

Information Sharing Frequently Asked Questions Resource

For Victorian Primary Health Care (PHC) Nurses



The purpose of this resource is to build awareness and understanding of Victorian information sharing schemes to make the information accessible to nurses working in the primary healthcare setting; and to prepare and facilitate primary healthcare nurses and the healthcare team prescribed under the reforms to share and request information with Information Sharing Entities (ISE) confidently. Further [Victorian Government resources](#) are available on information sharing and Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM)^{1,2}.

The resource focuses predominantly on child information sharing reform requirements.

The information is ideally read in conjunction with knowledge of Nursing and Midwifery Board Australia [Professional Standards, Codes of Conduct, and Guidelines](#)³.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the Child Information Sharing Scheme?

A: The Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) enables authorised or prescribed organisations to share information to promote child wellbeing or safety⁴. This could mean an Information Sharing Entity (ISE) requesting information from your organisation, or your organisation requesting information be shared, or proactively sharing information with an ISE for child wellbeing and safety purposes. CISS is designed to promote the wellbeing and safety of children, improve early risk identification and intervention for children, increase collaboration and integration between services working with children and their families, and support children's participation in services. CISS can be used to promote the wellbeing or safety of children and young people in Victoria aged from 0-18.

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

A: The Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) enables authorised organisations or services (ISEs) to share information to assess or manage risk of family violence for adults or children in Victoria. MARAM is the best practice framework relating to FVISS⁵.

Q: What is MARAM?

A: The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) describes the responsibilities of various workforces in assessing and managing family violence risk. MARAM guides information sharing in either scheme where family violence is occurring^{6,7}.

Image 1 below describes the Victorian Government Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) and Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS).

Victorian Government

Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS)

Relates to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) to assess or manage family violence risk.

Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS)

Focuses on the broader wellbeing and safety of a child or children.
(CISS may also have regard to MARAM to assess or manage family violence risk to a child).

Q: Who needs to be aware of child information sharing?

A: Organisations prescribed or authorised under the reforms known as Information Sharing Entities are supported to share relevant information related to child wellbeing and safety. It is important that workforces working in ISEs are aware of the reforms to promote wellbeing and safety for children when using CISS, and to share information to assess or manage risk of family violence for adults or children related to FVISS. The rollout of the schemes occurred in 2 phases. Phase 1 commenced in September 2018, Phase 2 from April 2021. The tables below provide examples of some primary health care settings and when they were prescribed⁸.

Q: What is an Information Sharing Entity (ISE)

A: Information Sharing Entities (ISEs) are organisations authorised under the Victorian Government reforms enacted to support child wellbeing and safety, or to assess or manage risk of family violence for adults or children. These workforces include general practice organisations, maternal child health services or education services. GPs, general practice nurses, community health and school nurses employed in these organisations are included in the ISEs prescribed. ISEs are mandated to respond to information sharing requests. It is anticipated that professional judgement will be exercised in information provided and in determining whether it is safe, reasonable and appropriate to provide information. More information about ISEs including the list of organisations and services can be found [here](#)⁹. Examples of prescribed primary health care organisations are provided in the table below.

Q: As a Victorian nurse working in primary health care: Why do I need to know about child information sharing?

A: The information sharing reforms came about as a result of the issues and gaps identified by a number of inquests

and Royal Commissions including the [Royal Commission into Family Violence](#)¹⁰.

As primary health care nurses working in authorised organisations or ISEs, and as health professionals familiar with our professional Standards and other regulation such as privacy requirements, it is important that we are aware of the information sharing scheme reforms to meet our professional obligations, and to contribute to wellbeing and safety of children. Familiarising ourselves with CISS and FVISS reforms supports compliance with the Schemes. Ministerial Guidelines are made under section 41ZA of the [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005](#) and see legislation <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/childwellbeing-and-safety-act-2005/03>^{11,12}.

Many education and health provider services or organisations were prescribed under the scheme in April 2021 during the COVID-19 Vaccine rollout. As a result, these health and education service provider organisations may not yet be aware of, or are recently becoming familiar with CISS (or FVISS) reforms. Other organisations or services such as maternal child health, alcohol and other drug (AOD) services were prescribed in 2018 and nurses in these workforces may be more familiar with the schemes¹³.

The reforms provide opportunities to work collaboratively to support wellbeing and safety, and for:

- Improving earlier identification and enabling earlier support and engagement with relevant services
- Supporting a collaborative, coordinated and integrated approach to service delivery across the service sector
- Empowering professionals to make informed decisions about the needs of the children and families in their care
- Promoting a shared responsibility for wellbeing, safety and identifying and responding to family violence across the service sector.

