Role of consultation at intake

Introduction
A central feature of the new Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (CYFA) is the establishment of clearer pathways into child and family intake services in Victoria where there are significant concerns about the wellbeing of children.

The ability to consult is a key component of the legislation and aims to promote and support the partnership, interface and operation of Child Protection and registered community-based child and family services.

Consultation is the process by which authorised and confidential information is shared and advice is given to achieve the best possible outcome for vulnerable children, young people and their families.

Intake assessment consultations
The CYFA permits both registered Child FIRST/Family Services and Child Protection to consult during the intake assessment for the purposes of assessing risk or determining the agency best able to provide assistance.

When Child FIRST/Family Services receives a child wellbeing referral or unborn child referral, the intake worker may (for the purposes of assessing risk or determining the agency best able to provide assistance) consult with:

• Child Protection
• another community-based child and family service
• service agencies (other government sectors and services like disability, health, psychiatric, and drug or alcohol)
• information holders (key professionals like police, principals and teachers, doctors and nurses, psychologists, child care, and drug and alcohol).

When Child Protection receives a report, the intake worker may (for the purpose of assessing risk or determining the agency best able to provide assistance) consult with:

• Child FIRST
• Family Services
• service agencies (other government sectors and services like disability, health, psychiatric, and drug or alcohol)
• information holders (key professionals like police, principals and teachers, doctors and nurses, psychologists, child care, and drug and alcohol).
What is the role of the community-based Child Protection worker in these consultations?

Community-based Child Protection workers will be available to undertake consultations with Child FIRST/Family Services in all established Child FIRST catchments and local government catchments in receipt of Family Support Innovation Project funding. In areas that do not yet receive Child FIRST or Innovation funding, family services should consult with the regional Child Protection intake.

What are the legal implications?

Authorised people who are consulted and provide information to Child Protection or Child FIRST are protected against legal and professional liability. The identity of authorised people who are consulted and provide information to Child Protection or Child FIRST/Family Services for the purposes of assessing risk or determining the agency best able to provide assistance, will be treated as confidential unless the law or a court order requires the disclosure of their identity, or unless the consultee consents to their identity being disclosed. Authorised persons may, if they wish, elect to provide consent to have their identity disclosed.

How should a consultation be recorded?

Both Child FIRST and Child Protection must make a written record of each consultation they undertake. Child Protection will record an initial consultation by Child FIRST as a child wellbeing report. Subsequent consultations about the same matter (up to six months) will be entered as a case note on the original child wellbeing report. Consultations received more than six months after the initial consultation will be recorded as a new child wellbeing report, with subsequent consultations (for up to six months) again entered as a case note.

Following intake assessment consultations as authorised above, Child FIRST/Family Services to which a case is referred and has case management responsibility, can consult with Child Protection at any time if necessary.

More information:

For more information, fact sheets and supporting documents, see the every child every chance website: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/everychildeverychance

Supporting documents:

Further details on information sharing can be found on the every child every chance website.

Related fact sheets:

- Child FIRST
- Unborn child referrals
- Child FIRST transitional arrangements