

# FILLING THE GAP

SERVICE MODEL  
APRIL 2011

Integrated post crisis response  
for women and children who have  
experienced family violence

Report written by Kathy Desmond.



McAuley Community  
Services for Women  
a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy



# Filling the Gap

## Service Model

### INTEGRATED POST CRISIS RESPONSE FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED FAMILY VIOLENCE

Prepared in consultation with a number of community sector organisations working with women and their children who have experienced family violence.

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## FOREWORD

***'Building effective strategies to help women rebuild their lives following family violence in an ongoing and sustainable way is a key challenge for our system response'***

*(A Right to Safety & Justice: Office of Women's Policy, DPCD 2010).*

In Australia, more than one in three women are subjected to intimate partner violence in their lifetime and approximately one in four children and young people witness family violence. Each year, violence against women – which includes family violence - costs Australia \$13.6 billion. Around \$3.4 billion of this is the annual cost to Victoria. By 2021, the national figure is expected to rise to \$15.6 billion with Victoria's share estimated to be around \$3.9 billion (DPC, 2010).

Contemporary research has clearly demonstrated that family violence has significant long-term economic, physical and mental health impacts on women and considerable psychological, emotional and behavioural consequences for children. The same research also highlights the extreme vulnerability of women and children after they have left a violent relationship – particularly their heightened risk of post separation violence which can continue for many months or even years.

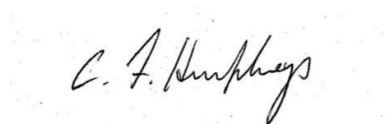
In addition, these women must also re-establish their lives and those of their children, frequently with few, if any, personal and financial resources. Current research demonstrates that women are more likely to return to a violent relationship after leaving if on-going support is not available – particularly when they are unable to adequately provide for themselves and their children. Lack of financial capacity to support their family and poor housing options are known to be major factors influencing a woman's decision to either remain with or return to a violent partner.

While the family violence service system in Victoria has undergone significant reform over the past five years there is still no systematic provision of long-term post crisis support for women and children to assist them in dealing with the longer term impacts of family violence.

The need for service system continuity between the provision of crisis intervention and longer term support for women and children who have experienced family violence has been well researched. Similarly, the associated benefits for the service system, the individual, families and the broader community of reducing repeated use of crisis family violence and homelessness services as well as other key emergency health services has been equally well documented.

It is this growing body of evidence, along with a significant number of documented accounts from women themselves, which has led to the design and development of the Integrated Post Crisis Response Model described in this report.

In order to break the cycle of family violence the service system must encompass a longer term support response so that women and children are able to sustain their new lives and continue their journey away from family violence.



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As a core strategy of the project, Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service and McAuley Community Services for Women formed a Project Reference Group consisting of a range of key sector stakeholders as well as policy and practice experts from within their own ranks to oversee and influence the development of the service model. The following report has been authored by Kathy Desmond of Desmond Consulting Services Pty Ltd who was contracted by Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service and McAuley Community Services for Women to undertake the project.

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## INTRODUCTION

This document provides a description of a new service model that will respond to the post crisis support needs of women and children who have experienced family violence and are seeking to re-establish their life after the major period of crisis has passed.

The following service model has been developed within the context of the current Victorian Integrated Family Violence Service System and aims to enhance and extend the capacity of the existing service system to further meet women's and children's needs. In addition, the model is built on the learnings that have emerged from research undertaken on the long-term support needs of women and children in overcoming the impact and effect that family violence has had on their lives. There are a range of core policy documents that have been used to inform the new service model context and design. These include:

- *A Better Place: Victorian Homelessness 2020 Strategy* (2010), Department of Human Services.
- *A Right to Safety and Justice: Strategic Framework to Guide Continuing Family Violence Reform in Victoria 2010-2020* (2010), Office of Women's Policy, Department of Planning and Community Development.
- *A Right to Respect: Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2010–2020* (2009), Office of Women's Policy, Department of Planning and Community Development.
- *Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2009-2021* (2009), Commonwealth of Australia.
- *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children* (2011), Council of Australian Governments.
- *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities 10 year plan* (2008), Department of Planning and Community Development.
- *Code of Practice for Specialist Family Violence Services for Women and Children* (2006), Domestic Violence Victoria.

