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| MARAM Brief and Intermediate Practitioner Guide |
| Roles, Responsibilities and Supporting Resources |

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The purpose of this guide is to provide you with an overview of your role as a **Brief and Intermediate** practitioner under the **Victorian Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM).** It includes a summary of the key practice guidance and other resources available to support you.

* The [**MARAM Foundation Knowledge Guide**](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/Foundation%20Knowledge%20guide.pdf) <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/Foundation%20Knowledge%20guide.pdf> is core reading for all professionals.
* The [**Ten Responsibility Practice Guides**](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/MARAM%20victim%20survivor%20practice%20guides%20full_1.pdf) <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/MARAM%20victim%20survivor%20practice%20guides%20full\_1.pdf> build on the foundation knowledge and provide practical guidance for your role as a Brief and Intermediate practitioner.

# What is MARAM?

MARAM has been designed to increase the safety and wellbeing of Victorians by supporting relevant services to identify, assess and manage family violence risk effectively. MARAM sets out key principles and pillars that should be embedded into policies, procedures, service delivery and practice. It also identifies the responsibilities of various organisations and staff across the system. MARAM is underpinned by an evidence review undertaken by the University of Melbourne. It was developed to replace the Victorian Common Risk Assessment Framework (CRAF) which was introduced in 2007. MARAM applies to a broad range of family relationships, diverse situations and contexts. It is not just intimate partner relationships but can include parent/child, same sex couples, carers of vulnerable people.

MARAM has been established in law under a new Part 11 of the ***Family Violence Protection Act 2008***. It creates a shared responsibility between prescribed services and sectors. This collaborative approach provides more options to keep victim survivors safe and it supports a more coordinated approach to keep perpetrators in view and accountable for their actions.

# What is my role as a Brief and Intermediate practitioner?

As a Brief and Intermediate practitioner, your work is associated with family violence risk but is not focused on this risk alone in providing services. You will be expected to engage with people in crisis situations or cohorts who are at high risk of experiencing or using family violence. Your role may involve therapeutic interventions, a crisis service, case management support or broader needs assessment and management. You will be capable of incorporating family violence risk assessment and management practice into your usual work. Professionals are not expected to become ‘experts’ in relation to family violence – but everyone has a role.

## What are my responsibilities as a Brief and Intermediate practitioner?

One of the key changes in the move from the CRAF to MARAM is the establishment of clear responsibilities for family violence identification, risk assessment and risk management. There are ten responsibilities that inform practitioners involved in risk assessment and management of family violence. There are three levels of responsibilities:

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| 1. Screening and Identification | 2. Brief and Intermediate | 3. Comprehensive |
| A practitioner who may come in contact with family violence victim survivors whilst providing universal services. | A practitioner who in the line of their work may have contact with people experiencing or using family violence but where responding to family violence is not their core role or function. | A practitioner whose role has regular contact with people experiencing family violence with a specialist function. |
| MARAM Responsibilities:  **1, 2, 5, 6, 9 and 10** | MARAM Responsibilities:  1, 2, **3, 4**, 5, 6, 9 and 10 | MARAM Responsibilities:  1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, **7, 8**, 9 and 10 |

Brief and Intermediate practitioners have the following eight responsibilities:

* **Responsibility 1: Respectful, sensitive and safe engagement.**  Create respectful and sensitive environments for safe disclosure of family violence. This includes an emphasis on listening to, partnering with and believing victim survivors as experts in their own experience and responding in a way that validates their experience.
* **Responsibility 2: Identification of family violence.** Understand and recognise the indictors of family violence risk and ask questions to identify all family members who are impacted.
* **Responsibility 3**: **Intermediate risk assessments** Conduct intermediate risk assessments (using appropriate approaches and supported by appropriate tools). This involves asking questions about risk factors, understanding the evidence base of how questions link to risk factors, using the process of Structured Professional Judgement in practice as well as using intersectional analysis and inclusive practice. This responsibility covers using Brief or Intermediate Assessment Tools and forming a professional judgement to determine the seriousness of risk, including levels of ‘at risk’ or ‘serious risk’.
* **Responsibility 4:** **Intermediate risk management** Undertake intermediate risk management and includes:
  + Working with victim survivors (adults, children and young people) to develop an appropriate risk management response based on their unique experience of risk and assessed level of risk
  + The differing elements of intermediate risk management
  + Discuss staying at home or leaving and talking to adult victim survivors about their options
  + Responding to serious and immediate risk
  + Documenting evidence of family violence
  + Developing risk management strategies where there are multiple victim survivors including children
  + Developing safety plans for children and young people, working with a parent/career (usually a mother) who is not a perpetrator (who may be a victim survivor) and/or working directly with the child or young person.
* **Responsibility 5: Seek consultation for comprehensive risk assessment, risk management and referrals.** Seeks internal supervision and consult with family violence specialists to collaborate on risk assessments and make active referrals for comprehensive specialist responses if appropriate.
* **Responsibility 6**: **Contribute to information sharing with other services (as authorised by legislation).** Proactively share information relevant to the assessment and management of family violence risk and respond to requests to share information from other information sharing entities under the Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes.
* **Responsibility 9: Contribute to coordinated risk management.** As part of integrated, multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approaches, contribute to coordinated risk management including information sharing, referrals, action planning, coordination of responses and collaborative action.
* **Responsibility 10: Collaborate for ongoing risk assessment.** Play an ongoing role in collaboratively monitoring, assessing and managing risk over time to identify changes in levels of risk and ensure risk management and safety plans are responsive to changed circumstances including escalation.

