
Crisis support services for families

Summary

- In an emergency always call triple zero (000). If you or someone in your family is thinking about hurting themselves, call Lifeline on 13 11 14.
 - Child protection are responsible for investigating alleged child abuse and neglect and working out the most appropriate care or support solution for the child and family. This may include placing the child in out-of-home care.
 - To report concerns that are life threatening, you should contact Victoria Police: 000. To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child outside of normal business hours, you should contact the After-Hours Child Protection Emergency Service on 13 12 78 (toll-free within Victoria).
 - If you are experiencing violence at home, the Department of Health & Human Services provides support services and offers violence prevention programs.
 - If you are a woman who needs emergency help to escape family violence, contact Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre on 1800 015 188.
 - For family members not confident with English, all government health services offer on-the-spot interpreter services either in person, over the phone or via videoconferencing.
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In times of family crisis – when there is violence in the home or when a child is at risk of harm due to abuse or neglect – it's good to know there is help only a phone call away.

In an emergency always call triple zero (000). If you or someone in your family is thinking about hurting themselves, call **Lifeline** on **13 11 14**.

If you are a woman who needs emergency help to escape family violence, contact **Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre** on **1800 015 188**.

If you are concerned about the immediate safety of a child within their family, call the 24-hour Child Protection Crisis Line on **13 12 78** (toll free within Victoria).

Child protection

Meeting the needs of children and making sure they are safe in the family is a shared responsibility between individuals, the family, the community and the government. When adults caring for children do not follow through with their responsibilities, are abusive or exploit their positions of power, then it is the child protection system that is empowered to investigate alleged child abuse and neglect and intervene legally to protect a child when required.

Child Protection is a statutory service specifically targeted to those children and young people at significant risk of harm as a result of abuse or neglect and where the parent is unable or not likely protect them from that harm.

The main functions of child protection are to:

- investigate where it is alleged that a child is at risk of significant harm
- refer children and families to services that help ensure the ongoing safety and wellbeing of children
- make applications to the Children's Court if the child's safety cannot be ensured within the family
- administer protection orders made by the Children's Court

Mandatory reporting of child abuse

The following professional groups are required to make a report to child protection where they form a reasonable belief, that a child has been or is at risk of significant harm, as a result of physical or sexual abuse, and the child's parents have not protected or are unlikely to protect the child from that abuse:

- registered medical practitioners
- nurses including midwives
- Victoria police officers
- registers teachers and school principals
- out of home care workers (excluding voluntary foster and kinship carers)
- early childhood workers
- youth justice workers
- registered psychologists
- school counsellors
- people in religious ministry.

In addition, any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child needs protection can make a report to Child Protection.

Child protection will decide when follow up is required and how to classify the report. This may mean providing advice to the reporter, progressing the matter to an investigation, or referring the family to support services in the community, or taking no further action.

Further information can be found on [Making a report to child protection](#) or [Making a referral to Child FIRST](#).

Failure to disclose child sexual abuse offence

Legislation came into effect in 2014 making it illegal to stay quiet about child sexual abuse. Any adult who reasonably believes that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child (aged under 16) must disclose that information to police. The offence applies to all adults in Victoria, not just professionals who work with children, unless they have a reasonable excuse.

Out-of-home care placements

Out-of-home care placements provide alternate living arrangements for children who are not able to live with a parent. They are often the result of a Children's Court order and include:

- **kinship care** – the child (or children) is placed with relatives and supported by the Department of Health & Human Services or community service organisations (CSOs) foster care – placement with foster parents and supported by CSOs
- **residential care** – placement in a residential unit staffed by CSOs
- **voluntary care** – placement where there is no court order requiring a child to live out of their parent's care and the parent consents to a voluntary arrangement with a service for the temporary care of their child.

Kinship and foster care are sometimes referred to as 'home-based care' because they happen in a home.

For more information see the [Temporary and permanent care for children](#) fact sheet.

Family violence

If you are experiencing violence at home, the Department of Health & Human Services provides family support services and offers violence prevention programs.

Services include individual counselling, specialised support groups and referral services. These services aim firstly to promote early intervention to prevent the occurrence or escalation of family violence, and secondly, to prevent future occurrences of family violence by offering post-crisis support.

The department can also help women who want to organise an intervention order. These services also help children to improve their coping skills and self-esteem and to help develop non-violent problem-solving strategies.

For more information about accessing these services, contact the [Department of Health & Human Services](#).

For emergency help to escape family violence, women can contact the [Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre](#) on [1800 015 188](tel:1800015188). Safe Steps can also help provide refuge accommodation.

For more information about how to help yourself or someone else who is being abused at home, see the

betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Supporting yourself or someone else with family issues fact sheet.

Financial help for families

The Australian Government provides one-off payments called a 'crisis payment' to help people who are experiencing difficult or extreme circumstances. These circumstances include being:

- a victim of family violence
- affected by a natural disaster
- released from prison or psychiatric confinement, or
- in Australia for the first time on a refugee or humanitarian visa.

For more information about the crisis payment visit the **Department of Human Services website (Commonwealth)**.

Accessing an interpreter

For family members not confident with English, all government health services offer on-the-spot interpreter services either in person, over the phone or via videoconferencing. Simply tell your service provider that you would like an interpreter, specifying the dialect you speak (if relevant) and if you have a preference for a male or female interpreter.

Where to get help

- In an emergency, call triple zero (000)
- The **Department of Health and Human Services Mandatory reporting page**.
- **Child FIRST** or **The Orange Door** contact numbers to make a referral in each local government area are listed at: **www.services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/referral** and support teams
- **Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre**, call **1800 015 188**
- **Lifeline**, call **13 11 14**

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

Department of Health and Human Services

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