

Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS)

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

www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-information-sharing-scheme

What is the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS)?

The FVISS allows workers in authorised organisations, called an Information Sharing Entity (ISE) to share information with other ISEs to assess or manage family violence risk. Community Housing Organisations are considered an ISE.

ISEs are organisations and services that provide services and support to victim survivors and perpetrators in response to family violence, including both specialist and universal services.

Under the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme some ISEs are also prescribed as Risk Assessment Entities (RAEs). RAEs are indicated in the sections below with (RAE).

FVISS has been legislated under Part 5A of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (FVPA).

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

Why is the FVISS important?

Prior to the FVISS being introduced, workers were limited by privacy laws about what they could say to other organisations, to support effective assessment and management of family violence risk to:

- Keep victims safe
- Hold perpetrators to account.

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

Under the FVISS, if workers have concerns about any family violence related harm, they are legally able to share their concerns including the name of the alleged perpetrator with another ISE, without breaching the Privacy Act.

Do I have to get consent before I share information?

Consent is required:

- From the adult victim survivor prior to sharing their information unless there is a serious threat, or the information relates to assessing or managing a risk to a child victim survivor.
- From the third party prior to sharing their information unless there is a serious threat, or the information relates to assessing or managing a risk to a child victim survivor.

When consent is not required:

- From any person if their information is relevant to assessing or managing risk of family violence to a child victim survivor. If appropriate, safe and reasonable to do so, information sharing entities should obtain the views of the child, and/or other family members at risk of family violence, or a relevant third party, prior to sharing their information.
- From the perpetrator prior to sharing their information to assess or manage risk of committing family violence.
- From the alleged perpetrator prior to sharing their information to establish or assess risk of committing family violence.

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

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

It *is* your role to notice any signs of family violence and talk to someone about this. This might mean talking to the victim survivor (if it's safe to do so) or talking to another ISE.

Housing workers are in a unique position to talk safely to victim survivors of family violence. You are often in regular contact with your tenants and do regular home visits. You may have known the families for many years and over time will have built up a trusting relationship.

Who in my organisation is allowed to share information?

Each organisation makes their own decision about who can share information.

Sometimes this might be part of your role as a housing worker. For example, as part of working with a tenant they disclose they are in a family violence situation.



For more formal requests (for example from a court) your organisation might require more senior staff to respond.

Check with your organisation to see who can share information under the Information Sharing Schemes and if you are unsure, always speak to your manager first.

Can I share everything I know?

No. The FVISS only allows you to share information that is relevant to assessing and managing family violence risk. In determining what information is relevant, you should use their professional judgement and refer to the MARAM [Framework](https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources) <<https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources>

The relevant information might include the name of the alleged perpetrator and observations about possible family violence.

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

The FVISS is not a mandatory reporting system, however the new legislation does require workers at all levels of the organisation to observe any family violence concerns and act on these concerns. This might mean talking to the victim survivor (if you think it is safe 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.

How do I speak to victim survivors?

Your role is to listen and to provide advice about other services and supports.

When speaking to a victim survivor reassure them that talking to another professional agency can help keep them and their children safe and provide them with extra support. Remind them 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 help keep everyone safe and assist agencies work together.

Reassure them that the information will *not* be shared with the perpetrator.

Tell them 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

Why is it important to let the parent/guardian (who is not the perpetrator) know what is happening?

Victim survivors of family violence have often been controlled by the perpetrator and prevented from being involved in decisions or making their own choices.

Supporting victim survivors to feel part of the solution, to feel they can make decisions to keep their family safe and to feel they are not alone in these choices is one of the most important things you can do when working with victim survivors of family violence.

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

Yes. 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

- Information on the FVISS: www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-information-sharing-scheme
- Information sharing schemes FAQ: www.vic.gov.au/frequently-asked-questions-about-information-sharing-and-maram
- Information sharing guides, templates and tools: www.vic.gov.au/guides-templates-tools-for-information-sharing
- Information Sharing Entity (ISE) 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@chiavic.com.au.

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

