



## Operational Policy

### MIS-05 MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH SERVICES POLICY

#### PURPOSE

The Colac Otway Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Service is a free Universal Service available for all families with children from birth to school age, through a schedule of consultations at key ages and stages, and other activities including parent groups. Additional support is also available through the Enhanced MCH Service, which responds to vulnerable children and families. Both the Universal MCH Service and the Enhanced MCH Service are supported by the 24-hour MCH telephone line.

The principles of Colac Otway's MCH service are to:

- Align with the MCH Service [Guidelines](#) and [Standards](#) as outlined in the diagram below (drawn from the MCH Service Guidelines 2019).



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In addition, these localised principles also apply to the MCH service:

- Provide a free, equitable, flexible and accessible service to users (Universal access).
- Employ registered maternal and child health nurses.
- Be accessible through a number of strategically-located service provision centres or via pre-arranged home visits.
- Network with allied support services.
- Respect the rights of service users including their rights to confidentiality.
- Recognise and respond to the diversity of communities including Aboriginal and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities.
- Be receptive and responsive to changing community and individual needs.
- Promote safe and friendly approaches to service provision.
- Provide for the special needs of clients.
- Research, monitor and evaluate our local early years developmental issues/data to better understand and provide for local needs.

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## SCOPE

This policy applies to Council officers, contractors and consultants to the extent that they are involved in the administration or delivery of Maternal and Child Health Services.

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## DEFINITIONS

**Universal:** The Universal program delivers a free universally accessible statewide service for all families with children from birth to school aged.

**Enhanced:** The Enhanced program responds assertively to the needs of children and families at risk of poor outcomes in particular where there are multiple risk factors.

**Vulnerable family:** A family that may be at risk of adverse health and wellbeing outcomes due to individual parental or family experience or circumstances.

**MCH:** Refers to the overarching statewide Maternal and Child Health Service. MCH centres refers to individual centres located within each Local Government council area that provides MCH programs.

**Family:** Is inclusive of carers as well as parents. It may include those people who consider themselves a family whether or not they are related by blood or marriage. Aboriginal children are born into a broad community of care that consists of immediate family, extended family and the local community.

**Council:** Means Colac Otway Shire Council, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the Local Government Act 2020

**Councillors:** Means the individuals holding the office of a member of Colac Otway Shire Council

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**Key ages and stages:** The Universal program consists of 10 key age and stage consultations with a Maternal and Child Health Nurse. The KAS consultations are a schedule of contacts for all children and their families from birth to school age.

**Out of home care:** Out of home care occurs when children are removed through Child Protection and court orders from their primary care giver. The MCH has an Early Childhood Agreement for children in Out of Home Care.

**Aboriginal Child:** A person under the age of 18 who is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.

**Child:** A person under 18 years of age

**Child Safe Standards:** The Child Safe Standards provide direction to the processes Maternal and Child Health providers and other services must implement in order to create and maintain a Child Safe organisation.

**Child abuse:** Any act committed against a child involving: physical violence, sexual offences, serious emotional or psychological abuse and serious neglect.

**Children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD):** - A child or young person who identifies as having particular cultural or linguistic affiliations by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language or language spoken at home or because of their parents' identification on a similar basis.

**Child-related work:** Work within one or more of the occupational fields defined in the Act where the contact with children is direct, unsupervised, and part of a person's duties, not incidental to their work.

**Child safe organisation:** In the context of the child safe standards, a child safe organisation is one that meets the child safe standards by proactively taking measures to protect children from abuse.

**Children with a disability:** A disability can be any physical, sensory, neurological disability, acquired brain injury or intellectual disability or developmental delay that affects a child's ability to undertake everyday activities. A disability can occur at any time in life. Children can be born with a disability or acquire a disability suddenly through an injury or illness. Some disabilities may be obvious while others are hidden.

**Cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds:** An environment which is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for children; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their cultural or linguistic identity, of who they are and what they need. Efforts need to be made to ensure the culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and their families receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner, including in relevant community languages.

**Cultural safety of Aboriginal children:** Cultural safety encompasses the child being provided with a safe, nurturing and positive environment where they are comfortable with being themselves, expressing their culture, their spiritual and belief systems, and they are supported by the carer and family.

