

CISS and care teams

Information sheet

This information sheet can be used as a stand-alone document for members of a care team. It outlines appropriate information sharing within care teams.

The Child Protection Manual defines a care team as “...the group of people who jointly look after a child while the child is in care. Each care team has a convenor (care team lead). A care team is required for every child in care, except for permanent care and adoption placements.”¹

In non-statutory settings, care teams allow professionals and the client (when safe and appropriate) to come together to make joint decisions in planning, assessing, and forming goals, without duplication or confusion of roles of the various professionals involved.

→ Child Information Sharing Scheme

Members of care teams will usually have the consent of a client, parent or carer, and where appropriate the child or young person, to share information with one another. However, if consent has not been granted, members of the care team can share information under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) to promote the wellbeing or safety of a child or group of children, as long as all parties with access to that information are prescribed Information Sharing Entities (ISEs) and understand the circumstances under which the information is being shared.

For instance, it is important that ISEs are aware of circumstances when the child/family have not been informed of the information being shared because it has been identified that making them aware of certain information may increase identified risk or because a serious risk or threat has been identified.

Relevant legislation:

- The Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) operates under Part 6A of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005.
- Organisations and services prescribed as Information Sharing Entities by the [Child Wellbeing and Safety \(Information Sharing\) Regulations](#) are authorised to share information and request information under CISS.²

→ The threshold for sharing

Information sharing entities can share confidential information with other ISEs under the CISS if:

1. The ISE is requesting or disclosing confidential information about any person for the purpose of promoting the wellbeing or safety of a child or group of children; and
2. The disclosing ISE reasonably believes that sharing the confidential information may assist the receiving ISE to carry out one or more of the following activities:

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- a. making a decision, an assessment or a plan relating to a child or group of children
- b. initiating or conducting an investigation relating to a child or group of children
- c. providing a service relating to a child or group of children
- d. managing any risk to a child or group of children; and

3. The information being disclosed or requested is not known to be 'excluded information' under Part 6A of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (and is not restricted from sharing by another law).³

CISS allows professionals to use their professional judgement in defining child wellbeing. Importantly, decisions are grounded in professional rather than personal judgement. This supports a focus on factual information over opinion and helps to avoid discrimination and bias when considering child wellbeing and the threshold for sharing.

→ Considerations for sharing information under CISS

- If client consent hasn't been granted to share information within the care team, you may be able to share using CISS. Prior to commencing care team activities, check if the other care team members belong to organisations that are prescribed ISEs by consulting the ISE list. Make a record of who is and isn't an ISE, so you know who you can share with in the care team using CISS. Plan in collaboration with Child Protection and the other ISEs so that everyone in the care team is informed as to who are not ISEs.
- If there are members of the care team who are not ISEs, you will not be able to share information using CISS. In these cases, look to other legislation, such as mandatory reporting laws, to share relevant information to promote the wellbeing or safety of a child or a group of children.
- When using CISS or other legislation to share information within a care team, only share relevant information pertinent to the wellbeing or safety of the child or the young person. If providing additional context, ensure you omit personal details that are not directly relevant to achieving this goal, to safeguard the privacy of the child, young person, carer and/or a third party.
- Be clear to the care team about the purpose behind any request or the sharing of certain information.
- If you are in doubt that what is being shared is relevant and appropriate, ask the sharer to clarify why something is being shared as per the above guidelines.
- Speak with your team leader if you are not happy with the response of the sharer, or if you do not understand why someone has asked you to stop sharing information.
- If there is a significant risk of harm to a child or children, organisations should rely on other information sharing laws including Victoria's mandatory reporting legislation under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 which overrides CISS. See the 'Mandatory reporting, CISS and FVISS' information sheet for how the CISS information sharing permissions relate to permissions under other laws.

¹ Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (2020) Care teams – advice, CP Manual, accessed 24 October 2023. <<https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/out-home-care/care-teams-advice>>

² State Government of Victoria (2023) Child Information Sharing Scheme Ministerial Guidelines, accessed 25 October 2023. <<https://www.vic.gov.au/child-information-sharing-scheme-ministerial-guidelines/chapter-1-sharing-information-under-scheme>>

³ *ibid.*

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