



Submission to the consultation on the development of a Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for New South Wales

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Who is NSW Family Services?

NSW Family Services (FamS) is the peak body for non-government, not-for-profit organisations working with vulnerable children and families across NSW.

We encourage and help these organisations to deliver quality support services and provide them with strong representation across rural, remote and metropolitan districts.

FamS has always been driven by strong values, and our vision is:

Safe Children
Strong Families
Supportive Communities

FamS was established in the late 1980s and provides support to about 200 services throughout NSW. Our members provide services such as home visiting, parenting groups, playgroups, case management, individual counselling, 'connections to community' activities and supported referrals.

We provide support to our members through:

- Systematic policy and advocacy: to inform and enable the government to implement solutions that support vulnerable children and families, while keeping members well informed about emerging issues, reforms and current policy related to the child and family sector.
- Building skills and knowledge: to share knowledge and resources about evidence informed approaches related to the child and family sector.
- Modelling and promoting outcomes-based frameworks: to enable the sector to collect and use data to inform practice and collaborate to provide better results for clients, practitioners and organisations.

Our work is guided by 10 core principles endorsed by our members:

1. All members of a family should be safe from violence
2. Children should be provided with safe quality alternatives if it is deemed they cannot live with their birth family
3. There is recognition that families have multiple forms, not necessarily biologically based
4. In Family Services, staff and families work together in relationships based on trust and respect
5. Family services enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members - adults, young people and children
6. Family services affirm and strengthen families' social, cultural, racial and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a pluralist society
7. Family services are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process

8. Family services are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues
9. Principles of family services are modeled in all aspects of the project, including planning, service delivery, management and administration
10. The priority at the heart of all our work with children and families, across the service spectrum must be the safety, health and wellbeing of children and young people

District Reps program

In 2013 Family and Community Services (FaCS) implemented a new arrangement of localisation within 15 Districts. Localisation meant that FaCS has within each District a single, local integrated presence for clients and communities. FamS was the first peak in NSW to establish a District Reps program that responded to the new structure, thereby ensuring that we remained well placed to represent the diverse needs of vulnerable children and families and our members across the State.

Each of the 15 Districts has a FamS representative. These reps are leaders within their communities with extensive experience and networks with those working with vulnerable children and families.

Having a meaningful connection to members is essential to the function of FamS as a peak body. The District Reps program assists us to maintain this connection. District Reps allow FamS to not only have a real and valuable presence locally, but creates a forum to identify and debate emerging systemic issues affecting service delivery and access pathways for clients. The District Reps program ensures that FamS is well placed to be the lead voice of the sector.

Outcomes measurement

FamS has specialised knowledge and skills in outcomes measurement using the Results Based Accountability™ framework (RBA™), and the evidence based case management system, Supporting Children and Responding to Families (SCARF). We work extensively with the sector to build skills and implement these evidence based systems. One way we do this is to organise and facilitate forums that focus on increasing knowledge in evidence based approaches or building capacity on practice issues.

FamS sits on a number of working groups led by government and non-government organisations that enable us to stay abreast of emerging issues and influence policy related to the child and family sector.

Introduction

FamS support and acknowledge the commitment from the state government to improve responses to victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence (DFV) in NSW. We owe it to the communities, families and children experiencing social deprivation and disadvantage in communities across NSW to seek out innovative ways to improve our service system.

This submission is based on the extensive knowledge, skills and experiences of FamS staff, our District Reps, members, partners, current research and evidence related to the child and family sector and collaborative practice.

Background

Through a series of consultations with government and non-government agencies in the community sector, Women NSW are developing a “Blueprint” which is to outline the ideal service system to address domestic and family violence in NSW.

In this submission NSW Family Services illustrates how a sound outcomes measurement framework can be applied to guide the service system towards achieving better outcomes for victims and survivors of domestic and family violence.

The first step was to review some of the major national and state plans concerned with responding to issues of DFV and look for commonalities in outcomes, indicators and strategies, in order to avoid duplication within the Blueprint.

The main plans that were reviewed were: *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*¹, the *NSW Domestic Violence Justice Strategy*², *It Stops Here*³ and *Going Home Staying Home*⁴.

Outcomes and indicators

These plans are all concerned with a response to domestic violence on a population level. The outcomes within these are all very similar and can be aligned with the National Plan outcomes:

1. Communities are safe and free from violence
2. Relationships are respectful
3. Indigenous communities are strengthened

¹ The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 – 2022, Commonwealth, 2011

² NSW Domestic Violence Justice Strategy: Improving the NSW criminal justice system's response to domestic violence 2013-2017, New South Wales, 2012

³ It Stops Here: Standing together to end domestic and family violence in NSW, New South Wales, 2014

⁴ Going Home Staying Home: Reform plan, New South Wales, 2012

4. Services meet the need of women and their children experiencing violence
5. Justice responses are effective
6. Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account

All plans lack clear indicators (or measures of the outcomes). However, the National Plan identifies success as:

- reduced prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault
- increased proportion of women who feel safe in their communities
- reduced deaths related to domestic violence and sexual assault
- reduced proportion of children exposed to their mother's or carer's experience of domestic violence.