Image 2 below describes Information Sharing Entities (ISEs), prescribing phases and workforce examples.

Information Sharing Entities (ISEs) are prescribed or authorised organisations enabled to share information with each other to promote wellbeing and safety of a child or children for CISS and to assess or manage risk of family violence for adults or children related to FVISS

27 September 2018 - Phase One Reforms included organisations with workforces from:

Maternal and Child Health services, The Orange Door, Specialist family violence services, Sexual assault services, Mental health services, Alcohol and other drugs services.

19 April 2021 - Phase Two Reforms included organisations with workforces from:

General practice organisations: incorporating GPs and Primary Health Care Nurses (PHCs); and schools including school nurses; Community health services including community health nurses; Long day care; Kindergartens; before and after school care.

Q: What action does my organisation need to undertake?

A: Organisations and settings including those employing primary health care nurses working in the general practice setting; school and community health nurses are now prescribed under the information sharing and **MARAM** reforms and have obligations to respond to information sharing enquiries from **Information Sharing Entities** (ISEs) under CISS and FVISS. PHC nurses may wish to discuss information sharing with their health setting teams to clarify their organisation’s policies and procedures for responding to information sharing requests. It is important for organisations and workforces prescribed under information sharing reforms to familiarise themselves with CISS and FVISS requirements to determine how their teams will respond on behalf of the organisation¹⁴. Activities to share with the team for consideration:

- Become informed, undertake information sharing training <https://training.infosharing.vic.gov.au>
- Plan your organisational approach to information sharing in collaboration with the health care team
- Identify what wellbeing looks like for your setting
- Clarify your understanding of organisations that are **Information Sharing Entities** (ISEs)
- Develop or update information sharing policies and procedures in collaboration with your team
- Ensure your organisation is aware of roles and responsibilities for information sharing
- Be aware of how to request or respond to a request, or proactively share information with appropriate organisations to promote child wellbeing and safety or to assess or manage family violence.

Q: When did the Child Information Sharing Scheme start?

A: Certain settings were prescribed as part of Phase 1 in September 2018, so maternal child health and alcohol and other drug service nurses may be more familiar with information sharing requirements than those workforces in organisations prescribed later. Phase 2 occurred in April 2021. Specific settings in primary health care services were included in information sharing including: general practice, community health centres and schools¹⁵.

Q: What are the key considerations for my organisation?

A: Prescribed organisations or ISEs, including PHC nurses and their health care or education setting teams are encouraged to familiarise themselves with their organisation’s policies and procedures for using CISS. ISEs are responsible for ensuring that their organisational policies and practices are consistent with the CISS Ministerial Guidelines. Some considerations for prescribed PHC settings are included in the table below.

It is important that organisations check that any information sharing enquiry is appropriate and comes from an ISE. PHC nurses and healthcare teams may wish to discuss opportunities for requesting information and proactively sharing information to facilitate care provided for children related to their wellbeing and safety.

Consider undertaking the Victorian Government online learning course <https://training.infosharing.vic.gov.au> to build understanding and confidence about information sharing¹⁷.

Table 1 below outlines actions for your organisation to consider. The table has been adapted from the Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association (APNA), Nurse Clinic Building Block planning framework.

Preparing for Information sharing	Actions for consideration for your ISE setting
Develop a Clear Plan for information sharing practices	Collaborate with your team to develop your information sharing plan. Determine your organisation’s information sharing goals.
Engagement	Engage the team to ensure everyone is on the same page for information sharing. Develop an agreed understanding of what child wellbeing looks like for your setting. Identify information sharing roles and responsibilities. Continue to develop respectful relationships with patients or clients related to information sharing. Provide support, resources and referral as appropriate.
Supporting Systems and Processes	Develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agreed processes for documenting information sharing • processes to clarify how information requests will be verified as being from ISEs. • guidance for determining what information is appropriate to share or request

