

Program requirements for the delivery of Family Violence Flexible Support Packages

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline the mandatory program requirements to be implemented by service providers for family violence Flexible Support Packages (FSPs).

FSPs are available to people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence. The department recognises the gendered nature of family violence, consistent with the Royal Commission into Family Violence, it is noted that 'the significant majority of perpetrators are men and the significant majority of victims are women and their children'. Women alone and women with children are therefore expected to be the primary recipients of flexible support packages. However, in recognition of the diverse experiences of family violence experienced by Aboriginal people, people from culturally diverse backgrounds, people with disabilities, people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, gender diverse and intersex community and older people experiencing elder abuse, victim/survivors will be the inclusive terms used throughout this document.

These requirements have been developed to ensure consistency in how FSPs are distributed across the state.

2. Background

Family violence flexible support packages are designed to provide a new individualised approach to respond to victim/survivors experiencing family violence. Individualised packages of up to \$10,000 will be available, with an average cost of \$3,000.

Flexible support packages will deliver a personalised and holistic response to victims/survivors experiencing family violence by assisting them to access support, move out of crisis, stabilise and improve their safety, well-being and independence into recovery.

Flexible support packages build on the success of other flexible funding responses, such as private rental brokerage.

3. Target group and eligibility for family violence flexible support packages

Packages can only be distributed to victims-survivors who have a case management plan or support plan, that identifies family violence and identifies how these support needs can be assisted through access to an FSP. This includes children victim-survivors who have a case plan in their own right, or are included in their care givers case plan. One flexible support package will be available reporting period for victims/survivors. This does not preclude victims/survivors from receiving a subsequent package for future presentations, provided a new case management plan is in place. In cases where a subsequent package is required within one reporting period, providers must contact the department to discuss.

Flexible support packages will be targeted to victim/survivors who:

- are escaping; and/or
- have recently experienced family violence; and/or
- are planning to leave an abusive situation or have the perpetrator removed from the home with appropriate legal sanctions in place.

In addition to the risk assessment, a thorough case management/ safety or support plan needs to identify the way in which a flexible support package would support the victim/survivors:

- to establish sustainable arrangements that support their long-term health and wellbeing
- in preventing intervention by child protection
- in leaving their current family arrangements in which family violence is occurring.

Priority will be given to:

- victim-survivors and their children at highest risk from family violence
- victim-survivors whose safety and security needs and independent living goals can reasonably be met through a flexible support package
- victim-survivors experiencing significant financial hardship.

In acknowledgement of diverse experiences of family violence, it is encouraged that FSP providers review each allocation based upon individual circumstances.

The intention of flexible support packages is to assist victim-survivors to stabilise and improve their safety, flexible support packages provide an opportunity to transform a victim-survivors life. A package is available for those who are in a high risk, crisis or post crisis situation, as well as those victim survivors who are attempting to stabilise in recovery from family violence.

Flexible support packages will not be accessible to victim-survivors who wish to continue their domestic living arrangements with the perpetrator of the abuse. If a victim/survivor returns to a domestic living arrangement with the perpetrator of the abuse, access to flexible support package funding will cease. Access to case management support should not be impacted by a victim-survivor returning to a domestic living situation with a perpetrator.

4. Flexible support package outcomes

Flexible support packages should aim to deliver the following outcomes for victim-survivors in a manner that is flexible enough to meet their varying needs and priorities:

- freedom from abuse and violence
- suitable and stable housing
- good physical and mental health
- participation in learning and education
- participation and contribution to the economy
- financial security and independence
- social engagement
- identification and connection to community

Use of flexible support packages must represent the most cost-effective, timely and appropriate response to meet the outcomes identified in a person's support plan.

5. Flexible support package principles

Flexible support packages must be administered in accordance with the following principles:

- the safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors is paramount
- victim-survivors are empowered to lead and make informed choices about the package, supports they need to meet their goals, improve their wellbeing and safety, and live independently
- tailored to the individual
- directed by the victim-survivors receiving the package, consistent with these guidelines
- understanding the social and gendered context of family violence and the impact of violence on victim-survivors (including children) development
- understanding of culturally appropriate service responses for victim-survivors from a range of backgrounds. This includes Aboriginal victim-survivors, victim-survivors with disabilities, victim-survivors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, older victim-survivors and victim-survivors who identify as LGBTI
- commitment by service providers to build and maintain effective partnerships, collaborate, communicate and share resources with other agencies in order to maximise opportunities for victim-survivors to achieve their goals

- support system wide responses focussing on perpetrator accountability
- underpinned by a strong quality improvement framework including a willingness to participate in research, evaluation and reviews to inform quality improvement and innovation.

6. Key service requirements and features

The department has released a standardised application form, including eligibility criteria. Service providers are required to utilise this as a minimum requirement to complete reporting requirements, however are permitted to adapt to suit local and agency requirements.

