

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR MOTEL RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

### BACKGROUND & CONTEXT:

A new Family Violence Crisis Response Model is being implemented in 2022-23. The model aims to ensure that victim-survivors in crisis are supported through coordinated responses which are consistent, clearly communicated, and jointly managed by the services involved. It also prioritises crisis support provided at the local level, where possible and in line with victim-survivor choice and safety.

The Crisis Response Model is comprised of:

- Family Violence Case Management Program Requirements (as they pertain to crisis responses)
- Roles and responsibilities in the provision of emergency accommodation
- Roles and responsibilities after hours (for funded after hours service providers)

The Roles and responsibilities documents articulate clearer roles and responsibilities for key parts of the specialist family violence service system in relation to the provision of emergency accommodation. Alongside these roles and responsibilities, guidance on key considerations for motel relationship management has been identified as a key system enabler required to support services to implement and align with the Crisis Response Model. **Safe and Equal** have worked in collaboration with **Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre** to develop this guidance.

In the development of this guidance **Safe and Equal** and **Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre** acknowledge that the characteristics and availability of emergency accommodation options varies significantly across regions in Victoria and in many cases, Specialist Family Violence Services are limited in their choice of suitable accommodation. **This document offers guidance and advice for services only, it does not establish minimum standards for emergency accommodation.**

The Local Family Violence Motel Coordination Projects will be working with family violence, homelessness and other local services to developing understandings and agreements between agencies to maximize safety for people in family violence crisis who are accommodated in motels, and to strengthen relationships with motel providers to help maintain/build the availability of suitable motel accommodation.

**DOCUMENT PURPOSE:**

This document provides Specialist Family Violence Services with the following guidance on motel placement and relationship management:

- Preferable emergency accommodation characteristics, including:
  - Location
  - Security
  - Amenities & accessibility
  
- Best practice approaches to working with moteliers, including:
  - Guidance for establishing relationships with moteliers, including safety considerations for establishing a relationship
  - Guidance for maintaining relationships with moteliers
  - Managing issues and incidents

In the preparation of this guidance, **Safe and Equal** and **Safe Steps** acknowledge that many specialist family violence services are experienced in the provision of motel crisis accommodation to adult and child victim-survivors. Services already experienced in the provision of emergency accommodation may wish to examine how the considerations in this document relate to their local area environment and whether further policy or practice guidance is required to support practitioners in the provision of emergency accommodation.

This guidance will support the systems development work to be undertaken through the Local Motels Co-ordination Projects.

**DEFINITIONS:**

This paper uses the language of “victim-survivor” to refer to both adult and child victim-survivors and acknowledges children and young people as victim-survivors of family violence in their own right.

Though this paper uses the language of “motel” to refer to emergency accommodation, it is noted that services utilise several different emergency accommodations provided by the private sector including motels, hotels, caravan parks, serviced apartments and air b’n’b.

**PREFERABLE EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION CHARACTERISTICS**

This section provides Specialist Family Violence Services with a list of preferable characteristics for selecting emergency accommodation options. Detailed advice and illustrative examples are also provided wherever relevant. As above, it is acknowledged that the characteristics and availability of emergency accommodation options varies significantly across regions in Victoria and in many cases, Specialist Family Violence Services are limited in their choice of suitable accommodation.

It is recommended that wherever possible, services visit accommodation options in person to assess their suitability. Services should carefully consider whether they are able to fulfil duty of care to victim-survivors when using emergency accommodation options such as residential caravan parks and hostels.

<b>Preferable location considerations</b>	<b>Motel is located in a safe area.</b> <i>It is recommended that emergency accommodations are not located near to Courts, Police Station or other facilities or services likely to be frequented by perpetrators living in the local area.</i>
	<b>Motel is accessible by public transport.</b>
	<b>Motel is located near to necessary services such as medical centres, Centrelink etc.</b>
	<b>Motel is located near to shops including supermarket, pharmacy, etc.</b>
<b>Preferable security considerations</b>	<b>Motel has staffed reception.</b> <i>It is recommended that motels that offer 24/7 staffed reception are sought in the first instance, and that Specialist Family Violence Services obtain the contact information for on-call managers at accommodations that are not staffed 24 hours. This can assist in the management of any issues or incidents occurring outside of reception hours.</i>
	<b>Motel has CCTV facilities and can readily access footage when requested.</b> <i>It is recommended that services understand how rapidly a motel can review CCTV footage in an emergency and note how long a motel stores CCTV footage before erasure. Victim-survivors may have cause to request CCTV footage to demonstrate breaches of IVO, for example.</i>
	<b>Motel rooms have phones.</b> <i>It is recommended that accommodation options with in-room phones are sought wherever possible as many victim-survivors enter emergency accommodation without access to a safe mobile phone.</i>
	<b>Motel rooms do not face directly onto the street.</b> <i>It is recommended that wherever possible, rooms are accessible only via secure lift or after passing staffed reception as this provides additional security.</i>