Preparing for Information sharing	Actions for consideration for your ISE setting
Best Practice Care	<p>Use evidence based care and guidelines for information sharing.</p> <p>Ensure information sharing policies and procedures are in place.</p> <p>Develop templates and formats for information sharing responses and enquiries.</p> <p>Build team awareness of excluded information and of information that may be proactively shared with ISEs where information sharing criteria is met.</p> <p>Undertake recommended training https://training.infosharing.vic.gov.au</p>
Location and facilities	<p>Ensure patient privacy for information sharing conversations.</p> <p>Where appropriate and safe, keep patients/clients informed.</p> <p>Consent is not required when sharing information under CISS. However, ISEs should seek and take into account the views of children and family members about information sharing if appropriate, safe and reasonable to do so.</p>
Funding/Financial considerations	<p>Schedule protected time for developing information sharing processes.</p> <p>Ensure your organisation meets requirements for responding to or making an information sharing request</p>
Staffing and HR	<p>Clarify information sharing roles and responsibilities for information sharing response or request processes.</p> <p>Clarify understanding of ISEs with the team.</p>
Evaluation and Improvement	<p>Be clear about what it is your organisation is setting out to achieve, how your organisation is supporting child wellbeing and safety and how will you measure whether your workplace is effectively sharing information¹⁶.</p>

Q: Who will contact our organisation requesting information?

A: Information sharing is enabled between authorised Information Sharing Entities (ISEs) under CISS and/or FVISS. If you are responding to a request for information on behalf of your authorised organisation, check to ensure your organisation’s policies and procedures align with the requirements of the Scheme, including Ministerial Guidelines. The purpose of the information sharing reforms is to promote wellbeing and safety of children or for sharing relevant information between authorised organisations to assess or manage risk of family violence. Consent is not required when sharing information under CISS. It may be useful to consider whether gaining consent is appropriate and will support maintaining relationships as long as there is no risk to safety¹⁸.

Q: What information can be shared?

A: Individuals in ISEs can share proactively and request information under CISS using professional judgement, to promote a child or children’s wellbeing or safety. ISEs should respond to a request for information in a timely manner (including when a request is refused). ISEs (that could be you on behalf of your organisation) are

required to share all the information requested as long as it meets the thresholds for sharing. The reforms provide precedence to the wellbeing and safety of children over privacy requirements.

Under CISS, information sharing entities can share confidential information with other information sharing entities for the purpose of promoting the wellbeing or safety of a child or group of children. It is important to use professional judgement and understanding of CISS and to clarify that sharing the information could assist the receiving information sharing entity to:

- make a decision, assessment or plan
- start or conduct an investigation
- provide a service, and/or
- assess and manage any risk relating to a child or group of children¹⁹.

For more information check out the online training Register for training: <https://training.infosharing.vic.gov.au>

Or contact the enquiry line 1800 549 646 or CISandFVIS@education.vic.gov.au²⁰

Q: What is Excluded information?

A: “Excluded information” cannot be shared under CISS. It is information that may:

- Endanger a person’s life or result in physical injury – this includes the child, their family or any other person
- Prejudice the investigation of a breach or possible breach of the law or prejudice the enforcement
- Prejudice a coronial inquest or inquiry
- Prejudice the fair trial of a person or the impartial adjudication of a particular case
- Disclose legally privileged information
- Disclose the identity of a confidential source of information. For example, reveal the name of a person who has confidentially provided information to police
- Contravene a court order²¹.

ISEs are not required to conduct investigations to determine that information is not ‘excluded information.’

If in doubt about whether the requirements for sharing have been met, the responding/sharing ISE may seek further information from the recipient ISE about how the shared information is intended to be used.

Q: What are the benefits of child information sharing?

A: As health care professionals we are already sharing information to coordinate patient or client care. CISS and FVISS expand on the usual care we provide. Contributing to child information sharing:

- Aims to improve wellbeing and safety for children
- Improves earlier identification and enabling earlier support and engagement with relevant services
- Supports a collaborative, coordinated and integrated approach to service delivery across services
- Empowers professionals to make informed decisions about the needs of the children and families in their care
- Promotes a shared responsibility for wellbeing, safety and identifying and responding to family violence across services²².

Q: What about privacy and confidentiality?

A: The Health Records Act and existing regulatory obligations continue to apply, including mandatory reporting. The CISS and FVISS reforms complement existing privacy law and child safety reporting and information sharing obligations. CISS gives precedence to child wellbeing and safety over the right to privacy. This means that CISS makes certain modifications to the Information Privacy Principles and the Health Privacy Principles:

- ISEs are not obliged to collect personal or health information about an individual directly from that person when using CISS

- ISEs are not obliged to take reasonable steps to notify that person that their information has been collected when using CISS
- ISEs are not obliged to obtain consent before collecting information when using CISS

Outside of CISS, these principles and existing privacy law continues to apply.

Q: Is child information sharing the same as mandatory reporting?

