



YOUTH AFFAIRS COUNCIL  
OF VICTORIA INC.

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## **Family Violence And Young People Project:**

### **Survey of Workers With Young People About Mandatory Reporting.**

*July* Please complete this important questionnaire. If you are unable to hand the completed survey to the Project representative please return to YACVic by the ~~1<sup>st</sup>~~ <sup>7<sup>th</sup></sup> of ~~June~~ to allow us to make recommendations quickly.

**Please Note: This questionnaire is for individual workers. If you require more copies for other workers please feel free to photocopy this original, or contact the Council for more copies.**

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria has received a grant from the Criminology Research Council of Australia to identify the training needs and recommendations of Victorian workers with young people in relation to mandatory reporting laws.

The results of this important survey will be used to assist YACVic to advocate for the training needs of workers with young people and to inform H & CS mandatory reporting program guidelines.

The purposes of this survey are to:

1. Gain insights into how workers with young people respond to disclosures of abuse from adolescent young people.
2. Seek information about the resources available to youth workers to assist adolescent young people when they disclose abuse.
3. Identify youth workers perceptions and recommendations concerning mandatory reporting laws relating to child abuse.
4. Determine the training needs of youth workers in relation to the Victorian 'protective system', and mandatory reporting legislation.

All respondents are invited to a forum which will be held in August to discuss the results of this survey and youth worker's responses to other aspects of The Project.

Thank-you for your valuable assistance.

# Section 1: Service & Worker Profile

1. Where is your service?

- Inner Metro
- Outer Metro
- Metro Outreach
- Rural Regional Centre
- Rural Town
- Rural Outreach

2. What is the major funding source for your position or your service?

- Federal Government
- State Government
- Local Government
- Large Non Government Body
- Small Non Government Body
- Other - please specify \_\_\_\_\_

3. Please tick up to three major services provided by your service, or in your workplace:

- Housing
- Information Provision
- Advocacy
- Counselling
- Outreach support
- Referrals
- Activities/leisure

4. What is the basis of your employment?

- Fulltime employee
- Part time/ Jobshare
- Casual
- Locum
- Unpaid

5. Please indicate which categories best describe the major duties of your current position in the youth work field. Please tick as many as apply to you:

- Case Worker
- Direct Service Provider
- Worker Supervision
- Service Management
- Research
- Other
- (optional) What is the title of your position? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Are you? \_\_\_\_\_

- Female
- Male

7. What is your age group?

- 15 - 19
- 20 - 24
- 25 - 29
- 30 - 34
- 35 - 39
- 40 - 44
- 45 - 49
- 50 - 54
- 55 - 59
- Over 60

8. Do you have any formal qualifications?

- No
- Yes  - Please indicate what sort of qualification(s) you have.
  - Certificate  ,In \_\_\_\_\_
  - Diploma  ,In \_\_\_\_\_
  - Degree  ,In \_\_\_\_\_
  - Higher Degree  ,In \_\_\_\_\_

9. Have you ever worked as a protective worker in a government, or gazetted organisation?

- No
- Yes  Was this in Victoria? Yes  No

10. How long, in total have you worked as a 'worker with young people', including voluntary work? \_\_\_\_\_ (years)

11. What services have you provided in your previous positions as a worker with young people? Please tick as many as apply to you:

- Housing
- Information Provision
- Advocacy
- Counselling
- Outreach support
- Referrals
- Activities/leisure

12. Does your work bring you into contact with young people aged 12 to 16 inclusive?

- No  - go to question 14.
- Yes

13. Thinking of the young people you currently work with who are aged 12 to 16 inclusive, please indicate what proportion of these young people are:

a) Female young people.

- |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 0-5%                     | 6-25%                    | 26-50%                   | 51-75%                   | 76%+                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

b) Male young people.

- |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 0-5%                     | 6-25%                    | 26-50%                   | 51-75%                   | 76%+                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

c) Young people from a non English speaking background.