	<p><b>Motel has secure parking, or parking available where a victim survivor’s vehicle can be parked out of sight of main roads.</b></p>
	<p><b>Services develop strategies to minimize the risk of victim survivors being accommodated alongside perpetrators</b>  <i>It is expected that the Local Family Violence Motel Coordination Project will assist services to develop local interagency and cross sector arrangements to minimize the risk that victim-survivors and perpetrators are placed in accommodation that may increase their risk.</i></p>
<p><b>Preferable amenities &amp; motel accessibility</b></p>	<p><b>Motel provides kitchen facilities.</b>  <i>It is recommended that motels with full kitchen facilities are used in the first instance, particularly for victim-survivors who are bottle-feeding infants, who have specific dietary needs or who need to prepare meals for children.</i></p>
	<p><b>Motel provides food vouchers on behalf of Specialist Family Violence Service or allows for meal charge back to room.</b>  <i>It is recommended that services provide victim-survivors with supermarket vouchers to uphold victim-survivor choice in meals wherever possible.</i></p>
	<p><b>Motel meets the needs of child victim-survivors.</b>  <i>It is recommended that families be accommodated in larger rooms or serviced-apartment style accommodations that provide children with space to play. If there are young children in a family, it is recommended that their accommodation also has a bath.</i></p>
	<p><b>Motel meets victim-survivor access requirements.</b>  <i>It is recommended that services build relationships with moteliers who provide accessible accommodations. Services should discuss individual access requirements with each victim survivor to ensure accommodations meet their specific needs.</i></p>
	<p><b>Motel allows pets.</b>  <i>Wherever possible, victim-survivors with pets should be offered emergency accommodation that will accommodate them with their animal. It is acknowledged that pet-friendly emergency accommodation is limited.</i></p>
	<p><b>Motel has laundry facilities.</b>  <i>It is recommended that services utilise accommodation options that provide in-room or shared laundry facilities, or that are near to a laundromat.</i></p>
	<p><b>Motel provides outdoor space for smokers.</b>  <i>It is recommended that victim-survivors who smoke are accommodated in rooms with a balcony or other outdoor space. This is client-centered and limits the likelihood of services being charged additional cleaning fees for smoking in-room.</i></p>



**BEST PRACTICE APPROACHES TO WORKING WITH MOTELIERS**

The section provides Specialist Family Violence Services with a set of best-practice considerations for establishing and maintaining relationships with moteliers and other emergency accommodation providers.

As a first principle, it is important that Specialist Family Violence Services explain to moteliers and other emergency accommodation providers that clients placed in their accommodation are victim-survivors of family violence. Services are encouraged to have transparent conversations with moteliers about the risk and safety needs of clients and should support accommodation providers to understand and be sensitive to trauma and its impacts.

It is also important to note that while moteliers and other accommodation providers have a role to play in supporting the safety of victim-survivors in their accommodation, they are not responsible for managing or mitigating complex family violence risk. It is integral that services provide moteliers with clear guidance about the practical ways they can support the safety of victim-survivors whilst also affording them the same privacy and customer service response that they would provide to any other guest.

There are a number of important safety considerations that should be discussed with emergency accommodation providers whenever establishing a relationship. The following provides a non-exhaustive list of safety considerations for discussion with accommodation providers. Both Specialist Family Violence Services and Moteliers should have robust policies and procedures in place to support the health, safety and wellbeing of adult and child victim-survivors in emergency accommodation. It is important that in the provision of emergency accommodation, both services and moteliers have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities when responding to critical incidents or issues that may arise.

<b>Developing clear understandings with moteliers including safety considerations when arranging accommodation</b>	<b>Motelier agrees to uphold the confidentiality of victim-survivor information by accepting bookings using first name of victim-survivor and size of family only.</b>
	<b>Motelier agrees not to disclose any information about victim-survivors accommodated except to the Specialist Family Violence Service responsible for the booking.</b> <i>It is recommended that services provide a client identification number (such as a SHIP ID) along with a first name when booking accommodation. Moteliers can then request that a client's identification number be quoted as a security measure whenever a caller or visitor seeks information about a booking.</i>
	<b>Motelier understands to advise the Specialist Family Violence Service if an unknown person calls or attends the accommodation seeking a victim-survivor.</b>



	<p><b>Motelier understands to advise the Specialist Family Violence Service if a victim-survivor is not sighted at the accommodation for a 24-hour period, or if any other concerns are held for safety.</b>  <i>It is recommended that services have their own practice or policy in place to ensure that they are regularly checking in on the wellbeing of victim-survivors in emergency accommodation.</i></p>
	<p><b>Motelier understands that they may be required to conduct a room-check to ensure the safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors in attendance.</b>  <i>It is recommended that services set clear expectations with moteliers that room checks may be requested and required promptly where there is significant concern for the safety of a victim-survivor or family.</i></p>
	<p><b>Specialist Family Violence Service and motelier have clear agreement in place in relation to the packing and storage of belongings left behind in rooms.</b>  <i>Some accommodation providers have policies in place that prevent them from packing belongings left behind by guests. It is recommended that services have a relationship with a cleaning company who can be called upon to clean up and pack belongings left behind.</i></p>

