



CHILD AND FAMILY VIOLENCE INFORMATION SHARING SCHEMES

POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to support Victorian government schools to request and share information under the Child Information Sharing Scheme and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme.

SUMMARY

- The Information Sharing Schemes provide prescribed Information Sharing Entities with an expanded ability to share confidential information with other Information Sharing Entities to promote the wellbeing or safety of children or to assess or manage family violence risk.
- Victorian schools and a range of other Victorian services are prescribed Information Sharing Entities and can request and share information under the Information Sharing Schemes.
- The Information Sharing Schemes complement existing obligations and frameworks and do not replace current authorisations (such as Child Safe Standards, Mandatory Reporting, Privacy or Criminal Law and Reportable Conduct) to share information.
- Information Sharing Entities must meet a range of requirements when using the Information Sharing Schemes to request and share information.
- The [Guidance tab](#) provides detailed guidance for schools on using the Information Sharing Schemes.
- Following this policy and guidance will ensure your school is aligned with current legislation, departmental policy, and the legally binding Ministerial Guidelines.

DETAILS

About the Information Sharing Schemes

The Child Information Sharing Scheme and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (the Information Sharing Schemes) provide authorised organisations, including Victorian schools, with an expanded ability to share confidential information with other authorised services to promote the wellbeing or safety of children or to assess or manage family violence risk.

Under the Information Sharing Schemes, organisations that are prescribed as Information Sharing Entities:

- must acknowledge they have received a request for information
- must respond to requests for information and provide all relevant information to other Information Sharing Entities that meets the requirements of the scheme it was requested under and do so in a timely manner
- must consider the information sharing legislative principles for the schemes
- if declining to share all or part of a request for information, must advise the requesting information sharing entity in writing
- can request information from other Information Sharing Entities
- can proactively share information with other Information Sharing Entities
- must meet the record keeping requirements of the Information Sharing Schemes.

Victorian schools, Department funded and delivered child wellbeing and safety programs and services (such as Student Support Services), centre-based education and care services (long day care, kindergarten and before and after school hours care services), key tertiary and frontline services (such as Child Protection, Maternal and Child Health and Victoria Police), and key health services

(such as GPs and public hospitals) are all prescribed Information Sharing Entities and can request and share information under the Information Sharing Schemes.

The Information Sharing Schemes complement existing obligations and frameworks. They do not replace current authorisations (such as Child Safe Standards, Mandatory Reporting, Privacy or Criminal Law and Reportable Conduct) to share information. In many cases existing obligations work together with the Child Information Sharing Scheme and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme and will enhance collaboration between services.

Schools should continue to share information as appropriate in accordance with other laws and Department policies, such as when making a mandatory report or when sharing information with external services under existing arrangements and mechanisms. The Information Sharing Schemes do not impact on these existing permissions and obligations.

However, there may be times when it is appropriate to use the Information Sharing Schemes to request and share confidential information with authorised services. For example, where schools determine that insufficient information is available to effectively support a student's wellbeing or safety, they can use the schemes to request and proactively share information with authorised services. The schemes enable schools and other prescribed information sharing entities to access and share relevant information with each other to promote the wellbeing or safety of children and to assess or manage family violence risk.

The [Guidance tab](#) provides detailed guidance for Victorian government schools on using the Information Sharing Schemes including:

- an overview to implementing the Information Sharing Schemes
- legislative principles for the Information Sharing Schemes
- three-part threshold test for the Child Information Sharing Scheme and the three requirements for information sharing under the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme
- responding to requests for information under the Information Sharing Schemes, and record keeping for responses
- requesting information under the Information Sharing Schemes and record keeping for requests
- proactively sharing information under the Information Sharing Schemes, and record keeping for proactive sharing
- considerations when sharing information about diverse and at-risk communities
- complaints handling under the Information Sharing Schemes and record keeping for complaints
- safeguards when using the Information Sharing Schemes.

Background

The Information Sharing Schemes were introduced in response to Royal Commissions, coronial inquests and independent inquiries over the past decade that identified poor information sharing as a barrier to service collaboration with detrimental outcomes for children and families. The Information Sharing Schemes enable schools and other Information Sharing Entities to access and share relevant information to promote the wellbeing or safety of children or to assess or manage family violence risk.

The Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme commenced in February 2018 for a select group of organisations. Phase One of the Child Information Sharing Scheme and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes commenced in September 2018 and included key frontline professionals, such as Child Protection, Maternal and Child Health and Victoria Police. From 19 April 2021, as part of Phase Two, universal services such as education and health are authorised to request and share information using the Information Sharing Schemes.

Related policies

Note: The Department has updated the below related policies to include additional information on the Information Sharing Schemes.

- [Attendance](#)
- [Blood-borne Viruses](#)
- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Chaplaincy](#)
- [Complaints — Parents](#)
- [Enrolment](#)
- [Family Violence Support](#)
- [Health Care Needs](#)
- [Privacy and Information Sharing](#)
- [Records Management — School Records](#)
- [Requests for Information about Students](#)
- [Schools' Privacy Policy](#)
- [Suicide Prevention and Response](#)

Relevant legislation

- [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Child Wellbeing and Safety \(Information Sharing\) Regulations 2018 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Family Violence Protection Act 2008 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Family Violence Protection \(Information Sharing and Risk Management\) Regulations 2018 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Health Records Act 2001 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 \(Vic\)](#)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

This policy will be reviewed annually to reflect new legislation, DET guidelines and best practice.

This policy was last reviewed by DET on 26 April 2021.