In addition to the above, the findings of the following key research reports have been used to underpin the service model's content, overall aims and objectives:

- *Researching the Gaps: The needs of women who have experienced long-term domestic violence* (2009), Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service.
- *Mind the Gap: Addressing service gaps in family violence – immediate crisis and post crisis support* (2006), Mercy Care and Western Women's Domestic Violence Support Network.
- *Women's Journey away from Family Violence* (2004), Community Care Division, Victorian Department of Human Services.
- *Women's Experiences of Male Violence – Findings from the Australian Component of the International Violence Against Women Survey* (2004), Australian Institute of Criminology.
- *Moving Forward - Women's journeys after leaving an abusive relationship* (2009), The Benevolent Society Social Policy and Research Team.
- *The Health Costs of Violence – Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence* (2004), VicHealth and Victorian Department of Human Services.

## A POST CRISIS RESPONSE: PURPOSE, DEFINITION AND RATIONALE

***'A woman is killed almost every week in Australia by a male partner or ex-partner, often post-separation'* (A Right to Safety & Justice, 2010).**

Post crisis support describes the support and assistance provided to women and children who have experienced family violence but are no longer in crisis (i.e. where the major crisis and circumstance that placed their safety at risk, has passed). In most cases this describes a woman who has left the violent relationship or environment and faces the challenge of re-creating life after family violence.

The overall aim of post crisis support is to prevent women from returning to violent relationships and environments due to lack of support/assistance and to prevent their re-entry back into the crisis homelessness and/or family violence service system.

Post crisis support is underpinned by a focus on breaking the cycle of violence and preventing further harm and trauma through the provision of a 'support safeguard' which targets support where it is needed and for as long as it is needed. This includes support to women and children, as needed, to maintain stable housing, to overcome financial hardship, to find avenues of on-going emotional support, to re-connect with family and community, to build resilience and self determination, to address mental health and physical wellbeing issues and to increase social and economic participation.

It is important to note here that not all women and children who have experienced family violence will need such longer term support. However, for a significant minority of women and children who need additional support, a post crisis response that women can access and engage as needed over time, is a critical component to sustaining the changes they have already made in their journey away from family violence. Overall, the intensity of assistance lessens over the support period as women grow stronger in their resolve, and experience improved levels of economic and social independence.

Post crisis support also encompasses the need for ongoing support, assistance and protection of women and children facing post separation violence (including lethal violence). These women will often experience an escalated risk of violence after they have left the violent relationship through situational opportunities and triggers such as children's access arrangements and/or on-going legal proceedings (Webster, 2007; Kirkwood, 2006; Healy, 2009; DHS, 2004).

### The Impact on Children

***'The presence of violence has a highly detrimental impact on the developing child...Alongside the act of physical violence, an additional element...is emotional violence - humiliation, coercion, degradation, and the threat of abandonment or physical assault'* (A Right to Safety & Justice, 2010).**

It is now well known that exposure to family violence has long-term psychological, emotional and behavioural consequences for children. Moreover, research indicates that children do not even need to be physically present when violence occurs to suffer significant negative consequences. The cumulative impact of trauma on children can be profound and exponential, diminishing a child's physical and mental development, sense of safety, stability and wellbeing (Webster, 2007).

The trauma of family violence on children is frequently extended in the post crisis period, particularly where there is financial hardship, difficulty in maintaining stable, affordable housing and isolation from other immediate and/or extended family members. This frequently results in on-going changes to children's schooling or care arrangements, isolation from peers and established relationships with significant others and lack of specialist support for children's physical and mental health, wellbeing and critical development (Kirkwood, 2006; Healey, 2009; DHS, 2004).