# What is the shared understanding of family violence?

MARAM seeks to ensure all professionals have a shared understanding of family violence. This enables a more consistent approach to risk assessment and management across the service system and helps keep perpetrators in view and accountable and victim survivors safe. According to Victorian law, family violence is behaviour by a person towards a family member that is physically, sexually, economically, emotionally or psychologically abusive. It includes behaviour that is threatening or coercive or that controls or dominates the family member and causes them to feel fear for their own safety or wellbeing or that of another family member or person. This includes behaviour that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of such abuse. MARAM outlines key understandings of family violence that should underpin the work of all prescribed services including:

* Family violence is a behaviour that controls or dominates a family member and causes them to fear for their own or another person’s safety or wellbeing.
* Family violence is a choice by a perpetrator to use behaviours for the purposes of power and control. Perpetrators use coercive tactics and violent controlling behaviour to gain power over one or more victim survivors. Responsibility for the use of violence rests solely with the perpetrator.
* Family violence is deeply gendered and rooted in structural inequalities. While both men and women can be perpetrators or victim survivors of family violence, overwhelmingly, perpetrators are men, who largely perpetrate violence against women (who are their current or former partner) and children.
* Family violence can occur in a range of ways across different relationship types and communities, including but not limited to the following:
  + Children and young people as victim survivors in their own right who have unique experiences, vulnerabilities and needs
  + Older peoples’ experiences of family violence, often described as elder abuse, from intimate partners, adult children or carers, or extended family members
  + The experiences of family violence may vary across communities and people from Aboriginal or diverse backgrounds may additionally experience structural inequalities.

# What are the recommendations for children under MARAM?

Experiences of family violence can create significant risks to a child or young person’s social, emotional, psychological and physical health and wellbeing. Children and young people may be victim survivors of family violence whether they are targeted or not, or directly exposed or not. Impacts on children who live with family violence may be acute and chronic, immediate and cumulative, direct and indirect, seen and unseen. It is important to view and acknowledge children and young people as victim survivors in their own right and allow them to contribute to risk assessment, management and safety planning. Children and young people have unique perspectives on their own safety that can inform your risk assessment. In addition to barriers experienced by adult victim survivors, young people may experience additional barriers due to their age and developmental stage.

[**Responsibility 1: Respectful, sensitive and safe engagement Practice Guide**](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/PG%20Responsibility%201_0.pdf) <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/PG%20Responsibility%201\_0.pdf> details further considerations needed for working with children and young people.

# What is the Structured Professional Judgement model?

MARAM incorporates a ***Structured Professional Judgement***model which enables professionals to assess information to determine the level or seriousness of risk. It is an opportunity to ask the victim survivor about their self-assessment of their risk, fear and safety and to explore if family violence risk factors are present. [Observing signs of trauma](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%201.docx) can also provide evidence of family violence risk.



The Structured Professional Judgement model consists of four key components combined in the assessment of risk: **victim self-assessment**; **evidence-based risk factors;** **information sharing;** **professional judgement and intersectional analysis**.

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## Victim self-assessment

Risk assessment relies on you or another professional ascertaining:

* a victim survivor’s self-assessment of their level of risk, fear and safety
* identifying the family violence risk factors that are present.