- |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 0-5%                     | 6-25%                    | 26-50%                   | 51-75%                   | 76%+                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

d) Koori or islander young people.

- |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 0-5%                     | 6-25%                    | 26-50%                   | 51-75%                   | 76%+                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Section 2: Knowledge and Training

14. Workers with young people have described a number of areas of confusion regarding the new mandatory reporting laws. Please indicate whether you believe the following statements are true or false by placing a '1', '2', or '3' in the box provided:

- 1 - TRUE  
2 - DON'T KNOW  
3 - FALSE

- a) If I make a report of abuse to the authorities an investigation will necessarily follow.
- b) If I make a report of abuse to the authorities, the matter must end up in court.
- c) Young people aged 12 to 16 have the legal right to refuse protective intervention.
- d) Mandatory reporting laws apply to young people 18 years of age and below.
- e) Any worker with young people will be required to report abuse, whether or not they have post secondary qualifications.
- f) Under the new laws, mandated workers may incur a penalty for failing to report abuse.
- g) Mandatory reporting laws apply to young people 16 years of age and below.
- h) Under mandatory reporting laws physical abuse must be reported to the authorities.
- i) Under mandatory laws, homelessness must be reported to the authorities.
- j) Under mandatory reporting laws sexual abuse must be reported to the authorities.
- k) Under mandatory reporting laws emotional abuse must be reported to the authorities.
- l) Under mandatory reporting laws neglect must be reported to the authorities.
- m) Intervention orders can only be taken out to protect adults.
- n) A young person can apply for crimes compensation following abuse.

15. Some workers with young people receive training about the child and adolescent protective system. If you have received training in the following areas please indicate the source of this training by placing a '1', '2' or '3' in the box provided:

- 1 = ON THE JOB TRAINING  
2 = TRAINING COURSE (INCLUDES TERTIARY EDUCATION)  
3 = BOTH

- a) The signs of physical abuse.
- b) The signs of sexual abuse.
- c) The signs of emotional neglect.
- d) How to respond to young people when they disclose abuse.
- e) How to be a witness in court.
- f) How to write a report for court.
- g) The orders that are used in The Family Division of The Children's Court.
- h) The child and adolescent protective system generally.
- i) The causes of abuse.
- j) The special needs of young women who have been abused.
- k) The special needs of young men who have been abused.
- l) Any other relevant training areas. Please specify below.

16. Please indicate where you have you heard about mandatory reporting legislation? Please tick as many as apply.

- Newspaper articles
- Television or Radio
- Pamphlets
- On the job training
- A training course run by H & CS
- A training course run by a different organisation
- Discussions with colleagues
- Discussions with friends
- I Have not heard about mandatory reporting
- Other

## Section 3: Skills In Working With Young People

17. What follows is a list of skill areas potentially required to work effectively with young people who may have suffered sexual and physical abuse. Using the code provided, please indicate how relevant you consider each skill area to be for you. Place an 'A', 'B', or 'C' in the left hand box.

**A: VERY IMPORTANT**  
**B: IMPORTANT**  
**C: NOT IMPORTANT**

In the right hand box, could you then assess your level of competency in those skills, again using the following code. Place a '1', '2', '3' or '4' in the right hand box.

**1: STRONG COMPETENCE**  
**2: BASIC COMPETENCE**  
**3: NEEDS IMPROVEMENT**  
**4: NOT COMPETENT**

Here is an example:

Being able to access appropriate housing for young people.