# POST CRISIS SUPPORT AND SERVICE SYSTEM INTEGRATION

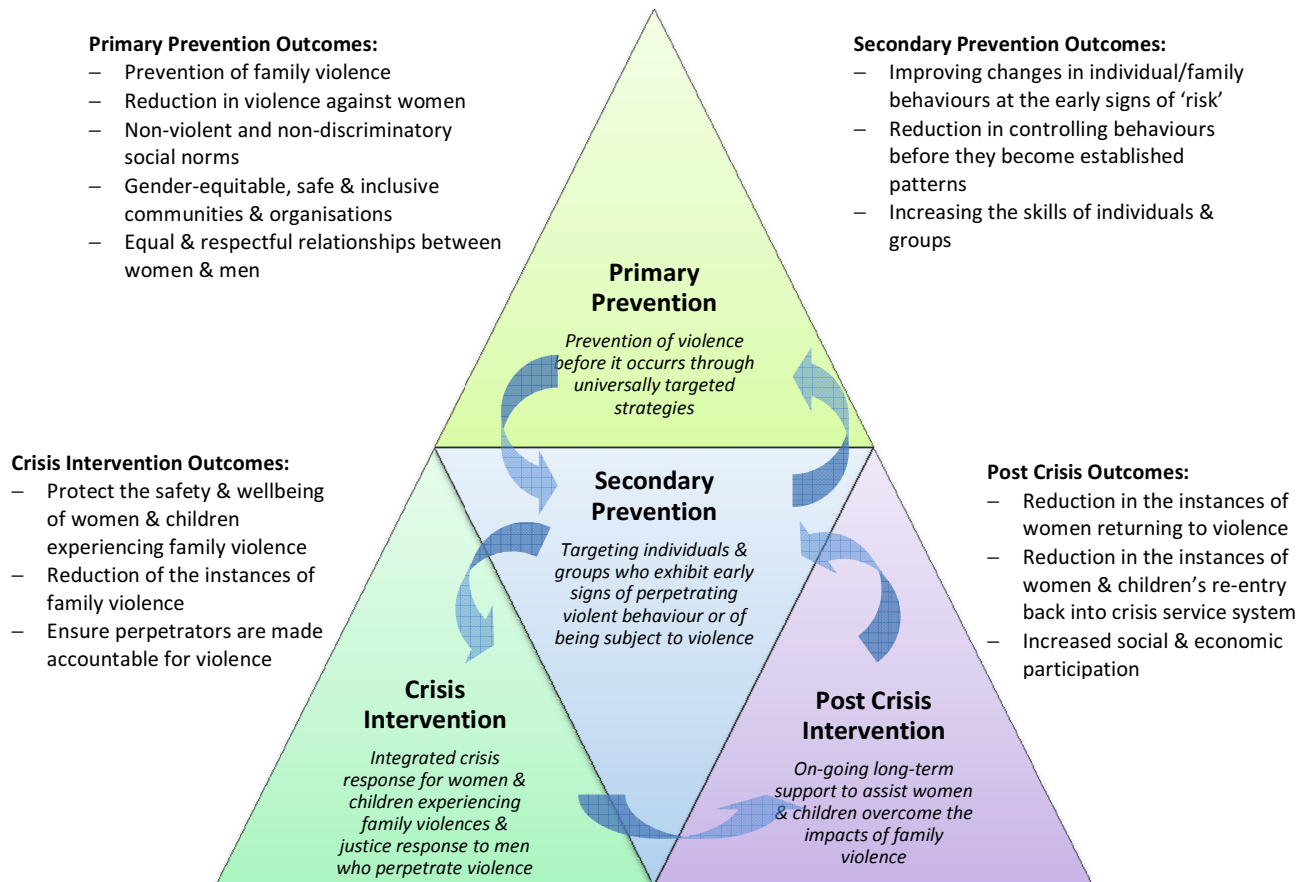
***'Intimate partner violence contributes more than any other risk factor to preventable disease, disability and death for Victorian women aged 15 to 44' (The Health Costs of Violence, VicHealth, 2004).***

Like primary and secondary prevention strategies, the aim of a post crisis response is to extend the capacity of the current service system and prevent the occurrence of future or further escalating violence. Similarly, it is a time-defined strategy that aims to provide a support safeguard at a point that will maximise improved and sustainable outcomes for women and children.

Primary and secondary prevention strategies are aimed at intervening *before* violence occurs, or at the first signs of the risk of violence, whilst crisis intervention targets women and children who are 'in the violence'. A post crisis response, however, seeks to support women and children who have *already* experienced family violence and are in the process of recovery. For most women this process is not a linear one and women will typically leave and return to a violent relationship an average of eight times before they are successful in breaking the cycle. A key aim of post crisis support is to strengthen women's capacity to consolidate and sustain the changes they have already made during the initial crisis period.

A core principal underpinning a post crisis response is to actively extend the current capacity of the family violence service system to better meet the needs of those women and children who are moving away from family violence through creating positive and sustainable changes in their situation and circumstances. This is particularly important for women and children whose support needs exceed the time limitations of current crisis services and who need additional practical and emotional support to sustain the changes they have made whilst also accessing other services that aim to assist with post crisis issues (i.e. counselling services, children's services, specialist mental health/AOD services etc).

