

## **1: NMH - Child & Family Safety Service**

*"There are far too many silent sufferers. Not because they don't yearn to reach out, but because they've tried and found no one who cares".*

*Rochelle E. Goodrich*

There is nothing new about violence within families. What is new is to treat it as a health issue and to develop policy and interventions to address it. When we think about family violence, we usually think about physical violence. Yet the experience of abuse can be physical, sexual and/ or psychological and impacts equally on mental, social, and spiritual health. Early identification and intervention is important to minimise damage to all these aspects of health. Health care providers are increasingly recognised as having a key role to play in the early intervention and prevention of family violence.

In 2001, the Ministry of Health Family Violence Project, Violence Intervention Project (VIP) was instigated to develop guidelines and begin training of health care providers. The *Family Violence Intervention Guidelines* are at the core of this project. Based on an extensive review of local and international protocols of care and consultation with health care providers, health professional bodies, and family violence advocates, it presents a six-step model for identifying/ screening and responding to family violence within health care settings. Given the high co-occurrence of partner abuse and child abuse, the guidelines also outline an integrated response to addressing both of these issues.

These guidelines are embedded in the NMH Child Abuse, Partner Abuse and Elder Abuse policies and procedures. The aim of the NMH VIP/ Child & Family Safety Service (C&FSS) is to establish a sustainable infrastructure within which staff will address child abuse and neglect, partner abuse and elder abuse and neglect (both in response to presentations and in identification and prevention of increased or further harm). The service also aims to raise awareness and identify issues in relation to vulnerable adults.

**Currently it is mandatory for all clinical staff from the following areas to attend VIP Core training: Emergency Department, Public Health, Maternity, Mental Health and Addictions, SCBU, CDS, Paediatrics, Social Work and Dieticians.**

New staff in these areas will automatically be invited to attend training as part of their orientation (enrolment required within 3 months). The programme will also be rolled out to other areas across the NMH (hospital and community settings) in the near future.

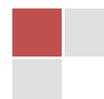
**All new clinical staff will also be required to have access to our eProsafe system within 3 months of starting;** eProsafe is the NMH family violence and child abuse documentation/ alert system. Dedicated training sessions are available (or as part of the VIP Core training); please arrange with your manager.

### **Why is VIP Core training and eProsafe important to you?**

- Family violence is a HEALTH issue
- You are already seeing victims of family violence and you may not know it
- Family violence intervention is demanding work; reap the rewards of doing it well

### **What is the training content of the VIP Core Training?**

- Partner abuse: indicators, issues and intervention
- Child abuse, including neglect: indicators, issues and intervention
- NMH-wide family violence policy and procedures
- How to report child abuse
- Multi-disciplinary and interagency work in child and partner abuse
- How to utilise eProsafe (the NMH family violence and child abuse documentation/ alert system).



## **2: What if you as a staff member experience family violence?**

If you're a NMH staff member experiencing family violence and wish to seek support, the following options are available:

- The Employment Assistance Programme (Stratos/ 0800 7872867)
- Contacting one of the NMH VIP Coordinators for further advice and referral

### **Or (if immediate assistance is required):**

- Contact the Police and/ or your local Women's Refuge (0800 733843)
- Contact the Male Room Nelson (for men/ 03 5480403)

## **3: The Vulnerable Children Act 2014**

*"...I did, but I didn't want to tell. I wanted to but I didn't want to, I was thinking, if I told and he found out, I would be in trouble..."*

Sam (8)

On 1 July 2014 the Vulnerable Children Act and other associated legislation passed into law. The Act forms a significant part of comprehensive measures to protect and improve the wellbeing of vulnerable children and strengthen our child protection system. It rests on the belief that no single agency alone can protect vulnerable children. For the first time, five chief executives of government agencies are jointly accountable for acting together to develop and implement a plan to protect our children from harm, working with families/whānau and communities.

The measures in the Vulnerable Children Act 2014 contribute to the Government's Better Public Services result to reduce the number of physical assaults on children and to keep our children safe. These include (1) new requirements for government agencies and their funded providers to have child protection policies and (2) standard safety checking for paid staff in the government-funded children's workforce.

1. The overarching purpose of the child protection policies is to provide information and processes to improve the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect. The NMH as funded provider of children's services has a child protection policy & procedure, covering the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect.
2. Safe children's workforce: the Act introduces new requirements to ensure children are safe with the people who work with them by implementing: (A) a new standard safety check for all paid staff in the government-funded children's workforce, (B) workforce restrictions preventing people with certain serious convictions from roles that involve working alone with, or with primary responsibility for, children. This restriction is subject to an exemptions process.

Altogether, the changes provide a framework for professionals from the different sectors to work better together to help children. By breaking down the barriers to information sharing and cross sector working, and brokering more targeted service provision, we can ensure children get better access to the services they need.

## **4: Contacts for the NMH VIP - Child & Family Safety Service:**

- Gina Lyon, VIP/ C&FSS Coordinator - Child Protection (Int. Ext. 7440)
- Lynn Bruning, VIP/ C&FSS Coordinator - Partner Abuse / Elder Abuse (Int ext 7731)
- Hilary Exton, Director Allied Health - Executive VIP Sponsor (Int. Ext. 7357)