**Here are the skill areas:**

- a) Explaining to young people their legal rights with respect to protective services.
- b) Explaining mandatory reporting laws to young people.
- c) Preparing a report for a protective hearing in court.
- d) Being an effective witness during a protective hearing in court.
- e) Encouraging disclosures of sexual and physical abuse.
- f) Providing physical safety.
- g) Building and developing a trusting relationship.
- h) Assessing whether a young person is likely to suffer significant harm.
- i) Assisting young people to identify, access and develop their power as individuals.
- j) Making decisions about the use of confidential information.

k) Ensuring that young people are aware of the extent to which confidentiality is observed and when it is not.

l) Providing accurate information to young people about court processes.

m) Sharing relevant information given to you by a young person appropriately with other workers.

n) Safely and constructively dealing with dependent behaviours.

o) Assessing a young person's right to input into protective decisions.

p) Assessing when the best interests of the young person overrule their right to input into protective decisions.

q) Balancing the need to maintain trust and provide support, with the need to refer to other professionals with more expertise.

r) Understanding different explanations for the causes of sexual and physical abuse.

s) Applying the different concepts which explain the causes of sexual and physical abuse to practice with young people.

t) Assisting young people to apply for intervention orders.

u) Assisting young people to apply for crimes compensation.

v) Assessing whether a young person has suffered significant harm.

**(Please ensure there is an answer in every box)**

18. Are there any other skill areas you regard as important for working with the young people who have been abused, or with the issue of sexual and physical abuse?

## Section 4: Worker's Attitudes

19. Thinking about your overall experience as a worker with young people, has a young person, aged 12 to 16 inclusive ever disclosed **sexual and/or physical** abuse to you?

- Yes  - Continue  
 No  - Go to question 21.

20.

a) Using the example provided, please indicate the **approximate number of disclosures** of both physical and sexual abuse from females and males you have received from young people. Please remember we are interested in young people aged 12 to 16 inclusive.

Example: Two disclosures of physical, and three of sexual abuse from young women, one disclosure of physical, and four of sexual abuse from young men.

	Physical	Sexual
Females	2	3
Males	1	4

Please indicate your experience here:

	Physical	Sexual
Females		
Males		

b) If you have **ever reported** any of these disclosures to the authorities, please describe what factors generally led you to do so:

c) If you have **ever not reported** these disclosures to the authorities, please describe the factors which led you to **not** report:

21. Some workers with young people have already reported a range of opinions concerning mandatory reporting. Using the code provided, please indicate your response to the following statements:

- 1 = STRONGLY AGREE  
 2 = AGREE  
 3 = UNDECIDED  
 4 = DISAGREE  
 5 = STRONGLY DISAGREE

- a) I won't know whether to warn a young person of my duty to report their disclosure to the authorities.
- b) If I make a report, a young person will see me to be abandoning her/him, when they need me most.
- c) A legal responsibility to report abuse to the authorities is at odds with my identity as a community based worker.
- d) There has been too little training about mandatory reporting laws for community workers with young people.
- e) A large number of professional workers will now report abuse, when previously they would not.
- f) I can envisage a situation where I will not report abuse when the law requires me to do so.
- g) Mandatory reporting laws themselves are good, however the circumstances of their implementation in Victoria are inappropriate.
- h) A legal obligation to report abuse is better than leaving it to an individual worker's discretion on a case by case basis.

## Section 5: Worker's Recommendations

**Mandatory reporting legislation will require certain professional groups to report sexual and physical abuse of young people up to 17 years of age. Reports must be made to the Department of Health and Community Services. A worker's failure to report abuse may result in a penalty. Youth workers are due to be mandated to report in November 1994.**

22. Thinking about how these new laws will impact on your practice as a worker with young people, please provide recommendations about the **implementation of the new laws** in terms of:

a) Resources allocation: (eg. Training of youth workers, provision of more accommodation services)

b) Practice Standards: (eg. Health and Community Services practice standards, practice standards for youth workers)

c) Any other recommendations about mandatory reporting laws?

23. Thinking about your particular workplace, please provide recommendations about the training needs of **workers in your service**, specifically in terms of:

a) Information about the protective system: (eg. Knowledge about the legal system)

b) Worker skills: (eg. Providing support to young people who have disclosed abuse, maintaining the trust of the young person)

c) Attitudes and beliefs: (eg. Understanding, and applying different concepts about the causes of abuse)

d) Any other recommendations about training?

24. Do you have any other comments regarding mandatory reporting or this survey? Remember, if you run out of space please write on the facing page.

**Space for extra comments.**