

Family Violence and Sexual Violence Evidence Framework

Background

Safe and Equal, No to Violence (NTV), Sexual Assault Services Victoria (SASVic) and the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (CFECFW) have partnered to co-develop a Family Violence and Sexual Violence Knowledge Hub housed within the Outcomes, Practice and Evidence Network (OPEN) portal. The OPEN portal is hosted by the CFECFW and funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

As part of this collaboration, the four peaks have developed this Evidence Framework to guide the work of our respective sectors and to ensure we collectively capture accurate information to inform policy and advocacy, workforce development, programs, practice, and projects.

Purpose

This Evidence Framework provides an overarching guide to common understandings about evidence across the four peaks and to considerations for using, collecting and creating evidence relevant to our respective sectors. We do this by drawing from a wide range of sources including from people with lived experience of our services and service system, practice experience, relevant and up to date research, and program evaluations to achieve better outcomes for victim survivors of family violence and sexual violence, including children and young people.

Who is this for?

- ✓ **The four peak partners leading the development of the FVSV Knowledge Hub,**
- ✓ **Practitioners and other professionals across our member organisations, and other service providers working within the family violence and sexual violence sectors.**
- ✓ **Government representatives and relevant parties interested in our collaborative approach to using evidence.**

Our understanding of evidence

For the purposes of the joint work of the four peaks, evidence refers to any information, data or findings which support a claim or belief. It can be written, oral or visual.

Our common view is that evidence encompasses a broad range of data and research methods ranging from story-telling, lived experience, evaluation, through to complex research methodologies. Each has its place in supporting our work as peaks.

A range of evidence is used to inform the work we do, justify our positions or arguments, and provide the basis for making informed decisions. Key types of evidence for our work as peaks include:

- research and evaluation findings;
- practice expertise;
- cultural knowledge, and;
- insights from clients and/or those with lived experience.

We gather this evidence using a range of methods and tools.

Why is evidence important?

Evidence helps us learn from what has been successful elsewhere, understand the social context of our work, incorporate practice expertise, and the lived experience of our clients, to measure and evaluate our own approaches, and to continually learn and improve. The best available research, practice expertise and service user insights can provide policy makers, managers, leaders and practitioners with confidence that their decisions are informed by what works, what doesn't work, and what needs to change. It reassures stakeholders that we offer high quality, evidence-based services to those who use them, such as victim survivors, people using violence, children and young people, their families and communities.

Evidence helps us learn from what has been proven to be successful elsewhere, test and measure our own approaches, and continually learn and improve.



Guiding principles

As part of our commitment to fostering evidence-informed practice to support better client outcomes, the following principles will guide our work.

- Acknowledge that research and evidence are influenced by underlying assumptions, motivations, and values, often shaped by Western, non-Indigenous perspectives¹
- Recognise and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being. Respect First Nations communities' rich culture, storytelling and passing on of knowledge, and promoting diversity and respect
- Incorporate insights from LGBTIQ+ and marginalised communities, acknowledging their unique experiences and perspectives as crucial to shaping comprehensive and inclusive responses
- Put client voices and lived experience at the centre of our efforts and capture client outcomes to drive meaningful change.
- Use transparent and appropriate evidence-gathering methods to ensure findings are accurate and reliable.
- Prioritise relevance, appropriateness and usefulness in selecting from the range of evidence types and methodologies available.
- Use multiple methods and sources to ensure findings are robust, and build our confidence that conclusions made are accurate
- Encourage collaboration and consultation to use expertise and resources effectively from diverse stakeholders including practitioners.
- Use a range of approaches to support engagement with evidence such as research summaries, fact sheets, webinars and other accessible formats to encourage practitioners to engage with evidence and increasing the likelihood of its application in direct practice.
- Focus on research that directly benefits practitioners, ensuring that the findings are relevant and applicable to real-world scenarios.

¹ See for example: Tuhiwai Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonising Methodologies*; Bloomsbury Publishing; Moreton-Robinson, A. (2013). *Towards an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory*. *Australian Feminist Studies* 28:78, 331-347; Fortier, C. (2017). *Unsettling Methodologies/Decolonising Movements*. *Journal of Indigenous Social Development*. (6) Issue 1 pp20-36.

How is evidence used?