You can gather information to inform this approach from a variety of sources, including:

* interviewing or ‘assessing’ the victim survivor directly, and/or
* requesting or sharing, as authorised under applicable legislative Information Sharing Schemes, with other organisations about the risk factors present or other family violence risk relevant information about a victim or perpetrator’s circumstances.

You should consider this information and apply your professional judgement to each of the elements; analysing and interpreting information to determine the level of risk. Risk assessment is a point-in-time assessment of the level of risk. Risk is dynamic and can change over time, which means that risk should be regularly reviewed, and any changes should inform future assessment. Your assessment of the level or seriousness of risk, as well as appropriate risk management approaches, must be informed by an intersectional analysis (detailed below).

## Evidence-based risk factors

All MARAM tools and resources are underpinned by the same evidence-based family violence risk factors to ensure that there is a consistent approach to family violence risk assessment across sectors and promotes collaborative practice. The MARAM family violence risk factors are presented below. Some of these factors may be new to you if you are familiar with using the Common Risk Assessment Framework (CRAF) indicated by # symbol. Risk factors in **bold** indicate increased risk of the victim being killed or almost killed (serious risk factors).

### Risk factors relevant to adult victim circumstances

* **Physical assault whilst pregnant/following birth**
* Self-assessed level of risk #
* **Planning to leave or recent separation**
* **Escalation – increase in severity and/or frequency of violence**
* Financial abuse/difficulties (including property damage)
* Imminence #

### Risk factors specific to children caused by perpetrator

* Exposure to family violence #
* Sexualised behaviours towards a child by the perpetrator #
* Child intervention in violence #
* Behaviour indicating non-return of child #
* Undermining the child-parent relationship #
* Professional and statutory intervention #

### Risk factors specific to children’s circumstances

* History of professional involvement and/or statutory intervention #
* Change in behaviour not explained by other causes #
* Child as victim in other forms of harm #

### Risk factors for adult or child victims caused by perpetrator behaviours

* **Controlling behaviours**
* **Access to weapons**
* **Use of weapon in most recent event**
* Has ever harmed or threatened to harm victim or family members
* **Has ever tried to strangle or choke the victim**
* **Has ever threatened to kill victim**
* **Has ever harmed or threatened to harm or kill pets or other animals**
* **Has ever threatened or tried to self harm or suicide**
* **Stalking of victim**
* **Sexual assault of victim**
* Previous or current breach of court orders/Intervention Order
* History of family violence #
* History of violent behaviour (not family violence)
* **Obsession/jealous behaviour towards victim**
* **Unemployed/Disengaged from education**
* **Drug and/or alcohol misuse**
* Mental illness/Depression
* Isolation
* Physical harm #
* Emotional abuse #
* Property damage #

It is important to note the following when you review the family violence risk factors:

* They are not weighted. Some are associated with an increased risk of the victim being killed or almost killed (in bold in the graphic above).
* The evidence base upon which the risk factors have been drawn are primarily based on reports of family violence incidents in heterosexual intimate partner relationships.
* The risk factors are relevant to family violence risk in Aboriginal communities, diverse communities and at-risk age groups, including children, young people and older people.
* The risk factors are described in gender-neutral language, where appropriate, to support further collection and understanding of the presentation of family violence risk factors and continuing development of the evidence base.
* The assessment of individual child experiences of risk should be undertaken with an understanding of the risk being experienced by any adult victim in the family as well as the child specific risk factors.

## Information Sharing

The Victorian Government has introduced laws to make it easier for professionals to collaborate with each other, and better support the children and families they are working with:

* **The Child Information Sharing Scheme** **(CISS),** which enables information to be shared to promote the wellbeing or safety of a child;
* **The Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS),** which enables information to be shared to assess or manage family violence risk

These Schemes aim to streamline information sharing arrangements by promoting a shared responsibility for child wellbeing and safety and family violence and enabling increased collaboration and better risk assessment and management across the service system. For more information about the Schemes and to access resources to support your information sharing, go to the [Victorian Government Information Sharing webpage](https://www.vic.gov.au/guides-templates-tools-for-information-sharing) <https://www.vic.gov.au/guides-templates-tools-for-information-sharing>.

## Intersectional Analysis

Applying an intersectional lens means considering a person’s whole, multi-layered identity and life experience, and reflecting on one’s own bias to be able to respond safely and appropriately in practice. Structural inequality and discrimination create and amplify barriers and risk which continue to exacerbate systemic marginalisation, power imbalance and social inequality for those experiencing family violence.

