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| Program requirements for Family Violence Crisis Brokerage (FVCB) |
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# Purpose of the funding – responding to crisis and COVID-19

This funding aims to increase the safety and wellbeing of people experiencing family violence by providing immediate, flexible, person-centred support during a crisis and in response to COVID-19.

Family Violence Crisis Brokerage (previously referred to as Housing Establishment Funds) supports specialist family violence services to respond to family violence and potential increasing demand associated with COVID-19. This includes the 24/7 statewide family violence crisis service, family violence case management services, family violence refuges and supported crisis accommodation services.

Family Violence Crisis Brokerage (FVCB) can be used to address costs associated with crisis responses such as accommodation, transport and material aid as well as smaller incidental costs associated with specialist family violence support.

The expansion of FVCB aims to increase the capacity of specialist family violence services to respond to crisis, including the increasing demand associated with COVID-19. Increased FVCB will enable specialist family violence services to be more flexible and responsive through the pandemic and will reduce the amount of administration and wait times associated with applying for other forms of flexible funding. These guidelines will be reviewed and updated as required.

# Program requirements

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Standards as the relevant industry standards. DHHS standards represent a single set of service quality standards for service providers delivering services to individuals and families.

FVCB is provided to agencies through the Activity *Flexible Funding Family Violence – 94874*.

FVCB is available for individuals and families (including children) that are receiving support from a specialist family violence service. FVCB providers are required to undertake an assessment of needs and risk in line with the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM). This should include consideration of financial circumstances and the anticipated outcomes or positive impact the FVCB will have on the individual or family. FVCB can be provided throughout the duration of an individual’s support period with a specialist family violence service provided they continue to meet the eligibility criteria.

Children should be considered as people in their own right (and therefore unique individuals for the purpose of assessing and undertaking expenditure of FVCB. In circumstances where an individual or family re-engages with a FVCB provider after a previous support period has been closed this will be considered a new support period and allow the individual or family full access to the maximum amount of FVCB.

Where FVCB is used for perpetrators, the purpose must be to reduce the risk to, or enhance the safety of victim survivors and/or their children. Any expenditure must directly link to this purpose such as increasing engagement and keeping perpetrators in view. The majority of expenditure for this cohort should therefore be confined to accommodation and transport. See the Perpetrator Case Management Trial Program Operational Guidelines for access to further guidance on the use of FVCB for perpetrators at https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-06/Perpetrator-Case-Management-Operational-Guidelines.

There is no minimum amount for use of the FVCB. However, FVCB providers are expected to ensure equitable access to available FVCB funds across the financial year by balancing the amounts provided to each individual or family. The maximum amount of FVCB an individual can receive in one support period is expected to be no more than $5,000. In circumstances where an individual or family re-presents after a support period has been closed this will be considered a new support period.

In cases where more than $5,000 is required within one support period, FVCB providers must gain approval from their DHHS Service Agreement Manager (usually the local Agency Performance and Systems Support Team).

Access to FVCB does not preclude people from accessing a Family Violence Flexible Support Package (FSP) or other individualised brokerage either while they are receiving FVCB, or at a later date.

FSPs deliver a personalised and holistic response to victims/survivors experiencing family violence who have a case management or support plan in place by assisting them to access support, move out of crisis, stabilise and improve their safety, well-being and independence into recovery. For further information including eligibility and suitability requirements, please see the FSP program requirements at <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/program-requirements-delivery-family-violence-flexible-support-packages>.

FVCB should only be used for private rental assistance if the individual or family cannot access the Private Rental Assistance Program (PRAP) located in each local area to establish (rent in advance) and sustain (rental arrears) for their tenancies. Further information on the PRAP can be found at <https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/PRAP%20Guidelines%20revised%202019.pdf>

# Principles

The following principles should guide the use of FVCB:

* the safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors is paramount
* responses are focussed on perpetrator accountability
* support provided is strengths-based, where possible
* expenditure is directed by the individual or family receiving the FVCB, within the parameters established in these guidelines
* the social and gendered context of family violence and the impact of violence on victim-survivors (including children) development is understood
* consideration is given to culturally appropriate service responses for individuals and families from a range of backgrounds
* the significant and disproportionate impact of family violence on people from marginalised communities and the effect of this on their level of risk and need is recognised.

