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| MARAM Screening and Identification Practitioner Guide |
| Role, 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 **Screening and Identification** 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.
* [**Responsibility Practice Guides** **1 & 2**](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cayor1912%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CTemp%5Cnotes81ADC1%5CResponsibility%20Practice%20Guides%201%20%26%202)< 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 you in your specific role as a Screening and Identification 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 organisations and staff across the system. MARAM is underpinned by an evidence review undertaken by the University of Melbourne. 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 Screening and Identification practitioner?

As a Screening and Identification practitioner in a prescribed organisation, your work will involve addressing universal needs of service users, which will not be primarily related to the person’s experience of family violence. You will be capable of incorporating family violence identification and screening practice into your usual work.

# What are my responsibilities as a Screening and Identification practitioner?

MARAM establishes 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**:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **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 core role is to respond to people experiencing or using family violence.  |
| 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 |

As a Screening and Identification practitioners you have the following six responsibilities:

* **Responsibility 1: Respectful, sensitive and safe engagement**. Understands the nature and dynamics of family violence, facilitate an appropriate, accessible, culturally responsive environment for safe disclosure of information by service users, and to respond to disclosures sensitively. Recognises that any engagement of service users who may be a perpetrator must occur safely and not collude or respond to coercive behaviours.
* **Responsibility 2: Identification of family violence.** Uses information gained through engagement with service users and other providers (and in some cases, through use of screening tools to aid identification/or routine screening of all clients) to identify indicators of family violence risk and potentially affected family members. Understands when it might be safe to ask questions of clients who may be a perpetrator, to assist with identification.
* **Responsibility 5: Seek consultation for comprehensive risk assessment, risk management and referrals**. Seeks internal supervision and consults 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 shares 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.** Contributes 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. Ensures safety plans are enacted.

# 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. As a Screening and Identification practitioners, you will work with victim survivors to identify if they have any children who may be affected by family violence and screen the young person accordingly (either through the protective parent or directly according to your role).

[**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) < 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**.

##

## 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 promote 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:

Your organisation will have its own policy and procedures in place on how information sharing is conducted. You should refer to these for guidance.

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 **Responsibility 1: Respectful and Safe Engagement** provide further information about how to apply professional judgement and intersectional analysis to your practice.

# What tools should I be using to identify family violence risk?

All professionals should apply **Responsibility 2** Practice Guide to help identify if family violence is present, and where appropriate to your role undertake screening for an adult, child or young person. The guide contains the following tools based on the **evidence-based risk factors** are designed to assist you with your assessments and basic safety planning:

* **Observable Signs of Trauma:** This tool details observable signs of trauma in adults, child or young person, and unborn. It covers Age related signs and indicators of neglect ([Appendix 1](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%201.docx)) <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%201.docx>.
* **Guidance on Use of Screening Tool** ([Appendix 2](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%202_0.docx)). <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%202\_0.docx>
* **Adult Screening and Identification Tool:** Stand-alone template ([Appendix 3](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%203.docx)). <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%203.docx>
* **Response Options and Safety Plan:** Contains a flow diagram of response options and a basic safety plan ([Appendix 4](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%204.docx)).<https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%204.docx>

## How do I use the Screening Tool?

You should use the Screening Tool if your client discloses that they are experiencing family violence or if you suspect family violence is occurring because you have identified evidence-based risk factors or observed any **signs of trauma**. Detailed practice guidance is provided at **Responsibility 2: Guidance on Use of Screening Tool** ([Appendix 2](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%202_0.docx)). <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%202\_0.docx>

It is important from the outset to ensure your client is made to feel comfortable and safe and that you engage and respond in a sensitive, respectful and culturally safe way. Ensure you have explained your role and the limits of confidentiality are explicit. Arrange for children to be cared for separately and provide privacy. It is critical you do not ask questions in the presence of a perpetrator or a person you suspect is using family violence.

You should initially use open-ended rapport building questions with your client. Then provide contextual information before directly asking screening questions, acknowledging your concern for her safety and welfare and explaining you want to make further enquiries to assess her safety and identify her support needs using a family violence tool to guide your enquiry.

The Screening Tool key questions are:

1. **Has anyone in your family done something to make you or your children feel unsafe or afraid?**

Question 1 Identifies if family violence is present and gives an indication of the level of fear felt.

