

Keep Them Safe

A shared approach to child wellbeing

Keep Them Safe Factsheet No. 4

Interagency Collaboration

Keep Them Safe: A shared approach to child wellbeing is the NSW Government's response to the Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW, led by the Honourable James Wood, AO, QC, released in November 2008. Keep Them Safe recognises the importance of the wellbeing of all children and young people, with the aim of providing appropriate support to families earlier, to prevent children and young people requiring statutory child protection intervention. To achieve this, Keep Them Safe encourages families, communities, government agencies and non-government organisations to work together to support children, young people and families.

The NSW Government's response to the Wood Inquiry, *Keep Them Safe: A shared approach to child wellbeing*, states that the care and protection of children is a shared community responsibility and that the focus of intervention should be broadened from a concern with "child protection" to support for "child wellbeing".

The Keep Them Safe action plan has seven elements to ensure children, young people and families are provided with appropriate support:

- Improving access to universal services (such as home visiting and parenting education) to help prevent problems from arising in the first place.
- Strengthening early intervention and community-based services to prevent the need for children to enter the child protection system.
- Better protection for at-risk children.
- Changing practices and systems (such as referral systems) to connect children and families to the right services.
- Supporting Aboriginal children and families to reduce the number of Aboriginal children coming into contact with the child protection system.
- Strengthening partnership across the community services sector.
- Delivering the Plan and measuring its success.

Effective referral systems are needed to connect children and families with the right services (universal, early intervention and statutory child protection services). These services need to be properly coordinated by government agencies and non-

government organisations, and they need to be able to share information so that children and families do not fall through the cracks.

A centrepiece of the reform for interagency collaboration is the new model for the intake and referral of child protection concerns. This involves the Child Wellbeing Units operating within four key government agencies and a network of Family Referral Services, which will be established across NSW. Refer to KTS Factsheets *Child Wellbeing Units* (No. 8a) and *Family Referral Services* (No. 9a) for more information.


Supporting effective collaborative practice is essential if the Keep Them Safe reforms are to succeed.

The Keep Them Safe Framework

Keep Them Safe proposes better agency coordination and information sharing to provide improved responses to children and young people through the development of the Keep Them Safe Framework.

The Keep Them Safe Framework is being developed as an overarching system that supports collaborative practice through the provision of information, resource materials and common assessment tools such as the *Mandatory Reporter Guide*, to enable agencies to identify and respond to the needs of children, young people and their families.

As a means of articulating the Keep Them Safe Framework, the *Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention 2006* are being completely revised and are



now known as the *Child Wellbeing and Child Protection – NSW Interagency Guidelines*.

The contents of the *Child Wellbeing and Child Protection – NSW Interagency Guidelines* are being revised in stages with sections on Information Exchange and Making a Child Protection Report already published on the Keep Them Safe website.

This revision is a collaborative process with participation from all agencies involved in the delivery of child protection and child wellbeing services contributing according to their areas of expertise.

Information exchange

Refer to KTS Factsheet No. 5: *Information Exchange* to find out more about new arrangements to support the exchanging of information between agencies (both government and non-government) relating to a child's or young person's safety, welfare or wellbeing.

Family Case Management approach

In the Keep Them Safe action plan, the NSW Government committed to implement integrated case management for “frequently encountered families”. This project is now known as Family Case Management (FCM) and is being trialled in South East NSW, Western NSW and South West Sydney.

What is Family Case Management (FCM)?

The target client group for FCM has been broadly defined to let local groups respond to priority issues and needs in their areas. However, families selected for the project should:

- include at least one child or young person at risk of harm
- be frequently encountered by, and require, multiple services (government and non-government)
- have received a previous government agency or non-government organisation response with limited results
- have consented to participate in the program.

The local groups (which include representatives from relevant government agencies and local NGOs) will be

responsible for selecting families, developing plans with the families, and ensuring agencies deliver on agreed actions. Brokerage is available to assist local groups in providing support and services for these families.

FCM is a strengths-based approach and will involve case management of all relevant family members who agree to participate, not just the children in the family.

In each Stage 1 region local activity is supported by an FCM Coordinator. The Coordinators will drive local implementation, support integrated case management activity, and assist with identifying barriers that impact on service delivery. The Coordinators will also support the evaluation of the program.

For further information:

- Consult your Child Wellbeing Unit, if relevant
- Contact your supervisor or manager
- Consult your legal services branch
- Keep Them Safe: www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au
- HSNNet ServiceLink: www.hsn.net.nsw.gov.au
- Association of Childrens Welfare Agencies: www.acwa.asn.au

What's New?

- Revising the *NSW Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention 2006*, now the *Child Wellbeing – NSW Interagency Guidelines*.
- The Keep Them Safe Framework.
- Exchange of information between agencies (both government and non-government).
- Family Case Management (FCM): integrated case management for frequently encountered families.