Service providers supporting FSP application will undertake the following activities:

- determine suitability, eligibility and priority for flexible support packages
- develop a holistic person-centred plan that is led, as far as possible, by the recipient of the flexible support package and reflects their goals and expected outcomes and clearly articulates how the flexible support package will assist in achieving these outcomes
- regularly review progress toward achieving the outcomes of victim-survivors who have received a flexible support package
- if appropriate refer the recipient to other relevant services and/or co-case management.

The service delivery features relate to the operational and process requirements for delivering flexible support packages. The following are mandatory requirements:

- A package is provided in conjunction with a case management plan outlining goals and support needs to be achieved through purchases made with flexible support package funding
- Regular and ongoing reviews of risk and safety planning
- Support will go beyond initial assessment and the practical response period as victim-survivors may need different levels and types of support at different times
- Flexible support packages must address the needs of children in their own right, including linking children to appropriate services

7. What the package can buy

Flexible support packages can be used to purchase services and goods nominated by victim-survivors in their support or case plan. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- freedom from abuse and violence – basic material needs including food, clothing, care packs, bills (utilities, phone) and utility debts
- technological safety support – CCTV, mobile phone, personal/property alarm; security doors or lighting
- good physical and mental health – medical or pharmaceutical costs not covered by Medicare or Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, physical aides, counselling or specialist services
- suitable and stable housing – public or private housing debt, mortgage costs, rent in advance, rent arrears, relocation costs, travel costs, furnishings and whitegoods in newly established housing
- participation in learning and education – schooling, educational costs, workforce readiness (for example adult education/TAFE course/school supplies for children)
- financial security and independence – clothing, care or placement of pets, outings, financial counselling, wellbeing courses
- identification and connection with culture and identity – travel, culturally specific service support, sporting or cultural activities

Flexible support packages can be used where available supports (For example, local, state or Commonwealth Government services) cannot be provided in a timely manner. There is an expectation that other avenues for

support are exhausted prior to application of an FSP, for example emergency accommodation supports are only applied when no viable alternative is possible. Similar to debts and fines, there are multiple alternative avenues available in the system that must be exhausted prior to support being provided through an FSP.

8. Exclusions and additional requirements

Flexible support packages cannot be used for the following purposes:

- illegal activity
- gambling
- products or services not identified in the case or support plan
- to replace or duplicate supports that are available through other funding sources, including other Local, State and Commonwealth Government programs.

9. Reporting and accountability

Service providers are accountable for using flexible support package funding provided by the department to deliver better outcomes for victim/survivors and their children.

Definition of a package/case Each provider is expected to deliver the number of packages/cases specified in the Department of Health and Human Services Agreement. A case is defined as a necessary period of support where a case management plan is in place and a package has been allocated.

In circumstances where a woman and her child/children re-presents after a support period has been closed and a new case management plan is put in place, this will be considered to be a new case. In order to assess whether this has occurred, service providers are required to collect data on a range of outcome indicators (set out below) and analyse their performance against these indicators in order to identify areas in which further improvement may be required.

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Performance Reporting and Evaluation

Service providers are required to contribute to a live performance reporting and evaluation process that will support continued learning and service improvement. Additionally, service providers are required to attend quarterly provider network meetings, chaired by the department.

Accountability

The service provider is responsible for ensuring that:

- the flexible support package contributes to agreed outcomes of the recipient
- the funds are spent in accordance with the support plan
- funds are acquitted on a quarterly basis
- data on outcomes is collected
- they participate in live data reporting and program evaluation.

Acquittal/Accrual

Service providers are required to acquit flexible support package funding to the department on a quarterly basis, using the acquittal/accrual template provided. These acquittal/accruals are required to indicate all approved package funding, not only finalised invoices. If for any reason approved invoices are not paid, amounts are to be amended in the next reporting period. Service providers are not required to report administrative costs as this is set at 5% of total funding. The accrual includes a report outlining:

- total amount of funds allocated for that financial year to the service provider
- the final value of funds expended and approved for each package (recipient de-identified)
- type and amount of assistance provided to each package recipient via drop down box menu
- the balance of unspent funds/unallocated funds

Service providers are expected to fully allocate flexible support package funding over the relevant financial year. The treatment of any unspent funds will be negotiated with the department, depending on the amount and reasons. The department reserves the right to require service providers to repay the unspent funds to the department.

Service providers are also required to monitor and acquit expenditure against individual support or case plans, follow up irregularities and review plans. A key purpose of such funding acquittal is to ascertain that funds provided have been fully expended or committed in accordance with the agreed funding plan. The department may undertake a forensic audit of the program management documentation to ensure funds are acquitted as agreed in individual support plans.

10. Attachments

Acquittal template

Application form

To receive this publication in an accessible format phone 03 9096 9282, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required.

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

© State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services November, 2016.

ISBN 978-0-7311-7131-6 (pdf/online)

Available at

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-service-providers/children.-youth-and-families/family-violence2>