

AN INTEGRATED RESPONSE  
TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:  
  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S  
FAMILY SAFETY FRAMEWORK



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EXPLORE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DV  
AND WOMEN'S OFFENDING

OVERVIEW THE FAMILY SAFETY  
FRAMEWORK (FSF)

CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS FOR FEMALE  
OFFENDERS



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# DV AND WOMEN OFFENDERS

- most female offenders are victims of abuse
- 57% in state prisons have been physically abused
- 61 % abusers were current or previous partners
- (Neal 2007)



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O'Connor (2007) argues that  
“women who end up in the courts and in  
prison....are almost always the victims of  
serious criminal conduct and ironically are the  
very people whom tough on crime purports to  
help”

Raeside and MacFarlane in 1995 found that in  
Adelaide Women's prison “88% of women  
surveyed had experienced significant trauma  
involving inter-personal violence”



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NSW Law Reform Commission in  
(1996) found that:

85 % of women offenders are  
survivors of sexual abuse

70% had experienced physical  
violence as an adult



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Women's offending behaviour can often be linked to DV and their fear of partner

- A o D use- self- medication, co-use

- Co-offending due to drug use

- Assaults ( self defence)

- Murder (self defence)



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Given this research it is clear that initiatives to increase women's safety must include women offenders in the community and women prisoners



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## Women offenders therefore increasingly likely to be subject of FSF

- Referred by prison pre- release
- Referred by CC
- Referred by external agency e.g. DV services, Women's Health, Education Department , housing



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# SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S FAMILY SAFETY FRAMEWORK



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## Integrated Service Responses

- *‘Coordinated, appropriate, consistent responses aimed at enhancing victim safety, reducing secondary victimisation and holding abusers accountable for their violence’* (Mulroney, 2003).
- involve the police, courts, child protection, health and community services providing a consistent response.
- International and national research suggests these are most likely to achieve long term success in eliminating violence against women.
- International best practice indicates that Government needs to take the lead



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# Moving Forward

1. Presentations to the Whole of Government Reference Group highlighted the need for:
  - Need to develop a model that can be applied across SA and ensure support from key portfolios such as Health, DFC and Justice
2. Dept for Correctional Services DV Workshop 2005
  - Support for progressing an integrated response to domestic violence and commitment from DCS to improve its practice and be more accountable to the experiences and safety of women and children.



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### 3. Women's Safety Conference 2005 highlighted the need to:

- Ensure that integration of service responses is not the outcome but the process and maintain a focus on women and children's safety
- Ensure flexibility to respond to diversity (ATSI, CALD, Rural & Remote)
- Designate a specific agency/person as responsible for integration and managing the relationships across systems
- Recognise the role of specialist services

### 4. A possible model - South Wales (UK) – MARAM



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# Whole of Government Commitment

- A working party was formed to report to the Whole of Government Reference Group on possible ways to move forward, including the critical elements of such as response
- Membership of the working group included representatives of:
  - OFW
  - Health
  - Attorney General's Department
  - South Australian Police
  - Education and Children's Services
  - Drug and Alcohol Services SA
  - Mental Health Services
  - Correctional Services
  - Families and Communities – Families SA
  - Steve James – Public Protection Matters (ex South Wales – UK)



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# Family Safety Framework

This Framework has been approved by Cabinet and is supported by the following South Australian Legislation:

- *Domestic Violence Act 1994*
- *Children's Protection Act 1993* (including Amendments Feb 2006)
- *Summary Procedure Act 1921*
- *Problem Gambling Family Protection Orders Act 2004*
- *Evidence Act 1929*
- *Correctional Services Act 1982*



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# Family Safety Framework

1. Family Safety Agreement
2. Information Sharing
3. Common Risk Assessment
4. The Family Safety Meeting
5. Monitoring and Evaluation



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# Family Safety Agreement

1. Involves a systems wide, case management approach
2. Outlines the process, procedures and policies in relation to the Framework
3. Cabinet approval for trial of the framework.
4. Involves common principles and understandings about violence against women and children across the portfolio's
5. Involves common understanding about the impact of violence on women, children and the community.