These can be translated into measures and are proposed as the indicators that the service system and communities can use to guide them in responding to DFV (Table 1). It is important to note that the National Plan also identifies "measures of success" under each outcome. However, some of these are problematic because data might be captured sporadically and some of the measures are not in fact population-level measures.

Table 1: The National Outcomes and possible indicators

Outcome	Indicator
Communities are safe and free from violence	# of DFV incidents in NSW # of sexual assaults in NSW % of deaths where DFV was a factor % of women and children who feel safe in their community % of ROSH reports where DFV was a factor
Relationships are respectful	# of young people who report they know what a respectful relationship is
Indigenous communities are strengthened	% of DFV incidents in NSW where the victim was Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander % of sexual assaults in NSW where the victim was Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander % of deaths where DFV was a factor and victim was Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander % of perpetrators who are Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander
Services meet the need of women and their children experiencing violence	% of women who feel safer as a result of the service/intervention
Justice responses are effective	% of perpetrators who are sentenced
Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account	% of perpetrators who reoffend

Strategies

All plans have strategies proposed to address issues related to domestic and family violence. After analysing the strategies from the plans, all can be grouped under three categories, or focus areas:

1. focus on prevention and early intervention
2. focus on victim support and better service delivery
3. focus on perpetrator accountability and rehabilitation

The broader strategies have been mapped to the focus areas in the Table 2. These strategies seem like something that is needed in the sector. However, they do not have identified measures of success and it is therefore unknown how they would be evaluated.

A State response:

All of these plans are focused on the macro-level response to DFV. It is clear that all of them share the desired outcomes for victims and survivors of DFV, as well as how to address issues associated with DFV. One limitation of the plans is the lack of clear indicators that measure progress towards these desired outcomes. However, this can be easily addressed with the application of the indicators suggested in this document.

These plans lack the micro-level implementation guidelines that communities and services can use to ensure better outcomes for those affected by DFV. What is desperately needed in a plan or blueprint is a process that outlines how districts, communities and neighbourhoods can use these plans to guide their response to DFV.

How RBA™ can help with the DFV Blueprint?

Results Based Accountability™ (RBA™) is an outcomes-based, quality improvement framework which uses a disciplined way of thinking and taking action to improve outcomes in communities, cities, countries and nations. It is also used to improve the performance of programs, organisations and service systems. RBA™ begins at 'ends' and works backwards step-by-step to 'means'. For populations the ends are conditions of well-being for children, adults and communities as a whole. For programs the ends are how children, families and adults who access programs and services are 'better off' when the program works. RBA™ uses a 7-Question process that guides collectives and organisations from talk to action, otherwise known as Turning the Curve. This process can be utilised to create a change in the community, or to improve on program performance.

Population Accountability 7 Questions

1. What are the quality of life conditions we want for the children, adults and families who live in our community? – Population Results
2. What would these conditions look like if we could see them?
3. How can we measure these conditions? - Indicators

4. How are we doing on the most important of these measures? – Story Behind the Baseline
5. Who are the partners that have a role to play in doing better?
6. What works to do better, including low cost and no cost ideas?
7. What do we propose to do?

Performance Accountability 7 Questions

1. Who are our customers?
2. How can we measure if our customers are better off?
3. How can we measure if we are delivering services well?
4. How are we doing on the most important of these measures?
5. Who are the partners that have a role to play in doing better?
6. What works to do better, including low cost and no cost ideas?
7. What do we propose to do?

The framework provides clearly defined common sense tools for organisations to measure if 'anyone is better off' as a result of the programs that they offer. These tools enable organisations to clearly demonstrate the contribution that they are making to the population outcomes.

An outcomes measurement way of thinking can be used in the DFV Blueprint as the disciplined process that the service system can adopt to effectively respond to issues of domestic and family violence. The Blueprint can address on the population and performance levels.

On Population Accountability level, the DFV Blueprint can provide the context in which the service system operates by adopting the National Plan's six outcomes and indicators; and by adopting the Strategies as outlined in Table 2, it can provide guidance on what strategies the service system could implement to address DFV.

On the Performance Accountability level it can provide a system for shared measurement of the strategies that can align with the population level indicators. Firstly, there should be a review of the data that is being captured for government funded DFV programs, or what the services are actually reporting on. The review of these measures should tell us if services are capturing outcomes and if they are capturing similar information. If there are gaps in outcomes measures, then these should be developed for those programs. They should align with population indicators where possible, and programs that have the same objective but are funded through different streams should report on same outcomes.

For example, programs under the *Staying Home Leaving Violence* should have set outcomes measures that every service should report on, for example:

- % Clients with improved safety status at case closure
- % Clients who report that they are more aware of NSW laws relating to domestic and family violence

- % Clients who report a better understanding of domestic and family violence on children
- % Clients remaining in their own home or a home of their choice

These measures are aligned with the first National Plan's Outcome – *Communities are safe and free of violence*. The percent of clients with improved safety status at case closure aligns with the percent of women and children who feel safe in their community.

What does it look like in practice?

