**Western Early Childhood Development Project**

# Western Child and Family Services Alliance
# Child First

## What is Child FIRST?

Western Child FIRST is the central intake for Family Services; it provides an initial assessment of families needs and risks to determine eligibility for Family Services.  Child FIRST provides information and referral for vulnerable children, young people and families living in the Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Wyndham local government areas.

**All conversations are confidential and may be anonymous, Western Child FIRST will also accept referals over the telephone.**

### What will Western Child FIRST do?

- Provide information and advice to families and professionals

- Accept referrals for vulnerable children and their families who need support or where there are concerns about children's wellbeing

- Discuss with families and referrers what support is needed

- Provide any initial support or assistance

- Provide access to a Family Service in their area

- Consult with the Aboriginal Liaison worker and other culturally specific services to ensure that responses to families are culturally sensitive

- Collaborate with the Community Based Child Protection Worker when there are significant concerns for the safety of a child or young person.

### What can Family Services assist with?

Western Child FIRST provides a gateway to Family Service providers that work with families who require support and assistance with:

- Strengthening their parenting

- Managing children's behaviour

- Building strong parent – child relationships

- Dealing with the impact of family violence, mental health, substance abuse or other significant difficulties

- Advocacy and connection to community

## Who is Eligible:

Referrals are made to Child FIRST for vulnerable children, young people and families or where a professional has significant concerns about the well being of children or young people.  Referrals can be accepted for families with children **0 to 17 years** of age, including unborn children.

We accept referrals from parents, family members, friends and other professionals such as Child Protection, Maternal Child Health, schools, hospitals, mental health services or drug and alcohol services.
Referrals are made over the telephone by telephoning:  **1300 775 160** 9.00 am-5.00 pm Monday to Friday (excluding Public Holidays).

Child FIRST will discuss with you whether you have consent of the family to make the referral, this is preferable as it often leads to better outcomes for the child or young person if the family has consented and is able to participate in the referral process.  Where professionals have significant concerns about the wellbeing of children and  young people details of the referrer can be protected.

## A Referral to Child FIRST or Child Protection? When to call

### Western Child FIRST / Family Services

Significant parenting problems affecting the child's development

Significant social or economic disadvantage including homelessness which may impact on child's care or development

Serious family conflict including family breakdown

Families under pressure due to a family member's physical or mental illness, bereavement, disability or substance abuse

Telephone Western Child FIRST during business hours on
**1300 775 160**

### When to call Child Protection

Serious physical abuse or non-accidental injury to a child or young person

Serious family violence or parental substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability – where there is likelihood of significant harm to the child

A disclosure of sexual abuse by a child or witness to that abuse

Serious emotional abuse and ill treatment of a child impacting on the child's healthy development

Persistent neglect, poor care or lack of appropriate supervision, where there is likelihood of significant harm to the child

Telephone North West Child Protection Intake Service during business hours on
**1300 369 536 or 131278** (after hours)

### Outcome of Child FIRST Assessment:

At the end of the assessment a Child FIRST intake worker will inform you and the family of the outcome of their involvement.

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