

**Position Title:** Specialist Family Violence Advisor – Child Protection.

**Team:** Leadership Team

**Report to:** Executive Officer

**Based:** Warrnambool – Child Protection Office & Emma House

**EFT:** 0.5 (38 hours per fortnight)

**Term:** 12 months

**Award:** SCHADS Award Community Service Worker Level 6

### **Background of this position**

The 2015-2016 State Budget committed \$17.27 million in funding over *five* years to the *Child Protection Flexible Responses Initiative*. This initiative, now known as *Family Violence Child Protection Partnership*, collocates 17 Specialist Family Violence workers in Child Protection offices across the state and aims to strengthen Child Protection practice enable joint assessments, assist Child Protection to navigate the family violence system and strengthen opportunities to divert children away from statutory responses.

Services for victims and perpetrators of family violence operate in the context of the *Family Violence Act 2008*. The *Family Violence Child Protection Partnership* co-locates a specialist experienced family violence worker within Child Protection investigation teams in each of the Department of Health and Human Services 17 areas. Through this co-location arrangement, the Partnership aims to strengthen and improve responses to families primarily subject to a Child Protection investigation.

The Specialist Family Violence Advisor- Child Protection Partnership is a senior practitioner with extensive knowledge of family violence. The position is responsible for providing operational and strategic advice to Child Protection practitioners and their managers who undertake investigations of families where a child is or may be in need of protection due to family violence.

**Emma House Domestic Violence Services Incorporated (EHDVSI)** was established in 1979 and provides support and assistance to women and their accompanying children who are experiencing, or who have experienced domestic violence/family violence. It is the DHHS funded specialist family violence services for South West Victoria. Our range of services can include crisis response, accommodation and / or outreach services all which are high quality and contemporary best practice models of service delivery.

EHDVSI upholds a feminist philosophy and our aim is to provide an empowering, respectful and culturally sensitive service committed to best practice. The EHDVSI hope is for a society where women and children live free from family, domestic or intimate partner violence in all its forms, and we work towards this each day.

EHDVSI acknowledges **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people** as the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate. We commit to working respectfully to honour their ongoing cultural and spiritual connections to this country.

EHDVSI actively values and **promotes diversity and is committed to being inclusive and respectful to all**. We welcome applications from women and people who identify as women who are Aboriginal, members of the LGBTIQ+ community, from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and women of all abilities.

**Risk Statement:** Risk management is a core component of EHDVSI governance arrangements and compliance across the organisation supports the Board, committees and senior management in their strategic and governance roles. Staff have an important role in contributing to and applying effective risk management within their area of influence.

### **Child Safe**

EHDVSI is committed to offering a safe environment for children and is required to ensure all employees are appropriately screened before working with children. Screening occurs via the mandatory Working With Children Check Act (2005), whereby all employees must have received a satisfactory assessment before employment can be confirmed, a satisfactory police record check, the interview process, whereby an applicant's personal and professional interest in working with children may be explored and the referee check process, whereby information will be sought regarding an applicant's history regarding working with children.

## **Purpose of this position**

The target group for the *Family Violence Child Protection Partnership* are families who are subject to Child Protection involvement where family violence is, or is suspected to be, present with a primary focus on families subject to a Child Protection investigation.

The position will assist Child Protection in the planning and conduct of investigations and support the development of plans that aim to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. The Specialist Family Violence Worker works collaboratively with the Child Protection senior managers and practitioners to provide effective service delivery and support.

The Specialist Family Violence Advisor's client is Child Protection. This reflects the intention of the Partnership to promote Child Protection's improved understanding of the dynamics of family violence, including perpetrator's pattern of coercive control and behaviours.

The aim of the *Family Violence Child Protection Partnership* is to:

- support and promote improved understanding of the perpetrator's pattern of coercive control and its impact on children and the ability of the protective parent to safely parent;
- restore and enhance safe, child-centred parenting; and
- use this knowledge to assist Child Protection achieve the following improved outcomes for the service system and for the families reported to Child Protection.

### **Child Protection Client Outcomes**

To improve assessment, planning and intervention in Child Protection investigations where family violence is, or is suspected to be, present in order to:

- Increase safety and stability for families
- Reduce the risk of harm to children;
- Safely reduce the incidence of re-reports to Child Protection and the number of children placed in out of home care;
- Strengthen the engagement of victims and perpetrators with support services; and
- Contribute to improved engagement with perpetrators towards changes in perpetrator behaviour and improved child centred parenting capacity.

### **Service System Outcomes**

To contribute to an integrated and collaborative child centred, family focused service system.