A: The Child Information Sharing Scheme complements existing law. CISS and FVISS provide additional permission to share information. Existing obligations such as Mandatory Reporting still apply. CISS is designed to ensure that professionals working with children can gain a complete view of the children they work with or care for, making it easier to identify and act on wellbeing or safety needs earlier.

Q: What are organisational considerations?

A: Authorised organisations or ISEs are prescribed under the information sharing reforms and responsible for meeting obligations.

- Become informed, undertake training <https://training.infosharing.vic.gov.au>
- Plan your organisation’s approach to information sharing
- Clarify understanding of organisations that are information sharing entities (ISEs)
- Develop organisational policies and procedures for information sharing with your team
- Develop processes for documenting information sharing
- Ensure your organisation is aware of roles and responsibilities for information sharing
- Be aware of how to request or respond to a request, or proactively share information with appropriate organisations to promote child wellbeing and safety or to assess or manage family violence.
- Learn about what may be excluded information. Check information requested or provided meets the criteria and is not excluded information
- Develop agreed organisational information sharing documentation processes
- Always check the information sharing request is from an authorised ISE. Your organisation may require confirmation in writing to verify this and to confirm the information being requested by the ISE
- Document the requesting ISE, information requested and whether the information was provided or not provided.
- Consider the identity and circumstances of each child and their family, including their unique needs such as cultural safety and any risks of discrimination or stigma they may be facing²⁵.

Q: Who can share and request information under the Schemes?

A: Authorised organisations or ISEs, include services that work with children, young people, and families, such as Child Protection, Youth Justice, Maternal and Child Health, and Victoria Police. General practice nurses, GPs, community health and schools have been prescribed under CISS since April 2021²⁶.

Q: Who can information be shared with?

A: Organisations or services that has been prescribed in legislation to request and share information under CISS and FVISS are supported to share information.

Check for authorised organisations and services in the [ISE list](#).

Q: I'm not familiar with child information sharing: Where can I learn more?

A: Register for training: <https://training.infosharing.vic.gov.au>

Q: What resources are available?

Resources for primary health care nurses and health care teams:

- About the information sharing and MARAM reforms <https://www.vic.gov.au/about-information-sharing-schemes-and-risk-management-framework>
- Information Sharing Entity (ISE) List: <https://elearn.childlink.com.au/login/index.php>
- Online resources: infosharing.vic.gov.au
- CISS and FVISS Enquiry line 1800 549 646 or childinfosharing@education.vic.gov.au

- RACGP White Book 2022 <https://www.racgp.org.au/getattachment/4ab6102c-67d9-4440-9398-a3ae759164ef/Abuse-and-violence-Working-with-our-patients-in-general-practice.aspx>
- Toolkit intended for schools, education health and wellbeing: [Child protection privacy and information sharing \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/child-protection-privacy-and-information-sharing)
- An introduction to family violence awareness for nurses who work in primary health care <https://www.apna.asn.au/product/detail/f9d727e5-768f-ec11-80e2-005056be66b1>
- Safer Families <https://www.saferfamilies.org.au/about-us>
- Mandatory reporting- Children youth and families - Who is mandated to report in Victoria? <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/mandatory-reporting>
- Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence (SHRFV) Tool Kit - hospital based resources <https://www.thewomens.org.au/health-professionals/clinical-resources/strengthening-hospitals-response-to-family-violence>
- Child protection <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts> out of hours contact 13 12 78
- APNA Improving Child Safety and Wellbeing and Family Violence Outcomes Project Team or Nurse Support Ph 1300 303 184

Q: Who do I contact to ask questions about Information sharing?

- Online resources: infosharing.vic.gov.au
- Enquiry line 1800 549 646 or CISandFVIS@education.vic.gov.au
- APNA Improving Child Safety and Wellbeing and Family Violence Outcomes Project Team or Nurse Support Ph 1300 303 184²⁸.

Table 2 below provides a brief explanation of information sharing acronyms.

Acronyms explained - What is MARAM, CISS, FVISS, ISE

Acronym	Term	Information
CISS	Child Information Sharing Scheme	https://www.vic.gov.au/about-information-sharing-schemes-and-risk-management-framework
FVISS	Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme	https://www.vic.gov.au/about-information-sharing-schemes-and-risk-management-framework
ISE	Information sharing entity	https://www.vic.gov.au/information-sharing-entity-list
MARAM	Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) ²⁷	https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-multi-agency-risk-assessment-and-management



Key Client Contacts

- Emergency 000
- 1800 RESPECT or 1800 737 732 <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>
- Kids Helpline Phone Counselling Service 1800 55 1800



Support for primary health care nurses:

- NMBA “Your Health Matters” this is an independent national support service for nurses, midwives and students. It is available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Or you can call Your Health Matters on 1800667877. The service provides access to confidential advice and referral and has some great resources.
- Also available [Beyond Blue](#) and [Lifeline](#) services for resources and support if required.



