

Discussion Paper
Family Violence Leadership and Coordination Mechanisms
February 2008

Background

In October 2006 the document *Guiding Integrated Family Violence Service Reform (Guiding Reform)* was developed by the Department of Human Services (DHS) with input from Victoria Police (VicPol), the Department of Justice (DoJ) and the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) to guide the implementation of the new approach to family violence, highlight reform priorities and outline new coordination mechanisms. Part 4 of *Guiding Reform* identified a number of statewide and regional leadership and coordination mechanisms (See attachment).

It was anticipated that the leadership and coordination mechanisms would be reviewed at the end of 2007 "to assess efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the intended objectives".

A number of issues have been raised in regard to both statewide and regional governance mechanisms including:

- The effectiveness of the current mechanisms to reflect whole of government integration;
- The effectiveness of the current mechanisms to link regional governance structures with central governance and relevant departments;
- The effectiveness of communication channels; and
- The roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the regional integration coordinators (leadership positions).

Following discussions at the Family Violence Interdepartmental Committee¹ (IDC), the following statewide governance mechanisms have been recommended to be implemented from 2008.

Proposed Statewide Leadership and Coordination mechanisms

It is proposed to strengthen the approach to **statewide** leadership and coordination by:

1. **Establishing a Family Violence Integration Planning Committee.** This committee will be a consolidation of the current DHS statewide committees (Stakeholder Advisory Group, Integration Reference Group) into one committee with a stronger whole-of-government focus.

The Committee would be chaired by an IDC representative and membership would include:

- IDC representatives (DHS, DPCD, DoJ, VicPol)
- Chairs of Regional Integrated Family Violence Committees
- Regional Integration Coordinators (leadership positions)
- Family Violence peak organisations (DV Vic and NTV)
- Family violence specialist services
- Senior regional DHS representatives
- Vic Police FV Advisers/Representatives
- Magistrates Court Registrars/Representatives

¹ The Family Violence IDC is chaired by Terry Healy, Deputy Secretary, DPCD, and includes the Assistant Commissioner, Victoria Police, and senior Managers from DHS (Children, Youth and Families and Housing and Community Building) and the department of Justice. The role of the IDC is to:

- Monitor the development and implementation of the whole of government reform initiative.
- Ensure implementation is consistent with the broader FV reform objectives.
- Ensure there are appropriate linkages across other relevant government portfolio areas and the Indigenous Family Violence Strategy.

The IDC now meets monthly and reports to the lead Minister and Family Violence Ministerial Taskforce.

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The rationale for this recommendation is:

- To strengthen links between regional and statewide coordination structures, in particular the Family Violence IDC;
- To provide a stronger focus on cross sector integration;
- To enhance the role and authority of chairs of regional committees and encourage them to take on a strong cross-sector leadership role; and
- To monitor and contribute to the activities and outcomes of an Integrated Family Violence State Plan.

The focus of the Family Violence Integration Planning Committee will be on practical integration problem solving and identification of emerging challenges. It is proposed that this group meet twice a year.

2. Developing a **mechanism for the lead Minister for Family Violence to meet the Chairpersons of the Regional Family Violence Integration Committees and key stakeholders**. This will provide an opportunity for the lead Minister to hear directly from the field about integration progress, enhance the status and role of the regional family violence committees, and strengthen the role of the Chairs of the regional committees.
3. Ensuring **regular meetings between DHS and DPCD representatives and Integration Coordinators** to improve communication and provide opportunities for joint problem solving. It is proposed that this occur through the existing meetings that are coordinated by DV Vic.
4. Developing a **statewide 12 month Family Violence Reform Work Plan** to link the Regional Work Plans or Strategic Plans with statewide whole of government reform implementation. The Family Violence Reform Work Plan would be coordinated by DPCD with input from all government departments and initially use the nine reform priorities identified in *Guiding Reform* to progress the reform agenda. The whole of government work plan would include a calendar of planned activities to ensure a coordinated approach to the implementation of new initiatives. It is proposed that the development of the statewide plan would commence early in 2008.
5. Developing a **5-year Family Violence Reform Strategic Framework** as a major aspect of the Women's Safety Strategy to encompass the policy directions of all partners. The development of the Strategic Framework would be coordinated by DPCD with input from all government departments and key stakeholders and a workshop of the Family Violence Integration Planning Committee in May 2008.
6. Improving **communication mechanisms** to ensure regular updates to all integration partners on key initiatives and directions. This could include a monthly/bimonthly whole of government email bulletin covering reform and integration activities and utilize the soon to be finalised family violence website.
7. **Stakeholder Practice Forums** will continue in their existing format.

Proposed Dates for 2008

- *Integration Planning Committee – May and October 2008*
- *Practice Forums – June and November 2008*

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Regional Leadership and Coordination

In relation to a review of regional leadership and coordination structures, discussion has centred around a perceived lack of role clarity and the need to identify/define a leadership group with the authority and commitment to bring about the change process.

Guiding Reform talks about the importance of identifying a 'critical mass of senior and influential people' to lead the change process. Regional leadership, service integration and planning is a shared role with the leadership group including multi agency members of the regional committee and the Integration Coordinator working with regional DHS staff to achieve change.