If the answer is **no/never**, then we have established that family violence is not present and we don’t have to ask any further questions. You should respect your client’s answer and advise that if family violence occurs in the future that they can seek assistance.

If the answer to this question is ‘**yes**’, follow up with the following questions:

1. **Is there more than one person in your family that is making you or your children feel unsafe or afraid?**
	* **How frequently?**(rarely/ sometimes/ often/always).

It is critical to understand the frequency of experience of fear, in order to guide you on whether any immediate management responses are required.

The next questions help establish the level (seriousness) of family violence risk and relate to the evidence-based risk factors of the Structured Professional Judgment model.

1. **Have they controlled your day-to-day activities (e.g. who you see, where you go) or put you down?**

If the answer is **no/never**: no action is required.

If the answer to this question is ‘**yes’**, follow up with the question:

* + **How frequently?** (rarely/ sometimes/ often/always).

It is critical to understand the frequency of controlling behaviours, in order to guide you on whether any immediate management responses are required.

1. **Have they threatened to hurt you in any way?**

If the answer is **no/never**: no action is required.

If the answer to this question is ‘**yes’**, follow up with:

* + What type of threat have they used?
	+ How specific are they in the detail of the threat?
	+ How frequently? (rarely/ sometimes/ often/always).
1. **Have they physically hurt you in any way (hit, slapped, kicked or otherwise physically hurt you)?**

If the answer is **no/never**: no action is required.

If the answer to this question is ‘**yes**’, follow up with:

* + What type of physical harm have they used?
	+ How frequently? (rarely/ sometimes/ often/always).

**If the responses to the above screening questions 1-5 are ‘often’ and if you have identified that behaviours are escalating, this may indicate serious risk.**

1. **Do you have any immediate concerns about safety of your children or someone else in your family?**

This question is asking about **Imminence.** The answer will determine if you should take immediate action to respond to the risk.

1. **Do you feel safe when you leave here today?**

This question will identify if the person is ***at immediate risk***.

1. **Would you engage with a trusted person or police if you felt unsafe or in danger?**

If the response is ‘**no**’, follow up with questions exploring reasons for hesitance. Remember that this question is not used to imply that police involvement is always required.

# 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.
 |

Detailed practice guidance is provided at **Responsibility 2 Practice Guide: Response Options and Safety Plan**([Appendix 4](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%204.docx))<https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%204.docx> and contains a flow diagram of response options and a basic safety plan.

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

At a Screening and Identification level, your responsibilities are to contribute to risk management by:

* Identifying if family violence is occurring (through use of the of the Screening tool).
* Supporting connection to another professional within your service who has responsibilities at a Brief and Intermediate or Comprehensive level or to specialist family violence service.
* Responding to any immediate danger.
* Supporting a victim survivor’s safety planning

At the Screening and Identification level, there may be some circumstances where you can develop a safety plan with your client (adult or young person). **Responsibility 2 Practice Guide:** **Response Options and Safety Plan** ([Appendix 4](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%204.docx)) <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/APPENDIX%204.docx> contains a flow diagram of response options and a basic safety plan template to guide your practice.

Every safety plan will be unique and based on the needs of the victim survivor. You should be guided by the victim survivor on what is important and safe for them in their basic safety plan. The safety planning process should also consider the needs of children/young people.

This plan is an interim measure and should be reviewed by a professional with Brief and Intermediate or Comprehensive responsibilities as soon as practicable. If safety planning is not within your role, contact a professional within your service or a specialist family violence service who can assist. Professionals who need to make referrals, seek secondary consultation or share information should refer to guidance on Practice Guidance: [Responsibilities 5 and 6 (Information sharing with other services including secondary consultation and referral](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-07/Responsibility-5-and-6-Information-Sharing-with-Other-Services-Including-Secondary-Consultation-and-Referral_0.pdf))<https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-07/Responsibility-5-and-6-Information-Sharing-with-Other-Services-Including-Secondary-Consultation-and-Referral\_0.pdf>.

# 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 1,2, 5, 6, 9 &10** applicable to those with Screening and Identification responsibilities. 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 Screening and Identification training for funded services and workforces. Training relevant staff is a requirement for organisations who are aligning their policies and procedures to MARAM. The 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 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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