Intersectional analysis gives due weight to service users’ identities and experience and understanding of risk. It is a theoretical approach to recognise the interconnected nature of social categorisations, identity and experience. Intersectional analysis reflects on an individual’s age, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, cultural background, language, religion, visa status, class, socioeconomic status, ability (including physical, neurological, cognitive, sensory, intellectual or psychosocial impairment and/or disability) or geographic location.

Gender and the drivers of family violence are critical to informing your understanding of intersectional analysis in the family violence practice context.

**Section 9** of the [**MARAM Foundation Knowledge Guide**](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/Foundation%20Knowledge%20guide.pdf) <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/Foundation%20Knowledge%20guide.pdf> and [**Responsibilities 3: Intermediate risk assessments Practice Guide**](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/PG%20Responsibility%203.pdf)<https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/PG%20Responsibility%203.pdf>provide further information about how to apply professional judgement and intersectional analysis to your practice.

# What tools should I be using to assess and manage risk?

For Brief and Intermediate practitioners, there are tools based on the evidence-based risk factors to assist you with your assessments:

* [**Adult Brief Risk Assessment Tool**](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%205.docx) <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%205.docx>**:** This tool is to be used in short term crisis situations, or where there is a brief window of engagement. It is a subset of questions identifying presence of high-risk indicators (Appendix 5).
* [**Adult Intermediate Risk Assessment Tool**](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%206.docx) <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%206.docx>**:** This tool can to be used if engagement is short or long term and allows time for more detailed assessment and holistic management. It is used if family violence has been confirmed through screening or disclosure. The tool contains detailed questions about family violence risk (Appendix 6).
* [**Child Assessment Tool**](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%207.docx) <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%207.docx>**:** This tool includes questions that can be asked for both adult victim survivor and directly to the child (Appendix 7).
* **Perpetrator Behaviour Assessment Tool** is currently under development.

The following tools are for Safety Planning:

* [**Making a Safety Plan**](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%209.docx) <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%209.docx>for adult victim survivors which can include safety planning for children through the parent/carer (Appendix 9).
* [**Safety Plan for Older Children/Young People**](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%2010.docx) <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%2010.docx>for use directly with older children or young people (Appendix 10)
* [**Responsibility 3: Intermediate Risk Assessment Practice Guide**](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/PG%20Responsibility%203.pdf) <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/PG%20Responsibility%203.pdf> provides the evidence base and guidance for using these assessment tools.

# What’s my role in intermediate risk management and safety planning?

All prescribed organisations have some role in risk management matched to their responsibilities under the MARAM Framework. All risk management is based on risk assessment and should respond to the level of risk being experienced, as well as to the forms of violence used. In your role as a Brief and Intermediate practitioner, you will be identifying immediate actions and developing risk management strategies (Responsibility 4) that include safety plans based on your intermediate risk assessment activities (Responsibility 3).

[**Responsibility 4: Intermediate risk management Practice Guide**](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/PG%20Responsibility%204.pdf) <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/PG%20Responsibility%204.pdf> supports professionals to undertake risk management that responds to the presentation and level of family violence risk. This includes information about: working with victim survivors to develop an appropriate risk management response based on their unique experience; the different elements of intermediate risk management; discussing options to stay at home or leave; responding to serious and immediate risk; documenting evidence of family violence; developing risk management strategies where there are multiple victim survivors, including child victim survivors; and developing safety plans for children and young people.

Safety planning is thinking about practical actions that can be undertaken by a victim survivor to be safer when living with family violence. Where family violence risk has been identified, all victim survivors, including children and young people, benefit from having a safety plan. Safety planning templates are provided to help you.

