

Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS)

This document is based on information contained in the Victorian Government website:

www.vic.gov.au/child-information-sharing-scheme

What is the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS)?

The CISS allows workers in prescribed organisations, called an Information Sharing Entity (ISE) to share information with other ISEs to support child wellbeing and/or safety. Community Housing Organisations are an ISE.

The list of authorised organisations and services, the ISEs, can be found [here](#).

Why is the CISS important?

Prior to the CISS being introduced, workers were limited by privacy laws about what information they could share, even if they were worried about the child's wellbeing or safety.

Maintaining a person's privacy is important, but at times these barriers prevented organisations working together and more importantly, sometimes prevented workers from sharing information that may have helped improve children's wellbeing and keep children safe.

Under the CISS, if workers have concerns about a child's wellbeing or safety, they are legally able to share their concerns with another ISE, without breaching the Privacy Legislation.

More importantly CISS helps professionals working with children gain a complete view of the children they work with, making it easier to identify wellbeing or safety needs earlier, and to act on them sooner.

Can I share everything I know about the young person or their parents/guardians?

No. CISS only allows you to share information that is required to improve a child's wellbeing and or keep the child/ren safe.

Are all children covered by CISS?

Yes, all Victorian children aged between 0 – 18 are covered by CISS. This means if you have any concerns about the wellbeing or safety of children living in a family tenancy you support, you are legally able to discuss your concerns with another ISE.

Am I required to have consent before sharing information?

If the threshold for sharing has been met under CISS, CHOs do not require consent from any person to share relevant information with other ISEs. However, CHOs should seek and take into account the views of children and family members about information sharing if appropriate, safe and reasonable to do so.

Communicating clearly and openly with children and families about information sharing, including the purpose and likely benefits of sharing, can promote positive engagement with services, draw out additional considerations and enable professionals to form a more holistic view of a child's circumstances and needs.

Note: Refer to advice on FVISS and MARAM if family violence is present and sharing information about a perpetrator, alleged perpetrator or victim survivor.

Do I *have* to talk to anyone if I have any concerns?

CISS is not a mandatory reporting system, however the new legislation promotes early support and intervention through enabling workers at all levels of the organisation to observe any wellbeing issues or concerns and act on these concerns. This might mean talking to the parent or guardian (if you think it is safe, appropriate and reasonable to do so) and/or talking to another ISE.

To report concerns that are life threatening, contact Victoria Police.

To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child contact Child Protection.

As a housing worker is this really part of my role?

You are *not* required to be a social worker or a child services worker or a family violence worker. It is not your role to fix the situation or make the violence or potential harm stop.

It is your role to notice any wellbeing concerns or potentially harm to a child or children and to talk to someone about this. This might mean talking to a parent or guardian (if it's safe to do so) or talking to another ISE.



CISS enables you to share the unique information you have about a child and family with other organisations working to support children and families, so professionals across services can collaborate, coordinate, and integrate service delivery, in the best interests of the child.

How do I have these discussions?

Your role is to listen, if appropriate, and provide information about other services and supports.

When you are speaking to a parent/guardian, if it's safe, appropriate and reasonable to do so, reassure them that talking to another professional agency can provide them with extra support, so they do not have to manage everything on their own.

You will also need to tell the person you're speaking with about the new information sharing guidelines. This means explaining the laws have changed, and information can now be shared across agencies to improve children's wellbeing and safety and assist agencies work together.

Tell the parent/guardian as much as you can about what agency you have already spoken with or plan to speak to.

You can find more information here on how to have these conversations.

www.vic.gov.au/tips-conversation-child-and-or-their-parent-about-information-sharing

Should I let parent/guardian know?

Children and their families are often well-placed to understand their needs and risks. Supporting parents and guardians to be part of the solution, to make decisions to improve the wellbeing of their children and or keep their family safe, helps parents/guardians feel they are not alone in these choices and shows them there are options for support.

For more information on Child Information Sharing for families, carers, children and young people, please go here: [Child Information Sharing | Victorian Government \(www.vic.gov.au\)](http://www.vic.gov.au/Child-Information-Sharing-Victorian-Government)

Do I have to keep a record of any information sharing discussions?

Yes, record keeping requirements apply when using CISS to share information either verbally or in writing. You must keep a record of a request to share information and any information you have provided.

Before you share information, check the organisation is an ISE. You can check the ISE list here www.vic.gov.au/ise/list



Your organisation will have its own record keeping system so if you are unsure, talk to your manager. You can also get some helpful tips here www.vic.gov.au/tips-information-sharing-record-keeping

Further information

Child Information Sharing Scheme: www.vic.gov.au/child-information-sharing-scheme

How sharing can make a difference: Click here to see videos, including Liana Buchanan, Commissioner for Children and Young People, discussing the importance of sharing information. www.vic.gov.au/child-information-sharing-scheme#how-sharing-can-make-a-difference

Information sharing guides, templates and tools are available here: www.vic.gov.au/guides-templates-tools-for-information-sharing

Information Sharing Entity list: www.vic.gov.au/ise/list

For information on training options click here: www.vic.gov.au/training-for-information-sharing-and-maram

Frequently asked questions on the Information Sharing Schemes: www.vic.gov.au/frequently-asked-questions-about-information-sharing-and-maram

Further assistance

Should you have any questions or comments in relation to the information in this resource please email leadingpractice@chiavvic.com.au.

This resource will be periodically reviewed and continually updated based on sector feedback.

