where appropriate and safe.

Homelessness services will stay in contact with individuals and families placed in these settings until they secure appropriate housing and/or support options. Local access protocols outline how to place a single vacancy among many applicants. These protocols also help find alternative arrangements for those waiting for a suitable vacancy. Make decisions on vacancy allocations together. All involved services and workers should agree to ensure a coordinated response.