**Figure 1: Family Violence Intervention Pyramid**



In a similar way as primary prevention is closely linked and aligned with secondary prevention – particularly in terms of aims, strategies and desired outcomes, a post crisis response links closely with crisis intervention and secondary prevention. This is particularly important in terms of impacting on the generational trend of family violence as women who experienced abuse during their childhood are one and a half times more likely to experience violence in adulthood (Mouzos & Makkai, 2004).

### **Current Costs and Future Benefits**

Post crisis support to women and children directly impacts on reducing the costs associated with on-going or repeated episodes of family violence crisis. In 2004 Access Economics estimated the cost of family violence to the Australian economy at \$8.1 billion. This included: \$3.5 billion in ‘pain, suffering and premature mortality’; \$8.7 million in health costs and the provision of services such as temporary accommodation, legal services, perpetrator programs and counselling programs; \$2.2 million in ‘second generation’ costs for children including increased use of government services and higher instances of juvenile and adult crime; and \$4.8 million in lost productivity costs. In 2009 the estimated cost of family violence to the Australian economy increased to \$13.6 billion (FaHCSIA, 2009).

A post crisis response aims to sustain the changes women have already made in their lives and improve outcomes for women, children and the service system. Benefits of this new initiative would include the following:

<b>Reducing Negative Outcomes</b>	<b>Improving/strengthening Positive Outcomes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reducing the use of crisis family violence and homelessness services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Strengthening women’s resolve to continue their journey away from family violence.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reducing social isolation and marginalisation, particularly for women from vulnerable target groups (e.g. Aboriginal women, CALD women and women with a disability).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Improving/strengthening women and children’s social support resources, participation, and connection within their local community.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reducing women and children’s housing stress and instability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Improving women’s housing circumstances through support and assistance to maintain safe, secure, appropriate housing.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reducing the risk of child protection involvement and out-of-home care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Strengthening women’s capacity for positive parenting and their ability to support their children to work through the effects of family violence.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reducing the deterioration of women and children’s mental and physical health and reducing the use of high-cost emergency services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Improving women and children’s mental health and physical wellbeing through the provision of integrated case management support and linking with other post crisis services (counselling, children’s services, mental health services etc).</li> </ul>

## PURPOSE OF THE SERVICE MODEL

The overall purpose of the Integrated Post Crisis Response Service (IPCRS) is to provide a range of longer-term, women-centred, case management and support options for women and children who have experienced family violence and are in the process of re-building their lives.

### Objectives

The objectives of the IPCRS are to:

- Expand the current capacity of the Victorian Integrated Family Violence Service System to better meet the longer-term support needs of women and children who have experienced family violence.
- Complement current family violence outreach services.
- Ensure (eligible) women and children are provided with a range of flexible service packages that support their journey away from family violence and assist them to sustain the changes they have already made.
- Establish cooperative and collaborative working relationships with relevant services within the Victorian Integrated Family Violence Service system.
- Work in tandem with other agencies and organisations across the spectrum of family violence key stakeholders – including the courts, police, child protection etc.

The IPCRS will comprise:

- Dedicated post crisis case management support for up to two years delivered as needed, when needed (i.e. multiple support periods over time).
- Brokerage funds to provide flexible support packages.
- Peer and group work support program.
- Partnerships with relevant family violence support services and other community based resources and organisations (such as community health, neighbourhood houses and learning centres etc).

### Eligibility

The IPCRS exists for women:

- Who have experienced family violence in the last 12 months but the crisis period has passed or been resolved; *or*
- Who are approaching the end of their crisis support period and are assessed as in need of longer term support and assistance in order to maintain their journey away from family violence.

In addition to the above the IPCRS will only assist women:

- Whose safety and security requirements can reasonably be expected to be met in their current housing situation; *and*
- Who are no longer living in a violent situation or living with the perpetrator of the violence.

