

Child protection

Additional service delivery data 2024–25

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Child Protection

Child protection is part of a broader children and families service system that also includes family services, care services, and transition from care services. These services, delivered by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) and funded community service organisations, support the health, safety, development and wellbeing of Victoria’s most vulnerable children, young people and families.

Child protection is responsible for receiving, assessing, and investigating reports where children may be at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect within their family, and for ensuring that appropriate services are provided to protect children from harm.

Child protection practitioners (CPPs) undertake assessment, planning and interventions for children assessed as being at risk of harm in parental care. Child protection practitioners meet with the child, their carers and professionals in contact with the child to formulate their assessment.

In some instances, children subject to protection orders may be case contracted to an agency. Child protection remains responsible for case planning and other statutory functions.

Demand

Reports to child protection can be made about a child’s wellbeing or safety. Reports can also be made about concern for the wellbeing and safety of unborn children.

In 2024–25, there were 151,587 child protection reports received.

The number of reports received in 2024–25 was 8.6 per cent higher than the previous year, while investigations from intake reports increased by 15.1 per cent. Substantiations following an investigation showed a 13.2 per cent increase from the previous year. Of the 18,823 substantiated cases, 3,711 (19.7%) involved children who had been part of a previously substantiated case that had been closed in the previous 12 months (13.9% increase from previous year). The number of reports received on unborn children in 2024–25 (2,185) was 2.0 per cent lower than the number received the previous year (2,230).

Table 1: Child protection demand¹

Child protection demand (quarterly data)	September 2024	December 2024	March 2025	June 2025	Total 2024–25
Reports on unborn children	562	542	546	535	2,185
Reports on children	37,797	38,778	36,223	38,789	151,587
Investigations	10,936	11,704	11,336	13,385	47,361
Substantiations	4,636	4,779	4,544	4,864	18,823
Re-substantiations within 12 months	879	942	916	927	3,711

Case allocation

All children involved with Child protection are actively monitored to ensure the allocation of the most urgent cases where children are at the highest risk. Cases awaiting allocation are monitored by the team manager until a case manager is allocated.

¹ Full year results may capture additional data entered after end of quarter – and therefore quarters may not sum to the full year.

Table 2: Average rates of clients awaiting allocation 2024–25, by division and state, per cent²

Quarter	North	South	East	West	State
September 2024	14.1	14.8	13.1	17.5	15.3
December 2024	12.8	13.2	10.0	16.0	13.6
March 2025	16.3	16.2	11.0	16.8	15.6
June 2025	23.1	18.3	14.1	19.8	19.1
2024–25 ³	16.5	15.6	12.1	17.5	15.9

Care Services

Placements

When children are unable to live safely at home, the department makes an application to the Children’s Court for the child to be placed in alternative care arrangements.

For children who cannot safely reside with their parents, kinship care is sought to enable the child to remain with extended family or community networks. If a kinship placement cannot be found, foster carers provide a critical role in providing safe and nurturing home-based care for children and young people.

Residential care is used when placement in home-based care is not possible, or it is in the child’s best interest, with regard to their individual circumstances.

Permanent care is a legal arrangement in which the child lives permanently with a family approved as suitable to assume parental responsibility to the exclusion of all others. Permanent care provides stability for children who are unable to live safely with their birth parents.

The department contracts a variety of community service organisations to recruit and support volunteer foster carers and operate residential care services. Community service organisations also help to provide permanent care and kinship care support services.

In 2024–25 there were:

- 12,610 children placed in at least one out-of-home care placement during the year (excluding permanent care placements).
- 3,515 admissions to and 3,499 exits from out-of-home care (including permanent care placements).⁴
- 9,288 children and young people in out-of-home care (daily average) excluding permanent care.

² Data represents the average rate of clients awaiting allocation per quarter. The count excludes cases in intake phase and cases awaiting allocation for less than four days. State results include Statewide Services.

³ Daily average over financial year.

⁴ Children entering and exiting an episode of care – an episode of care may include a break in placement of less than 60 days.

Table 3a: Daily average children aged 0 to 17 years in care services placements by placement type and quarter 2024–25 (excluding permanent care)

Quarter	Foster	Kinship	Residential	Total daily average number in care ⁵
September 2024	1,309	7,435	455	9,181
December 2024	1,313	7,415	469	9,206
March 2025	1,295	7,526	464	9,303
June 2025	1,284	7,616	461	9,349
Full year average ⁶	1,304	7,505	465	9,288

Table 3b: Daily average children aged 0 to 17 years in care services on Permanent Care Orders by quarter 2024–25

Quarter	Permanent care
September 2024	3,923
December 2024	3,928
March 2025	3,900
June 2025	3,878
Full year average ⁷	3,907

Table 4: Children less than 12 years of age in residential care⁸

Measure	Percentage
Percentage of children less than 12 years of age placed in residential care, relative to total children in care, at 30 June 2025	0.51%

Voluntary Child Care Agreements placements

Child Care agreements can be entered into by a parent and the person in charge of the community service organisation providing the placement. Voluntary placements may occur with or without the involvement of child protection and may be made with a kinship carer, disability provider or out of home care provider.

Voluntary placements are an option where there is no court order requiring the child or young person to live in a placement outside the family home. Voluntary placements require consent of the parent to place a child in an out of home care placement due to factors including parental illness, family crisis or for emergency reasons.

⁵ The three placement types for each quarter do not sum to the daily average number in care. The discrepancy is due to small number of placements categorised as 'other' which contributes to the overall total.