Acknowledgement: The APNA “Improving Child Safety and Wellbeing and Family Violence Outcomes Project” was supported by the Victorian Government under the Child Information Sharing Capacity Building Grants Program.

References

- 1 Victorian Government MARAM practice guides and resources <https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources> Victorian Government's website on the information sharing and MARAM reforms, Reviewed 31 January 2022
APNA
- 2 About the information sharing and MARAM reforms <https://www.vic.gov.au/about-information-sharing-schemes-and-risk-management-framework>
- 3 NMBA Professional Standards <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/codes-guidelines-statements/professional-standards/registered-nurse-standards-for-practice.aspx> Viewed 6 June 2022.
- 4 Victorian Government, About the information sharing and MARAM reforms <https://www.vic.gov.au/about-information-sharing-schemes-and-risk-management-framework>, Viewed 6 June 2022 ^{5 6 7 8}
- 9 Victorian Government, Information Sharing Entity List, <https://www.vic.gov.au/information-sharing-entity-list>, Viewed 6 June 2022
- 10 Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victoria), 2019, <http://rcfv.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/>, viewed 17 July 2022
- 11 Victorian Government, Information sharing guides, templates and tools, <https://www.vic.gov.au/guides-templates-tools-for-information-sharing> See point 2. Viewed 17 July 2022.
- 12 Victorian Government, Legislation, Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/child-wellbeing-and-safety-act-2005/035>, viewed online 17 July 2022.
- 13 Victorian Government, About the information sharing and MARAM reforms <https://www.vic.gov.au/about-information-sharing-schemes-and-risk-management-framework>, Viewed 6 June 2022.
- 14 Victorian Government, Information Sharing Entity List, <https://www.vic.gov.au/information-sharing-entity-list>, Viewed 6 June 2022
- 15 Victorian Government, About the information sharing and MARAM reforms <https://www.vic.gov.au/about-information-sharing-schemes-and-risk-management-framework>, Viewed 6 June 2022
- 16 Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association (APNA), based on the APNA Nurse Clinic Building Blocks methodology <https://nurseclinics.apna.asn.au/building-blocks/>, Viewed 6 June 2022
- 17 Victorian Government Information Sharing and MARAM Online Learning System <https://training.infosharing.vic.gov.au> viewed March 2022
- 18 Victorian Government, Information Sharing Entity List, <https://www.vic.gov.au/information-sharing-entity-list>, Viewed 6 June 2022
- 19 Victorian Government, Information Sharing Entity List, <https://www.vic.gov.au/information-sharing-entity-list>, Viewed 6 June 2022
- 20 Victorian Government, Frequently asked questions about information sharing and MARAM, <https://www.vic.gov.au/frequently-asked-questions-about-information-sharing-and-maram>. Viewed 17 July 2022.
- 21 Victorian Government, Overview of the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme, <https://www.vic.gov.au/overview-family-violence-information-sharing-scheme-0>
- 22 Victorian Government, Frequently asked questions about information sharing and MARAM, <https://www.vic.gov.au/frequently-asked-questions-about-information-sharing-and-maram>. Viewed 17 July 2022.
- 23
- 24 Victorian Government, Department families, Fairness and Housing, Mandatory reporting <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/mandatory-reporting#:~:text=In%20Victoria%2C%20under%20the%20Children,their%20office%2C%20position%20or%20employment>
- 25 Victorian Government, Information sharing guides, templates and tools, <https://www.vic.gov.au/guides-templates-tools-for-information-sharing> See point 2. Viewed 17 July 2022
- 26 Victorian Government, Information Sharing Entity List, <https://www.vic.gov.au/information-sharing-entity-list>, Viewed 6 June 2022.
- 27 Victorian Government, Frequently asked questions about information sharing and MARAM, <https://www.vic.gov.au/frequently-asked-questions-about-information-sharing-and-maram>. Refer to the Acronyms and glossary section. Viewed 17 July 2022.
- 28 Introduction to Child Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms presentation provided by DET Implementation, Victorian Child Information Sharing Division, Victorian Department of Education 28 April 2022, available at APNA- Improving Child Safety and Wellbeing and Family Violence Outcomes Project webpage <https://www.apna.asn.au/profession/child-information-sharing-scheme>