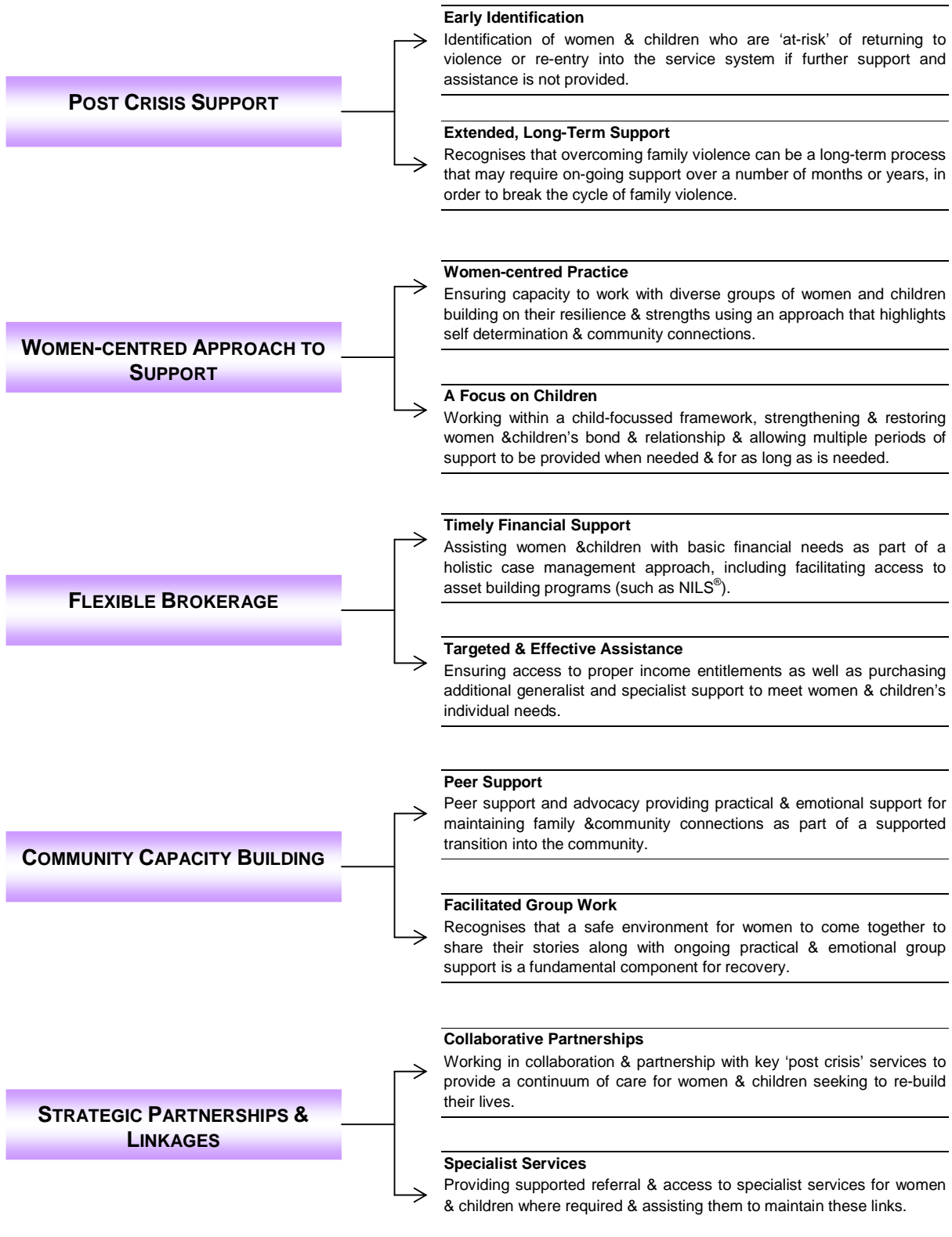
Women are not eligible for support from the IPCRS if they:

- Are experiencing family violence and are assessed as in need of crisis intervention; *or*
- Are in refuge, emergency or crisis accommodation (excluding medium term transitional housing); *or*
- Are experiencing primary homelessness; *or*
- Are living with the perpetrator of the violence, or intend to return to living with the perpetrator.

# IPCRS MODEL OVERVIEW

There are five core components that make up the IPCRS model. These are: a clearly defined focus on post crisis support; a women-centred approach to support; flexible brokerage; community capacity building; and the development of strategic partnerships and linkages.

Figure 2: IPCRS Model Components



## **Post Crisis Support**

*Post Crisis Support* involves identifying those women and children who are particularly vulnerable to returning to the violent relationship or who are at heightened risk of re-entry into the crisis service system if post crisis support and assistance is not provided. It allows support to be provided when needed, where it is needed and for as long as it is needed. Key tasks of this component include:

- Identification/referral of eligible women from family violence specialist services and other services working with women and children who have experienced family violence (such as homelessness services, courts/legal system, community health services etc).
- Identification of on-going longer-term needs of women and children who have experienced family violence.
- Averting women's return to violence and ensuring the on-going protection of women and children's safety and security by extending the resource capacity and support period limitations of specialist family violence crisis services.
- Robust gate-keeping practice on eligibility criteria.