Managing issues and incidents	<p><b>Motelier understands that they are to call 000 whenever they hold immediate and serious concern for the safety of a victim-survivor or family, and advise the supporting FV service whenever this occurs.</b></p>
	<p><b>Specialist Family Violence Service and motelier have clear agreement in place in relation to payment for lost, damaged or stolen motel property.</b>  <i>It is recommended that moteliers be asked to provide services with the opportunity to recover items missing from motel rooms prior to a motel charging for replacement of same. Wherever possible, services should avoid unduly criminalizing victim-survivors by encouraging moteliers to report theft to police however each accommodation provider will have their own policy in place in relation to reporting stolen or damaged property.</i></p>
	<p><b>Specialist Family Violence Service and motelier agree to communicate immediately if either service has cause to contact emergency services, Police or Child Protection.</b>  <i>It is recommended that services advise motel staff if emergency services have been called to their location as this can assist with ease of access.</i></p>



	<p><b>Specialist Family Violence Service and motelier have clear agreement in place in relation to responding to critical incidents.</b></p> <p><i>It is recommended that in addition to understanding internal critical incident response and reporting requirements, services establish clear guidance for moteliers on what to do in the event of a critical incident, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>When to call emergency services</i></li> <li>• <i>Timely communication when an incident occurs</i></li> <li>• <i>Incident debriefing and review processes</i></li> </ul>
	<p><b>Specialist Family Violence Service offers debriefing and support to motel staff following any critical or otherwise distressing incident.</b></p> <p><i>Though workers at motels and other accommodations may have access to their own debriefing and support, it may be of benefit for services to offer debriefing through a specialist family violence lens to any motel workers impacted by an incident. Some services may extend use of their EAP to motel workers impacted by critical incidents.</i></p>

In addition to providing moteliers with clear guidance and expectations when arranging accommodation, services can take steps to maintain collegial working relationships with moteliers and other emergency accommodation providers on an ongoing basis. The following provides guidance on maintaining ongoing relationships with accommodation providers:

<p><b>Guidance for establishing relationships with moteliers</b></p>	<p><b>Motelier has a sound understanding of the crisis nature of emergency accommodation service provision and understands that their accommodation will be used to house victim-survivors of family violence who are at risk.</b></p>
	<p><b>Motelier is provided with contact information for the Specialist Family Violence Service, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Who to call in relation client-related matters arising at their motel, and</i></li> <li>• <i>details of who to contact in relation to invoicing, administration and ongoing relationship management.</i></li> </ul>
	<p><b>Wherever possible, a service agreement is put in place that confirms:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The role the SFVS will play in supporting clients and the motel owner/staff</i></li> <li>• <i>Agreed key contacts in the SFVS and the motel</i></li> <li>• <i>Agreed booking arrangements and room rates</i></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motel reception/staffed hours (including whether an on-site or on-call manager is available when motel is unstaffed)</li> <li>• Client confidentiality considerations</li> <li>• Any agreement reached in relation to use of amenities (for example, services may negotiate free or low-cost use of laundry facilities, or a reduced rate for meals ordered from motel restaurant etc.)</li> <li>• Any agreement reached in relation to payment for room damages, additional cleaning etc.</li> </ul> <p><i>It is acknowledged that on occasion and in periods of peak demand, Specialist Family Violence Services will be reliant on use of motels, hotels and emergency accommodation options where no prior service agreement has been negotiated.</i></p>
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<p><b>Guidance for maintaining relationships with moteliers</b></p>	<p><b>Specialist Family Violence Service communicates regularly with motelier to ensure they feel supported in provision of services to adult and child victim-survivors.</b></p> <p><i>It is recommended that services provide key contact details to moteliers including an explanation of who to call at what time of day. Services may also consider appointing a staff member to act as a primary liaison with accommodation providers.</i></p>
	<p><b>Specialist Family Violence Service develops policies or practices to monitor utilisation of emergency accommodation options.</b></p> <p><i>On occasion, services may place a cap on the number of families booked into any one accommodation option at a time. Services may also temporarily cease or decrease booking numbers following an incident or issue at a motel.</i></p>
	<p><b>Specialist Family Violence Service has arrangements in place to ensure ease of re-booking process and timely payment of invoices.</b></p> <p><i>It is recommended that services develop a policy or practice which specifies the number of nights a victim survivor is booked for upon first entering crisis accommodation, as this reduces administrative burden and minimises disruption to clients.</i></p>
	<p><b>Specialist Family Violence Service fosters good communication between frontline workers at their service and staff at motel.</b></p> <p><i>It is recommended that services provide motel staff with direct contact numbers for specialist family violence practitioner teams as this can support ease of communication in relation to client related matters.</i></p>
	<p><b>Motelier undertakes to advise Specialist Family Violence Services about changes to room availability as early as possible, including changes to current bookings and availability around major events, holidays etc.</b></p>