Our four peaks use evidence to:

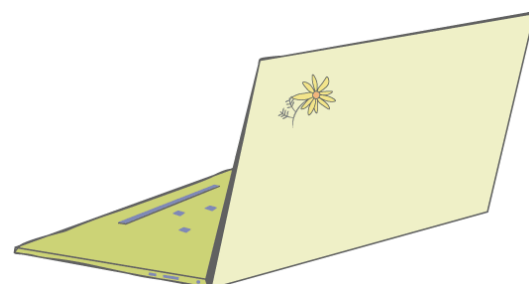
- improve client experience and outcomes by identifying what works and what doesn't work so we can continually improve;
- support advocacy efforts and hold stakeholders accountable so we can highlight challenges and potential solutions to existing and emerging issues affecting victim survivors;
- better understand local priorities, local client needs, and use data to inform place-based responses;
- support management and board decision-making by assessing program performance and providing information that can inform strategic planning and resource allocation;
- keep funders and decision makers informed about progress towards program goals and outcomes, helping them allocate resources effectively;
- build a knowledge base that provides insights for future research and practice, and;
- foster collaboration and partnerships among organisations by providing a common understanding of issues and solutions and coordinated efforts to address complex challenges more effectively.

How is evidence communicated?

Evidence is communicated through a variety of methods, each tailored to the audience and context. Key methods include:

- written reports and papers;
- presentations (including webinars, conferences, symposiums);
- visualisations (such as charts, graphs), and;
- social media.

The Family Violence, Sexual Violence Knowledge Hub is designed to be a communication platform for our sectors. A platform where we can share, translate, synthesis and access diverse types of evidence and knowledge to learn and improve.



Types of Evidence

Quantitative

Quantitative data is concerned with counting and measuring things, like the number of clients who have accessed a service or the percentage of victim survivors who have been placed in emergency accommodation in a given period. It often involves surveys or experiments with fixed questions and analysis using statistical tools. Quantitative data contributes to our knowledge about general trends or causal relationships.

Qualitative

Qualitative data is more concerned with people's experiences, thoughts and insights. This can include client feedback, victim survivor experiences, practitioner insight, and consultations with professionals. It involves the collection of descriptive information, helping us learn from participants' perspectives and to understand trends we might observe. Qualitative approaches use open-ended methods such as interviews or observations. This kind of evidence is best suited to smaller cohorts, in situations when in-depth exploration and nuanced interpretations of social circumstances is needed.

Mixed method

Mixed-method approaches use a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. By using a range of evidence types and methods, including both qualitative and quantitative techniques, the four peaks aim to deepen understanding and confidence in findings and conclusions. Mixed methods provide the opportunity to gain diverse perspectives and to seek out conclusions which align, thereby increasing our confidence in their reliability. Using mixed methods, when appropriate, can ensure the quality and rigor of the evidence we use or generate.

Sources of Evidence

Evidence can be drawn from a range of sources, including (but not limited to) people with lived experience, service providers, researchers, policy professionals, government reports and statistical data. Drawing from a range of different evidence provides a more comprehensive and balanced perspective. When different sources of evidence converge on the same finding, it increases confidence in the reliability of our conclusions.

Whenever possible, multiple sources of evidence and knowledge should be used to determine conclusions or directions for practice.

Clients and individuals with lived experience, including children, offer invaluable insights that ensure research and interventions are grounded in their perspectives and realities. As experts of their own lives, they provide crucial feedback on their experiences and needs. This input not only highlights areas for improvement but also helps services and products evolve to meet shifting expectations and requirements. Addressing these evolving needs requires a nuanced understanding of changing service contexts. By staying attuned to these shifts, organisations can proactively adapt their approaches, aligning more effectively with the evolving needs of their clients.

Practitioner expertise is also critically important when building evidence about what works or not and why. Practitioners have a unique knowledge base which draws on their professional expertise, on-ground experience and cumulative learning from clients. Practitioners develop a deep understanding of the service environment and context, and possess knowledge refined through experience of service successes and failure and provide a vehicle for client feedback.

Cultural knowledge is also a vital source of insight. We recognise the importance of integrating diverse cultural perspectives, values, and ways of knowing in shaping how evidence is understood, interpreted, and applied across different communities. In many cultures, the collection and sharing of evidence often involve diverse methods, such as storytelling. This approach not only preserves cultural narratives but also deepens understanding by embedding data within lived experiences.

Everyday data and evidence are continuously collected in the day-to-day work of the four peaks. This can include information collected through client data, workforce and other data, and through program evaluation.