## **Women-Centred Approach to Support**

A *Women-Centred Approach to Support* means working within a framework that acknowledges and recognises women and children's right to live free from violence. It utilises a range of unique strategies that are particularly effective for supporting women and children including a dedicated focus on supporting children within the context of their family and community and a case management approach that highlights self determination and community connections as key pathways to empowering women and children. It also includes an improved capacity to work with diverse groups of women and children such as CALD and Indigenous women and children, women with a disability and women with larger families. Key tasks of this component include:

- Case planning and case management including outreach practice.
- Support to maintain newly established tenancies in safe, secure and appropriate housing as well as supporting women to remain in their own home.
- Assistance and advocacy support in negotiating service systems such as justice (particularly family court, legal aid and child protection), income, housing, education, employment, drug and alcohol and mental health services.
- Supporting women to address and 'un-pack' the range of issues that arise from experiences of family violence, such as grief and loss issues, post traumatic stress disorder, depression, self-esteem and assertiveness.
- Support for women to assist their children to work through the effects of family violence.
- Support and assistance for women dealing with children's access arrangements and at handover times.

## **Flexible Brokerage**

*Flexible Brokerage* incorporates the provision of financial assistance to women and children where other community and government resources are not available or do not exist and when timely financial assistance will facilitate a positive and sustainable outcome. The provision of financial assistance also incorporates facilitating access to asset building strategies (such as NILS and matched savings programs) and ensuring that women and children have full and proper access to their income entitlements.

Brokerage dollars are also used to purchase additional and specialist supports and services to meet the unique needs of women and children. Key tasks of this component include:

- Assistance to meet rent or mortgage arrears to avert the threat of eviction, followed by the development of a practical plan and budget built on maintaining suitable housing and which incorporates regular arrears repayments where needed.
- Accessing asset building services and ensuring income maximisation.
- Meeting arrears for debts to utility companies to avert ‘cut-off’s’ and negotiating a further repayment schedule to fit the family budget.
- Assistance with house moving expenses and urgent home repairs/maintenance.
- Assistance to support children and young people to remain at school or to participate in community recreational and personal development activities.
- Assistance for women to access specialist supports and services (for themselves and their children) such as parenting programs, specialist counselling services etc.

## **Community Capacity Building**

*Community Capacity Building* involves building the capacity of women and children as part of a supported transition into the community. It includes peer support initiatives that provide practical and emotional support for women and children to build and maintain family and community connections. It recognises that a safe environment for women to come together to share their stories along with ongoing practical and emotional individual and group support is a fundamental component for women and children’s recovery from family violence. Key tasks of this component include:

- Linking women and children to appropriate practical and emotional support options.
- Provision of individual peer support through a dedicated peer support program and provision of a facilitated group work program.
- Improving women’s social, educational and labour market participation.
- Strengthening women and children’s capacity to develop new and healthy relationships.
- Strengthening women and children’s participation and connection to their community.