# What are the next steps if there is immediate danger?

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| Immediate danger:  Client is willing to receive further assistance | Immediate danger:  Client is not willing to receive support |
| * Call Police (000) if client has experienced or is likely to experience immediate risk of family violence; * Seek support of a specialist family violence service; * Consider information sharing, secondary consultations and referrals; * Consider child wellbeing and safety and share information if needed. | * If your client is in immediate danger and does not want to contact the Police, you have a duty of care to respond to this risk by contacting Police (000); * Acting upon your duty of care responsibilities should be done in consultation with your manager. It is essential for practitioners to use their professional judgement to ensure clients feel supported and respected through this process; * Ensure your client is in a safe place until police attend and they have access to crisis support from a specialist service; * If the victim survivor does not want support from a specialist service, support their safety planning by making sure they have emergency contact details and are aware of, and know how to, access support from Police, Safe Steps and the local Specialist Family Violence Service. * Consider information sharing regarding any children or with victim survivor’s consent. * You will also need to consider your obligations to make a referral to Child Protection. |
| No immediate danger:  Client is willing to receive support: | No immediate danger:  Client is not willing to receive support: |
| * Provide information about services and options available including support to make a report to Police; * Refer and collaborate with a specialist family violence service for comprehensive risk assessment and management; * Consider child wellbeing and safety and share information if needed * Make a safety plan including a plan for children. | * Provide information about services and options available including support to make a report to Police; * Consider child wellbeing and safety and share information if needed * Monitor closely; * Let the client know that if their circumstances change, they should seek assistance. |

# What’s my role regarding perpetrators under MARAM?

Many professionals have a role in working with perpetrators of family violence through their existing service engagement. Your service may be accessed for a primary purpose of receiving assistance with housing, drug or alcohol misuse or abuse, mental health issues or illness, or a range of other health and wellbeing needs. This may also be due to a professional’s role within a statutory service, such as relating to Child Protection matters. It is important to be aware of the possibility that a service user may be using violence. The identification of perpetrators can be complex, and distinctions should be made between adult perpetrators and adolescents who use violence in the home. In any setting, a professional’s objective is primarily to identify behaviours that may present as risk to victim survivors and to contribute to safety and risk management.

Important considerations when working with a service user who may be perpetrating violence to their family member/s are: What collusion is and how to avoid it; The role perpetrators have to their own accountability; What a predominant aggressor is; Misidentification of a perpetrator.

Perpetrators should be encouraged to acknowledge and take responsibility to end their violent, controlling and coercive behavior, and service response to perpetrators should be collaborative and coordinated through a system-wide approach that collectively and systematically creates opportunities for perpetrator accountability.

Chapter 11 of the[**MARAM Foundation Knowledge Guide**](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/Foundation%20Knowledge%20guide.pdf) <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/Foundation%20Knowledge%20guide.pdf>addresses these issues in detail and role specific **Responsibilities for Practice** guide your practice in this area.

Under **Responsibility 3** where appropriate to your role and mandate of your organisation or service and where safe to do so you will be expected to contribute to behavior assessment through engagement with a perpetrator, including through the use of the **Perpetrator Behavior Assessment** tool, and contribute to keeping them in view and accountable for their actions and behavior. Under **Responsibility 4** if working directly with perpetrators you should attempt intermediate risk management when safe to do so, including safety planning.

Professionals in key identified workforces will be trained to engage with a perpetrator about their behaviour in accordance with their role and responsibilities, identified by their organisation, under the MARAM Framework. Guidance on working safely with perpetrators appropriate to professional roles is under development.

# What resources are available to support me?

The MARAM Practice Guides support professionals to understand their relevant responsibilities towards the identification, assessment and ongoing management of family violence risk as it relates to their specific roles. The Practice Guides include the **Foundational Knowledge Guide**, and **Responsibilities for Practice Guides 1-10**. The guides are available on the [Victorian Government MARAM resources webpage](https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources) <https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources>.

# What training is available to support me in my role?

* **MARAM:** The Department has tailored Brief and Intermediate training for funded services and workforces. Training relevant staff is a requirement for organisations who are aligning their policies and procedures to MARAM. The Brief and Intermediate training aims to support practitioners to understand their MARAM responsibilities including what it means for their day-to-day practice. Visit the [website to access this training](https://www.vic.gov.au/training-for-information-sharing-and-maram) <https://www.vic.gov.au/training-for-information-sharing-and-maram>.
* **Information Sharing:** eLearn modules are also now available for DHHS funded services and workforces. To access these modules, visit the [Information Sharing and MARAM training webpage](https://www.vic.gov.au/training-for-information-sharing-and-maram) <https://www.vic.gov.au/training-for-information-sharing-and-maram>.

# Where can I get more information?

For further information about MARAM and the information sharing schemes, please email: [infosharing@familysafety.vic.gov.au](mailto:infosharing@familysafety.vic.gov.au) [infosharing@familysafety.vic.gov.au](mailto:infosharing@familysafety.vic.gov.au) or visit the [Victorian Government MARAM website](https://www.vic.gov.au/information-sharing-schemes-and-the-maram-framework) <https://www.vic.gov.au/information-sharing-schemes-and-the-maram-framework>.

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