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# Information Sharing Protocol

- Cabinet has approved information sharing in high risk cases of domestic violence.
- Research and experience have shown repeatedly that keeping women and children safe requires professionals to share relevant information in relation to their safety.
- This agreement is designed to help staff from all agencies to work together by sharing information with a view to identifying those at a high level of risk and jointly constructing a management plan to provide professional support to all those at risk
- Clarify as far as possible, under which circumstances information will be provided for the purposes of a Family Safety Meeting (FSF)



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# Common Risk Assessment

- Important element of the Family Safety Framework
- Focused on High Risk Cases
- Key risk factors are associated with the potential for serious injury or death for the victim/s (including women and children).



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# Common understanding of risk

- Research indicates that there are commonalities of risk in cases where domestic homicide has occurred.

These relate to

- Nature of the abuse
- historical patterns of behaviour
- Victims perception of risk
- Specific factors associated with an incident
- Aggravating factors
- Other factors



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# Risk Assessment

- Much previous research has observed that a history of domestic violence is common in intimate partner homicides and that in some cases the homicide incident is the culmination of numerous prior incidents of domestic violence (Goetting 1995; Jurik & Winn 1990; Mouzos 2003b, 2003c; Browne 1997; Arias & Pape 1999).
- A prior history of domestic violence was recorded in 31 out of the 71 intimate partner homicides (44%). In six intimate partner homicides, a current or expired legal intervention order was also in place (Mouzos 2005:16-17) .
- Clearly the assessment of risk is a key factor in any prevention of future homicide or serious harm to both the victim and any children within the relationship.



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# Family Safety Meeting

1. Determine whether the offender poses a significant risk to the women, child or young person.
2. Jointly construct and implement a multi agency positive action plan that includes risk management, provides professional support and reduces the risk of further harm.
3. Removes the onus from the woman to take action.
4. Increases agency accountability and transparency.
5. Prioritises action within the work place for high risk cases.
6. Enables relationship building and partnerships across agencies.
7. Improve support for staff involved in high risk family violence cases.



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# Family Safety Meeting

A core group will always attend:

- Families SA
- Housing SA
- SAPOL
- DASSA
- Department for Correctional Services
- Department of Health
- Women's Domestic Violence Service
- Department of Education and Children's Services



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# Family Safety Meeting

- Actions Prior to FSF
- Referring agency completes referral form with relevant information
- Decide whether to call an emergency telephone conference, or feed into FSM
- Agenda with the referral form will be circulated by secure email or FAX to SAPOL
- SAPOL passes on to each agency the agenda and list of cases
- Establish what information is held by organisation about each case
- Collect information for the meeting
- Check that all tasks from previous meeting are completed



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## At the Meeting

- Confidentiality statement
- Information sharing
- Response discussions
- Positive action plan (onus on worker)
- Previous meeting review
- Minutes/Actions

Recorded

## After the Meeting

- Rep to feed actions through their Agency
- Rapid Response to actions
- Ensure FSM information is securely stored



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# Monitoring and Evaluation

OCSAR will monitor and evaluate the impact of the Family Safety Framework. Key performance indicators may include:

- Improved victim safety
- Reduced level of repeat victimisation
- Repeat offending and the incidence of crimes involving domestic violence by men involved in the program is reduced
- Number of cases over a 6 month referred to a FSF
- Range of agencies making referrals
- Data relating to diversity issues, including ethnicity, sexuality and disability
- Number of children involved
- Number of cases where victim supports a prosecution.



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## Results so far from Corrections perspective:

- 2 metropolitan trials sites
- 3<sup>rd</sup> to start in the new year in country- high Aboriginal population
- several male offenders involved
- To date no women offenders involved
- Women have become registered Victims – access to information regarding release, conditions
- warning Screens raised on perpetrators
- HD application refused



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## Things we have learned so far:

- Other agencies have not known how to access DCS eg Prisons, Victims Register
- Need to focus on immanency
- Keep paper work to a minimum
- Many agencies have poor internal communication structures eg CC and prisons
- May require funding to sustain



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# IMPLICATIONS FOR CORRECTIONS

Focus to date primarily on perpetrators-

non-compliance

release reports

specific conditions

increased accountability,

better information to make decisions



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## IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN OFFENDERS

- Case may be referred- CC and Prisons
- Her safety will be prioritised- often not done due to offender status
- Access to services
- Perpetrator held accountable
- Opportunity to cease offending – address substance use, stable safe housing etc



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