## **Strategic Partnerships and Linkages**

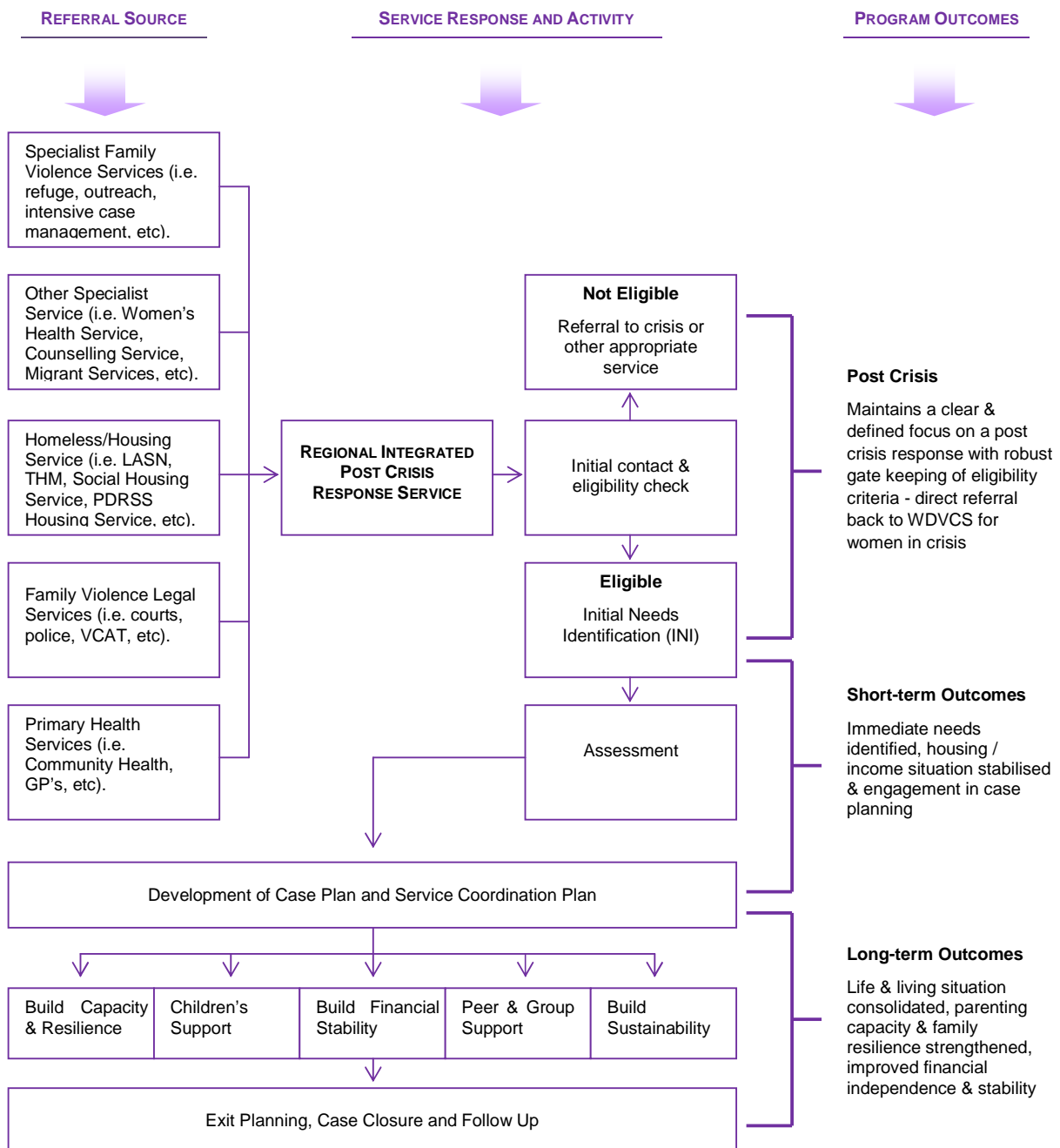
Developing *Strategic Partnerships and Linkages* ensures that the IPCRS does not function in isolation from other key services or sectors. It means working in collaboration and partnership with key ‘post crisis’ services such as public housing authorities, women and children’s specialist counselling services, the courts and legal system, Indigenous health and housing services, CALD services and information centres, disability services, mental health and AOD services, children’s services, parenting programs and community health services. This approach aims to provide a continuum of care for women and children through supported referral and ease of access to specialist services (where required) and assisting them to maintain these links and supports. Key tasks of this component include:

- Creating MOUs, referral pathways and other collaborative arrangements with relevant services, agencies and organisations.
- Participating in local community capacity building initiatives and activities and promoting the post crisis response service to potential referring agencies.

# PATHWAYS AND SERVICE RESPONSE

A core aim of the IPCRS is to ensure that women and children receive the support and assistance they need in order to continue their journey away from family violence. In the short term, this means providing services that help women to maintain safe, affordable housing and to adequately provide for themselves and their family. In the longer term, this means building women and children’s capacity to consolidate and sustain the changes they have made in their lives, strengthening their resilience and improving their social, educational and labour market participation. Figure 3 below, illustrates the main referral sources, the IPCRS service response and predicted program outcomes.

**Figure 3: IPCRS Referral, Service Response and Outcomes Flow Chart**



Naturally, meeting the full spectrum of women and children's post crisis support needs cannot be achieved by a single service alone. The IPCRS is therefore based on the Primary Care Partnerships (PCP) service coordination model to manage and coordinate the involvement and participation of multiple services and supports and to ensure that women and children receive an integrated and timely response.