Each community within NSW, led by a consortium of services and community stakeholders, would use the DFV Blueprint as a guide for responding to DFV. This would mean that they would adopt the six outcomes and indicators, but use local data to go through the Turn the Curve process. They would come up with their own strategies to address the DFV issues in those communities. Each partner within the community would ensure that they are measuring if those strategies are actually making a difference to the people they serve.

Through our extensive experience in outcomes measurement, FamS is well placed to lead this work across New South Wales. To illustrate this, FamS would like to work with an identified District to address the DFV issues in their community by:

- facilitating a Turn the Curve session;
- choosing one outcome from the National Plan and one suggested indicator to turn the curve one for that community, for example, we could use *Communities are safe and free from violence* as the outcome and number of DFV incidents in the district; and
- guiding the group through the seven questions and use the strategies as a guide to what works to turn the curve.

This process would guide the district to identify and agree on a number of locally driven strategies and an action plan to implement in their community. FamS could support services to collect outcomes data to demonstrate the real impact they are making to improve the responses to victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence in New South Wales.

Recommendations

FamS recommends that the NSW Government:

1. Adopt the six outcomes in the *National Plan for Reducing Violence Against Women and Their Children*
2. Work with FamS to:
 - a. identify appropriate indicators to measure the six outcomes, showing NSW data
 - b. adopt the Strategies as suggestions of “what works” to be used to guide local community collectives
 - c. create a shared measurement system which aligns with the outcomes and indicators to be used by local service systems

Table 2: Strategies compared

	Focus on Prevention and Early Intervention	Focus on Victim Support/Better Service Delivery	Focus on Perpetrator Accountability and Rehabilitation
National Plan	<p>Strategy 2.1: Build on young people's capacity to develop respectful relationships</p> <p>Strategy 2.2: Support adults to model respectful relationships</p> <p>Strategy 2.3: Promote positive male attitudes and behaviours</p> <p>Strategy 1.2: Focus on primary prevention</p> <p>Strategy 4.1: Enhance the first point of contact to identify and respond to needs</p> <p>Strategy 6.3: Intervene early to prevent violence</p>	<p>Strategy 3.2: Build community capacity at the local level</p> <p>Strategy 3.3: Improve access to appropriate services</p> <p>Strategy 4.1: Enhance the first point of contact to identify and respond to needs</p> <p>Strategy 4.2: Support specialist domestic violence and sexual assault services to deliver responses that meet needs</p> <p>Strategy 4.3: Support mainstream services to identify and respond to needs</p> <p>Strategy 5.1: Improve access to justice for women and their children</p> <p>Strategy 5.2: Strengthen leadership across justice systems</p> <p>Strategy 5.3: Justice systems work better together and with other systems</p>	<p>Strategy 6.1: Hold perpetrators accountable</p> <p>Strategy 6.2: Reduce the risk of recidivism</p> <p>Strategy 6.3: Intervene early to prevent violence</p>
Justice Strategy	<p>JS Strategy 1.3 Immediate referral to victim services</p>	<p>Strategy 1.1 Proactive investigation of domestic violence incidents</p> <p>Strategy 1.2 Consistent collection of evidence</p> <p>Strategy 1.3 Immediate referral to victim services</p> <p>Strategy 1.4 Coordinated interagency risk management</p> <p>Strategy 2.1 Compliance with the NSW Carter of Victims' Rights</p> <p>Strategy 2.2 Court support and aDFVocacy for victims</p> <p>Strategy 2.3 Specialist domestic violence training</p>	<p>Strategy 5.1 Proactive investigation of alleged breaches</p> <p>Strategy 5.2 Prompt service of briefs of evidence</p> <p>Strategy 5.3 Timely legal services for defendants</p> <p>Strategy 5.4 Monitoring repeat offenders</p> <p>Strategy 5.5 Prompt reporting of breaches of court ordered programs to the court</p> <p>Outcome 6</p>

		<p>for prosecutors Strategy 2.4 Pre-hearing meetings with victims Strategy 2.5 Victims support at hearings</p> <p>Strategy 3.1 Accessible and effective case management services for victims Strategy 3.2 Safety planning with victims Strategy 3.3 Accessible counselling for victims Strategy 3.4 Financial assistance for victims</p>	<p>Perpetrators change their behaviour and re-offending is reduced or eliminated Strategy 6.1 Case management for eligible defendants Strategy 6.2 Eligible offenders attend the Domestic Abuse Program Strategy 6.3 High quality behaviour change programs</p>
It Stops Here	<p>Element 1: A strategic approach to prevention and early intervention</p>	<p>Element 2: Streamlined referral pathways to secure victims' safety and support recovery</p> <p>Element 3: Accessible, flexible, person-centred service responses that make the best use of resources</p> <p>Element 4: A strong, skilled and capable workforce</p>	<p>Element 5: A strengthened criminal justice system response</p>
Going Home Staying Home		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.GHSH Streamlined access for clients: helping clients access the services they need 2.Client information management system Better planning and resource allocation: locating services where they are needed most 3. Industry and workforce development: enabling organisations and staff to deliver the reforms 	