To achieve this outcome the Specialist Family Violence advisor will work with Child Protection to:

- Contribute to an integrated and collaborative child centred, family focused service system
- Recognise the protective parent as a victim/survivor
- Recognise and respond appropriately to perpetrator behaviour and perpetrator- driven risk
- Identify and address systemic barriers to joint practice by family violence and Child Protection
- Strengthen referral pathways between Child Protection and specialist family violence services
- Encourage joint family violence risk assessments (CRAF assessments) and safety plans and enhanced information sharing
- Create a better understanding of each organisation's processes
- Identify, consistently document and respond to the risk from perpetrators to each child
- Support cultural safety - keeping Aboriginal people and other groups connected to their culture
- Improve the quality and depth of information sharing and documentation, including material that may be relevant for legal processes.

## **Key tasks and responsibilities**

### **Strategic Focus**

The strategic focus involves supporting the development of more integrated service response by Child Protection and family violence services through:

- Identifying emerging trends, needs and gaps in service delivery and practice issues, particularly in the investigation phase, and to use this knowledge to generate changes in systems and approaches.
- Facilitating engagement between and promoting joint work by Child Protection and family violence services in the Southwest.

- Improving the quality and consistency of family violence related information, assessment and interventions in case notes.
- Identifying the need for, participate in, and/or deliver Child Protection training and professional development activities.
- At the local level, supporting the implementation of the government's responses to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

### **Operational Focus**

The operational focus will occur through direct engagement with activities and tasks associated with Child Protection investigations:

- To jointly identify and document, with Child Protection, issues in responses to family violence and develop solutions to system gaps and practice issues.
- Provide specialist advice to Child Protection practitioners undertaking investigations where family violence is present.
- Where permitted, facilitate client information sharing, and where appropriate, support joint work between Child Protection and family violence services to achieve better engagement with services for victims and perpetrators of family violence.
- Where permitted, provide information about the client's history from the Specialist Family Violence Agency and other family violence men's and women's services operating in the South west.
- Support Child Protection to understand the dynamics of perpetrator behaviour and use this information to:
  - improve engagement with perpetrators and to create stronger feedback loops between men's services and Child Protection; and
  - enhance understanding and work with the non-offending parent.
- Initiate exceptions conferences', contribute to the rationale for substantiation, and participate in secondary consultation with Child Protection to enable more informed assessments of safety and risk to victims and perpetrator behaviour.
- Assisting Child Protection practitioners to understand and navigate the family violence system.
- Making outward referrals (where possible supported referrals) in collaboration with Child Protection to specialist family violence services and expediting referrals.
- Maintain an in-depth knowledge of the family violence support services in the area and the eligibility requirements for such services.

- Keeping up to date information on waitlists and alternatives for family violence support services in the area.
- Assisting Child Protection to secure placement for clients in refuge or crisis accommodation.
- Coordinating other family violence workers in the area to attend joint home visits with Child Protection.
- Targeting the use of funding and resources in responding to clients that experience and/or use family violence; and
- Building the capacity of Child Protection.

This role may be required to give written or oral evidence to the Children's Court of Victoria, the Magistrates' Court of Victoria and other relevant courts and tribunals.

### **Key Selection Criteria:**

Applicants must demonstrate they are able to undertake the inherent responsibilities of the position as contained in the position description and are able to meet the following:

- 1 A degree level qualification in Social Work, Health, Psychology or related discipline.
- 2 Well-developed and demonstrated understanding of the causes and complexities of family violence.
- 3 Knowledge of the family violence service system and relevant government policy, particularly as it relates to Child Protection.
- 4 Comprehensive understanding of the impact of family violence on women and children focusing on the mother-child relationship and holding perpetrators accountable.
- 5 Demonstrated understanding of risk assessment using the MARAM Framework.
- 6 Well-developed leadership, collaborative partnership and stakeholder engagement skills.
- 7 High level oral and written communication skills, including skills in engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders and communicating complex information as simply as possible.
- 8 Willingness and ability to engage directly with perpetrators or with services working with perpetrators of family violence for the purpose of service linkage and referral.
- 9 Demonstrated experience in developing and maintaining relationships with other stakeholders in a multi-disciplinary environment including capacity to problem solve and negotiate with other professionals.
- 10 Ability to lead professional development activities with Child Protection and the home family violence agency.
- 11 Ability to demonstrate initiative and highly developed organisational skills.
- 12 Demonstrated skills in managing conflict, competing demands and prioritising work.
- 13 Ability to work autonomously as well as part of a team.

- 14 Advanced computer skills.
- 15 Current Victorian Driver's Licence and ability to travel independently.
- 16 Current Working with Children's Check.

**Other**

Appointment of the successful candidate will be subject to the completion of a National Police Record Check and a six-month probationary period (and an International Criminal History Check if indicated).

Approved: July 2020  
By Executive Officer Ruth Isbel