Service coordination is based on the premise that clients must be at the centre of service delivery to ensure they have access to appropriate supports, opportunities for early intervention, promotion of health and wellbeing and sustainable outcomes. Service coordination is underpinned by the following principles:

<b>A central focus on clients</b>	Service delivery needs to be driven by the needs of those who use the service rather than the needs of the system, or those who practice in it.
<b>Partnerships and collaboration</b>	Service providers work together and take responsibility for the interests of clients, not only within their own service but across the service system as a whole.
<b>The social model of health</b>	A distinct conceptual framework that is concerned with addressing the social and environmental determinants of health and wellbeing, as well as biological and medical factors. This includes the spiritual and family connections that contribute to wellbeing.
<b>Competent staff</b>	The six elements of Service coordination must be undertaken by staff who are appropriately skilled, qualified, experienced, supervised and supported.
<b>A duty of care</b>	A duty to take reasonable care of a client. The duty of care extends to Service coordination, where staff have a duty of care to provide accurate and timely information, and assist clients with referrals.
<b>Engagement of other sectors</b>	Service coordination embraces the broadest possible range of partnerships across service provider types (small, large, non-government, government, etc) and across disciplines.
<b>Consistency in practice standards</b>	Service coordination enables services to remain independent of each other, while working in a cohesive and coordinated way to deliver a seamless and integrated service response.

*(Victorian Service Coordination Practice Manual, 2009)*

## PROGRAM LOGIC

CONCEPTS	NEED	RESOURCES/INPUTS	ACTIVITIES/OUTPUTS	CLIENT OUTCOMES	SYSTEM IMPACT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A woman is killed almost every week in Australia by a male partner/ex-partner, often post-separation.</li> <li>– Women are more likely to return to a violent relationship if on-going support is not provided.</li> <li>– Helping women to establish economic stability and independence is a protective factor against returning to the violence.</li> <li>– Women and children facing post separation violence are at high risk.</li> <li>– Family violence has long-term psychological, emotional and behavioural consequences for children.</li> <li>– The cumulative impact of trauma on children diminishes a child's physical and mental development, sense of safety, stability and wellbeing.</li> <li>– Family violence impacts on children are frequently extended in the post crisis period.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– There is no systematic provision for long-term post crisis support within the current Integrated Family Violence Service System in Victoria.</li> <li>– Many women return to violent relationships because they are unsupported and suffer extreme financial hardship.</li> <li>– Women will typically leave and return to a violent relationship an average of eight times.</li> <li>– There is a significant minority of women and children who need longer term support, post crisis.</li> <li>– The cost of family violence to the Australian economy was estimated at 8.1 billion in 2002/03. This figure increased to 13.6 billion in 2008-09.</li> </ul>	<p>Dedicated government funding to establish a post crisis response service within the current IFVS system inclusive of the following components*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Case management support (2.5 EFT per region). **</li> <li>– Dedicated brokerage dollars (\$1,200 per client to purchase support).</li> <li>– Peer Support Program (0.5 EFT Peer Support Coordinator). ***</li> <li>– Facilitated Group Work Program (0.5 Group Work Coordinator).</li> <li>– Funding for peer training and group work resources.</li> <li>– Funding for formative action research evaluation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Case managed support to 40 women and children per annum per region (20 cases per 1 EFT).</li> <li>– Volunteer Peer Support Program in each region.</li> <li>– Facilitated group work program in each region.</li> <li>– Development of partnership MOU's/agreements and protocols within each region.</li> <li>– Financial assistance of up to \$1,200 to purchase support, per client (40 women and children per annum per region).</li> <li>– Independent evaluation of program &amp; client outcomes.</li> </ul>	<p>Strengthened capacity for women to continue the journey away from family violence through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Improved access and use of social support resources and specialist post crisis services (i.e. counselling services, children's services etc).</li> <li>– Improved participation and connection with local community (and subsequent reduction of social isolation and marginalisation).</li> <li>– Improved housing and financial situation.</li> <li>– Reduction in the deterioration of women and children's mental and physical health.</li> <li>– Strengthened capacity for women to achieve positive parenting and appropriately support their children post family violence crisis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reduction in the number of women and children re-entering family violence/homelessness crisis services.</li> <li>– Reduction in women and children's use of high cost emergency services.</li> <li>– Reduction in the number of women and children returning to violent circumstances/ environments due to lack of support.</li> <li>– Reduction in the risk of child protection involvement.</li> <li>– Increase in the number of women able to maintain safe, secure and affordable housing.</li> <li>– Improved IFVS system capacity to meet the longer term needs of women and children.</li> <li>– Improved education, training and employment links and outcomes for women and children.</li> </ul>

\*Funding for Post Crisis Response Service to all DHS regions, with progressive rollout over three years

\*\*Case manager positions to include community development component for community capacity building/partnership development activities

\*\*\*Peer Support Coordinator and Group Work Program Coordinator may be built into 1 EFT position