Drawing on the evidence base by using documented evidence produced by scholarly research results, reviews, evaluations and reports and that is shared through journals, research databases, books, university repositories, knowledge clearinghouses and governments and organisation reports.

Identifying 'good' evidence

Understanding common features of good evidence can be valuable to support reliability of the method and conclusions of evidence sources. Key features of good evidence include being:

- **Appropriate, relevant and useful for decision making.** Responds to your question or need, is it appropriate to the context and will support decision making and improvement efforts
- **Rigorous and objective** supported by credible evidence which is referenced and is transparent about any conflict of interest, political biases, funding, and in methodology and limitations.
- **Transparent and clear on purpose, audience and limitations.** Sources of evidence that are shaped to meet a purpose, clear in their intent, their strengths and limitations, and draw on diverse perspectives and experiences to inform decision making and improvement across the multi-faceted and complex issues and services system represented by the four peaks.
- **Gathered from diverse sources and methods** to strengthen the quality and reliability of any findings and conclusions. Consistency of findings and conclusions across different sources or different methods increases confidence in their quality and reliability.

For the four peaks and our joint workforces, diversity of sources and methods includes:

- **Centering lived experience:** ideally in the design of the evidence gathering process and, in the information, gathered. Drawing from the perspectives of those with lived experience provides real, on the ground perspectives and solutions from those closest to the issue.
- **Being culturally responsive:** respecting and integrating diverse cultural perspectives so that the evidence is relevant and meaningful for stakeholders
- **Timely:** making sure any data collected is up-to-date and that any literature is still current and relevant.
- **Authoritative and credible:** consider carefully the authors and organisations producing evidence, their qualifications and expertise.
- **Underpinned by ethical principles and standards:** including privileging the rights and wellbeing of individuals involved in the evidence gathering.



Evidence gathering

The following table outlines some of the common ways in which evidence can be sourced and collected. Each has its strengths and limitations. When findings from different methods of collection align, we can be more confident in the reliability of our conclusions.

Collection Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Literature Review	Summarises and analyses large volumes of information in accessible format. Involves reviewing existing evidence, analysis or theory to determine what is known already about an area of research and where the knowledge gaps might be.	Can be labor intensive to identify, locate and review relevant documents and literature. Requires access to library/journal data bases.
Document review of service or project activity data	Low cost and efficient use of existing organisational data (e.g. records of service activities) already being collected for other purposes (e.g. funders).	Large quantities of data needs to be collected systematically and consistently to be able to offer valuable insights.
Interviews	Allows a range of perspectives including insights of service users, policy makers or practitioners to be captured in structured or semi-constructed ways to understand an individual's experience or perspective.	Can be time consuming when analysing, thematising, and writing up interviews, testing content with interviewees.
Focus Groups	Can be a more comfortable option for some participants. Useful for gathering practitioner and professionals' views or experiences.	Can be time consuming when analysing and writing up discussions.
Case Studies	Involves in-depth analysis of a particular program, collaboration, group, event or phenomenon in its real-life context. Useful to use as examples of good practice, or for training purposes	These are about particular instances and often not generalisable.

Collection Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Story-telling/narrative inquiry	Can engage the reader or listener, helping them to connect or relate to the information being provided and give meaning to the evidence	Is typically focused on the experiences of individuals and might not be generalisable
Observation	Can see firsthand what is happening for clients (such as the family's physical environment or children's interaction with family members)	Shows only the external behaviour not what individuals are thinking.
Testimonials	Can offer a range of personal perspectives on impact.	There can be considerable variety in the quality and usefulness of these
Photos/videos	Can show elements of experience that might be difficult to capture in other ways.	Can involve privacy and ethical issues.
Questionnaires or surveys	Can be quick and low-cost ways of finding out the views of specific cohorts or large population level groups. Good for capturing demographic data.	Do not allow for more in-depth perspectives and can have a high attrition rate if too lengthy or complex.
Validated outcome Measurement tools	Validated tests and instruments can give assurance as to the validity and reliability of the information gathered. Used for capturing certain types of data such as intervention outcomes.	Generally, requires professional expertise to administer and analyse and on their own will only tell part of a client's story
Mapping	Visually representing information to capture, analyse, and interpret spatial and other relationships and patterns.	Collecting, processing, and analysing data can be time-consuming and expensive.