# Eligibility

Eligibility criteria for FCVB are as follows:

* individuals or families (including children) who have recently experienced and/or been affected by family violence; and
* are receiving support from a specialist family violence service; and
* are experiencing a financial crisis.

# What family violence crisis brokerage can buy

FVCB may be used to purchase goods and services including but not limited to:

* **alternative housing and accommodation** - such as such as crisis accommodation, private rental assistance (if not eligible for PRAP), relocation and storage costs and furniture needs
* **household related expenses** - such as electricity, gas and water bills, repairs to whitegoods and any items related to support for remote access and connection with support services such as internet and ICT equipment
* **basic material needs** – such as clothing, food, basic toiletries, cleaning supplies, infant supplies such as nappies or formula or care or placement of pets
* **transportation** – such as public transport cards (‘mykis’), fuel vouchers or taxi vouchers
* **health and wellbeing support**s – such as medical or pharmaceutical costs not covered by Medicare or the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, glasses, mobility and communication aids, private counselling or specialist service. This also includes supports for refugees/migrants who do not have access to medicare or other government programs to cover medical and other costs.
* **child development and safety items** – such as educational resources, school uniforms or books, therapeutic supports
* **identification and connection with culture and identity** – such as travel, culturally specific clothing or food, culturally specific service support
* **basic safety and security responses** (outside the scope of the Personal Safety Initiative and Victims of Crime brokerage support) – such as emergency/backup mobile phones, repairs to broken doors and/or windows, lock changes and installation of security doors.

The Personal Safety Initiative (PSI) is available to complete a safety and security audit and support victim survivors to remain safely in, or return safely to, their own home and community, or to increase their safety and stability by relocating them to a new home. PSI is not intended to be a crisis response. Further information including eligibility and suitability requirements are available here: <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/personal-safety-initiative-operational-guidelines>.

# Exclusions

FVCB must not be used for the following purposes:

* illegal activity
* gambling or alcohol
* other free or low-cost services readily available within the community
* to replace or duplicate supports available through other funding sources, including other Local, State and Commonwealth Government programs where these can be accessed in a timely manner
* cash payments.

# Accountability and monitoring

FVCB providers are required to acquit against FVCB by reporting on the number of new individuals who have been assisted with FVCB during the reporting period, via Service Delivery Tracking on a monthly basis. This measure is based on an average price of $500 per individual assisted, noting that children can be counted as unique persons. The amount of FVCB administered per individual or family assisted will vary depending on their risks and needs.

FVCB providers are also required to acquit against the FVCB to their DHHS Service Agreement Manager a quarterly basis using the acquittal template provided. The acquittal template is due on the 15th day of the month following the end of the quarterly reporting period (January, April, July, October) of each year. All FVCB provided to individuals should also be recorded in the FVCB provider’s client record system to track all funding provided to each individual.

This acquittal is required to indicate all approved FVCB, not only finalised invoices. If for any reason approved invoices are not paid, amounts are to be amended in the next reporting period.

The acquittal template includes (by each financial year):

* total amount of funds allocated to the service provider for that financial year
* number of individuals assisted with FVCB by client category (i.e. victim survivor, child) and by demographic categories
* the final value of funds expended/committed by type of support (i.e. accommodation, transport, material aid)
* the balance of unspent/uncommitted funds.

FVCB providers are expected to fully allocate FVCB over the relevant financial year. This will require consideration of demand and prioritisation measures to ensure equity of access and retainment of sufficient reserves to last the duration of the funding period. The treatment of any unspent funds will be negotiated with the department, depending on the amount and reasons. The department reserves the right to require FVCB providers to repay unspent funds to the department.