

FAMILY VIOLENCE FORUM EXPLORES INFORMATION SHARING TO HELP KEEP WOMEN AND CHILDREN SAFE

On 19 April 2018, the Central Highlands Integrated Family Violence Committee (CHIFVC) welcomed 70 professionals from a range of sectors working with people impacted by family violence to its Community of Practice forum, *Information Sharing: From Concept to Practice*.

The forum was an important opportunity for practitioners from across family violence specialist services, health, education, justice and community sectors to consider the application of new Victorian legislation, and explore practice in when and what information to share across agencies.

Dr Anita Morris, Family Violence Principal Practitioner at the Department of Health and Human Services, facilitated discussion on the day and shared her insights as one of Victoria's leading practitioners in this field.



“The impact of family violence is felt across all sectors and the evidence supports a focus on multi-sector, interagency, coordinated approaches”, she said. Dr Morris also gave a strong message about the importance of child safeguarding. “We need to promote children’s resilience, hear the child’s voice, and encourage others to do so”.

A focus on information sharing emerged from the 2015 *Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence* which led to changes to legislation to enable information about victims, children, perpetrators or a third party to be shared between prescribed agencies for the purposes of family violence risk assessment and risk management. An overview of the scheme was provided to forum participants by representatives of Family Safety Victoria.



This was followed by a panel discussion involving practitioners and table group discussions working through a case study. Areas explored in discussions included better practice in gaining consent where appropriate, and consideration of ‘relevance’ of information. Discussions also included reflection on unintended consequences, and the importance of maintaining trust in relationships particularly when working with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Libby Jewson, Executive Director of WRISC Family Violence Support and Chair of the CHIFVC Working Group that led the forum, said that it was a complex area of reform that was essential for increasing the safety of women and children experiencing family violence.

“This is the start of a conversation that we need to continue throughout this year as new arrangements are implemented for information sharing. We need to continue to reflect on good practice in this area more broadly, and tackle questions that come up for practitioners on the ground”, she said.

Feedback from the day was overwhelmingly positive with nearly 100% of participants indicating that the forum met or exceeded their expectations and that they would recommend a future CHIFVC event to a colleague.



The next Community of Practice is scheduled for 19 July 2018 in Bacchus Marsh.

Visit the [CHIFVC news page](#) for updates about events or email info@chifvc.org.au to be added to the mailing list.

Copies of presentations from the 19 April forum are also available from the [CHIFVC news page](#).

The CHIFVC would like to thank members of the Working Group for their input to the development of the forum, and all presenters on the day as follows:

- Angela Heard, Badimia traditional owner from the Yamatji group of nations in WA, who provided the Acknowledgement of Country
- Libby Jewson, Deputy Chair of CHIFVC and Chair of the Practice Change and Innovation Working Group
- Dr Anita Morris, Family Violence Principal Practitioner, Department of Health and Human Services
- Sutapa Howlader, Family Safety Victoria, Family Violence Policy and Programs Team
- Ben Kite, Family Safety Victoria, Risk Management and Information Sharing Unit
- Ashley Egan, Family Violence Project Manager, Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative
- Marg Murphy, Risk Assessment Management Panel (RAMP) coordinator, Berry Street Western



The Central Highlands Integrated Family Violence Committee acknowledges the traditional owners of the land we meet and work on and pays respects to elders past, present and emerging