- **Regional committees:**

The "authority" vested in committees comes from the mandate each of the committee member agencies has to progress the objectives of the integrated family violence reforms. This mandate is reinforced by the seniority of representation on the committee and from the participation of all key agencies, in particular Police, Courts and Family Services/Child FIRST/Child Protection. Memorandums of Understanding between the committee members and key partners may assist in clarifying relationships and roles of members.

Regional committees and their members play a key role in developing and implementing regional integration strategies. A lack of participation of all key agencies (Family Violence Services, Police, Courts and Family Services/Child FIRST/Child Protection) will have an impact on the capacity of the committees to make decisions and action strategies in relation to the integrated service system. The combined input of committee members is crucial to the development of a strategic plan or work plan that is relevant to the multi agency membership and to the identification of ways to resource initiatives to support the achievement of key strategic goals.

- **Committee Chairperson**

The role of a Committee Chair is to represent the views and priorities of the regional or sub regional committee, promote the work of the committee and local integration priorities at a regional and statewide level and guide the committee in oversight of their identified strategic priorities. Committee chairs will be key members of the statewide Integration Planning Committee. *Guiding Reform* recommended that agency representatives on regional committee have sufficient seniority to make decisions on behalf of their agency with view to providing an authorizing environment for decision making. It is now recognized that the position of Chair of the regional committee needs to be formally acknowledged as an important leadership role in the reform process.

- **Integration Coordinator role and accountability**

Guiding Reform defined this role in a broad way to allow flexibility as new structures were established. A key part of the role was that of member of the leadership group, supporting the regional committee in leading and promoting service integration and planning.

The role was described as follows:

... *the role will support the regional/sub-regional committee to undertake the following tasks:*

- *Regional (sub-regional) service integration and planning*

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- *Develop an annual work plan based on statewide and regional integration priorities (see template and sample work plan at Attachment 1)*
- *Monitor progress against the work plan.*
- *Information and data collection to demonstrate achievements*
 - *Collate and analyse local trend data*
 - *Identify learnings and issues to feed into statewide committees*
 - *Identify and document successful integration service models.*
- *Communication and relationship development*
 - *Communicate the role and work of the integrated family violence services at a statewide, regional and sub-regional level*
 - *Liaise with generalist service providers eg Maternal and Child Health Services, schools, GPs*
 - *Ensure close working relationship with the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group and related Indigenous Family Violence initiatives*
 - *Act as a regional contact point for joint professional development and training initiatives*
 - *Facilitate prevention and awareness activities.*

The role needs to be able provide leadership in the development, implementation and monitoring of the integrated approach. Committees may therefore wish to consider how they can collectively resource some basic secretariat functions so that the role can focus on reform.²

DHS recognised that there would be a need to prioritise workload and that the time necessary to establish committees and regional plans would mean that this task would be a significant focus in the first 18 months of the reform.

Regional strategic priorities will inform the annual work plan for the Integration Coordinator, developed in consultation with their committee and auspice. Work plans will need to be realistic and achievable and take into consideration the part-time nature of most positions. Not all priorities and work areas can be progressed simultaneously and there is no expectation that this occur.

Whilst the Integration Coordinator has a role to play in supporting and facilitating the strategic vision, they are not responsible for the implementation of the plan, rather, it is expected that the regional strategic/work plan will inform their individual work plan priorities.

Line management of the Integration Coordinator is through their auspice organization.

- ***Integration Coordination auspice agency***

The role of the auspice agency is to provide line management, supervision and support for the Integration Coordination position. The auspice will assist the Integration Coordinator to develop and implement their individual annual work plan and ensure their work is strategically aligned with the relevant regional or sub-regional family violence work plan. If the auspice is not involved in the regional integrated family violence committee then it would be expected that there would be regular communication between the auspice and the committee chair/representative to discuss role and workload of the Integration Coordinator.

² *Guiding Reform* page 13

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The auspice agency should ensure the Integration Coordinator is able to work to their role independent of other auspice agency programs and priorities and as the role has a regional and sub-regional focus, the auspice agency will provide the necessary flexibility and resources to enable this role to be involved in regional and sub regional committee activities.

The auspice agency is also the fund holder for the small amount of community education and prevention funding that has been provided for each region. The auspice agency will be guided by the regional plan as to how these funds should be used and administered.

- **Regional DHS staff**

The DHS/VCOSS Partnership Agreement 2005-2008 aims to continue to strengthen and build on the working relationship between DHS and community service organisations. The agreement recognises that the department and service organisations have legitimate differences in governance roles and responsibilities.

DHS regional staff are responsible for broad service system planning, service system development, fund allocation to service providers and system-wide service monitoring, that is, both partnership functions and contract management functions.

Key partnership functions include the strategic development of sustainable partnerships with their broader community and organisations to identify service issues, assess risks and to continually improve service system outcomes for the benefit of clients. Regions are expected to play a key role in the implementation of service development initiatives to achieve service delivery goals and objectives.

In this role, it is expected that DHS work closely with the regional committee and Integration Coordination position to support their work in the achievement of improved service system outcomes.

DHS regional staff also have ongoing service monitoring responsibilities with DHS funded organisations. This is done via service agreement processes and related monitoring frameworks and guidelines. The contract management function differs from the partnership function in that it is focused on a one-to-one relationship between each funded organisation and the department/region.