⁶ Quarterly results reflect average volume over the quarter as at end of quarter. Full year results may capture additional data entered after end of quarter – and therefore quarters may not sum to the full year.

⁷ Quarterly results reflect average volume over the quarter as at end of quarter. Full year results may capture additional data entered after end of quarter – and therefore quarters may not sum to the full year.

⁸ Children aged less than 12 years of age in residential care may be in specialised arrangements to accommodate sibling groups or to care for children with high and complex needs.

Table 5: Voluntary Child Care Agreement 2024–25⁹

Measure	2024–25
Number of new child care agreements entered into in 2024–25	230
Number of child care agreements open as at 30 June 2025	22

Deaths of children known to Child Protection

When a child who was known to child protection in the previous 12 months dies, regardless of the circumstances, all services provided to them are independently reviewed by the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) via a child death inquiry. In 2024–25, the department notified the CCYP of 38 deaths of children known to child protection that are in scope for a child death inquiry.

Incident reporting

Client incident reporting data records when a client experiences harm, or is alleged to have experienced harm, during service delivery. Client incident reporting data includes disclosures of historic abuse. Incidents are recorded, and the client’s immediate and ongoing safety needs are responded to. Incident records are maintained regardless of whether an investigation substantiates the allegation of harm.

The Client Incident Management System (CIMS) safeguards clients by providing timely and effective responses to incidents which harm them during service delivery, which in turn, enables service providers to enhance service delivery by learning from incidents. CIMS policy ensures a consistent and proportionate response to client incidents.

CIMS is part of the department’s safeguarding response, ensuring that service providers and the department take appropriate actions to promote the safety and wellbeing of clients. This includes reporting suspected crimes to Victoria Police. Service providers and the department use incident data to inform continuous improvement activities.

Incident categories

Major Impact (CIMS) incidents are the most serious incidents.

Abuse

Abuse incidents include allegations of physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, and financial abuse. Professional judgement is used with respect to the nature of all abuse to determine the appropriate level of categorisation of each incident.

Allegations of abuse are treated seriously. Where clients are victims, they are supported by family support services, child protection, care services, and specialist services, including access to specialist victim support services and medical assistance. Where required, the Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA) is contacted in cases of alleged sexual abuse and suspected crimes are reported to Victoria Police.

⁹ Data captures voluntary agreements managed by an agency, counting unique placements between the carer and child/young person in the reporting period.

Behaviour

A client's harmful behaviour may be indicative of, or a response to, the trauma the client has experienced in their life. Additional support is provided to clients to respond to their needs.

Other incident types

Other incident types include when a client is absent from care, injuries, medication errors, alleged neglect and self-harm or attempted suicide.

Impact of CIMS Policy review changes

The revised [Client incident management system policy](#)¹⁰ was published in December 2024. The revised policy introduced new incident types, revised incident type definitions and changes to the impact classification of incidents. These changes better record the harm experienced by a client.

As a result, the 2024–25 data is not directly comparable to data reported in previous years.

Table 6: Child Protection and Family Services Major Impact incidents (CIMS) 2024–25¹¹

CIMS – Major Impact incidents¹²	2024–25
Client death	9
Abuse	1,149
Behaviour	224
Other incident types	1,012

Incident responses

Incident allegations are met with a strong response, including medical attention should this be required; report to police if the incident involves allegation of physical or sexual abuse or potential victim of crime; and counselling and support offered to all parties.

Each major impact incident is subject to either an investigation or a review led by the service provider. This provides an understanding of how and why incidents occur, how they can be prevented, and how the department and service providers can respond to and learn from these incidents.

CIMS incident information for children and young people in out of home care is shared with the Commission for Children and Young people under section 60A of *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012*.

Care Services client incident investigations

The department requires that the safety and best interests of the child are always paramount, and that children and young people in Care Services reside in safe, stable and high-quality placements.

Under CIMS, organisations must report and investigate any incident where a child in their care is alleged to have been abused or neglected, where the staff member, carer or another client is identified as the subject of

¹⁰ <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/cims>

¹¹ New incident types were introduced with the revised CIMS policy in December 2024. Consequently, 2024-25 data is not directly comparable to data reported in previous years.

¹² Major impact incidents data includes incidents reported by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and incidents reported by community service organisations funded by the department.

allegation. The purpose of a CIMS investigation is to determine, on the balance of probability, whether abuse or neglect has occurred.

Ensuring the safety of children may involve removing the child from placement, removal of the subject of allegation or, where the subject of allegation does not live in the placement, planning for the child to have no further contact with them.

Table 7: Care Services client incident investigations¹³

Measure	2024–25 ¹⁴
Completed CIMS investigations (total)	916
Completed CIMS investigations with outcome of abuse substantiated ¹⁵	478

Suitability Panel

The Suitability Panel determines whether a carer who is found to have sexually or physically abused a child in his/her care should be disqualified from being recorded in the register of out-of-home carers. The Suitability Panel may also determine whether a carer who has been disqualified, should have that disqualification removed.

The Suitability Panel conducted nine hearings throughout 2024–25. Out of these, three cases are still under review, while allegations of misconduct were confirmed in six cases (including three from the previous financial year), leading to the disqualification of three carers.

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¹³ Completed investigations include allegations of abuse or neglect reported to the department during previous reporting periods. Multiple clients can be subject to a single CIMS investigation, each with an outcome of ‘substantiated abuse’ or ‘not substantiated’.

¹⁴ Data reflects number of investigations. This will differ from national reporting data that counts number of children and young people involved in an investigation.

¹⁵ Of the total completed investigations, data reflects number of investigations with a substantiated outcome.