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## REFERENCES

Local Government Act 2020  
Marrung: Aboriginal education plan 2016-2026  
Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out Of Home Care  
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005  
Family Violence Protection Act 2008  
Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan  
[Maternal and Child Health Program Standards 2019](#)  
[Maternal and Child Health Practice Guidelines 2019](#)  
[Child Information Sharing and Family Violence Information Sharing Toolkit – Maternal and Child Health Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Program Guidelines 2019](#)  
[Universal Maternal and Child Health Program Guidelines](#)  
Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014  
Key Ages and Stages Service Activity Framework 2009  
Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM)  
Health Records Act 2001  
[Colac Otway Shire Council's Child Safe Policy](#)  
[Commission for Children and Young People website – Child Safe Standards](#)

## STATEMENT OF POLICY

### Objectives

To engage with all families within Colac Otway Shire with children from birth to school age to take into account their strengths and vulnerabilities and to provide timely contact and ongoing primary health care in order to improve their health, wellbeing, safety, learning and development by:

- Providing a schedule of contacts and activities for all families, with an emphasis on health promotion, early detection, and intervention where necessary.
- Helping to identify children and families who require further assessment, intervention, referral and/or support.
- Bringing families together, fostering social networks, supporting playgroups and strengthening local community connections.
- Linking in other services and supports, such as family support services, First Time Parents Groups and immunisation programs.
- Working in partnership with childhood development and learning educators; family support service providers, referral agencies and allied early years health professionals.
- Monitoring and referring children for childhood immunisation programs, and to provide opportunistic immunisations to children as required.

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- Providing a service model that focuses on ensuring MCH services are culturally safe, providing Aboriginal families with flexibility in how they access MCH services. In addition, strengthening relationships and partnerships between mainstream MCH providers and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOS).

### Service delivery

The majority of sessions are by appointment. These are arranged for critical stages of the infant or child's development. They provide the opportunity for longer consultations and privacy for mothers/families.

A new baby is considered enrolled in the MCH service once the MCH nurse has made contact with the family. Home visits are provided for parents of newborn babies. The initial home visit is to be completed before the child is two weeks of age.

Additional Home visits will be conducted at other times when there is a special need for the mother or infant.

If an Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Service is provided, it assertively responds to children and families at risk of poor outcomes, particularly children for whom there are multiple risk factors or indications of a significant level of risk. This Service is provided in addition to the suite of services offered through the Universal MCH, by providing a more intensive level of support, including short-term case management in some circumstances. This may be provided in a variety of settings such as the family's home, the maternal and child health centre or other location within in the community.

For Occupational Health and Safety requirements home visits will not be conducted outside standard home visiting arrangements without approved procedures from Council's Occupational Health & Safety Committee.

A Maternal and Child Health telephone line is available 24 hours a day to provide support when the local Maternal and Child Health nurse is unavailable. The telephone number is 132229. Critical after hours support can be obtained from the local hospital and doctor service.

### Service location

Service centres are provided strategically throughout the shire, and are supplemented by home visits in smaller or remote townships. These are provided in both purpose-built facilities as well as in partnership with other allied health service providers. The Centres are located in the following townships:

- **Apollo Bay**
- **Beeac**
- **Birregurra**
- **Colac**

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## Networking with other agencies

The Maternal and Child Health Service will work in a collaborative manner with other agencies to ensure that the best and most appropriate support services and structures available are provided when needed. The MCH nurses are primary and essential service providers. Their role is pivotal for ensuring and monitoring referrals.

There are a number of services and groups that Council's Maternal and Child Health Service networks with. These include:

- **Barwon Orange Door** - is the Colac Otway Access Point to access services for women and vulnerable children.
- **Colac KEYS<sup>1</sup>** - meets to provide increased interaction between local services, shared learning, support, professional development and to develop and implement agreed actions for the group and Early Years community.
- **Vulnerable Families Professionals Meeting** - MCH representation at the scheduled meeting which identifies and plans for the care of vulnerable perinatal families
- **Colac Area Health Great Ocean Road Health** - to facilitate discharge planning and an early transition to Maternal and Child Health Services.
- **Colac Otway and Corangamite Shire Family Alliance Operational and Strategic groups** - MCH and Council represented at meetings

## Service standards

Principles and objectives of the MCH service will be achieved and maintained through the Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan, and those strategies and plans that cascade from that. Council's individual performance management processes also drive service provision.

Specific standards for the MCH are defined in the Victorian Maternal and Child Health Service Guidelines and Program Standards.

## Child safety

The Colac Otway Shire is committed to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation where protecting children and preventing and responding to child abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of all Councillors, employees, contractors and volunteers.

Policies and practices of Council's Maternal and Child Health service prioritise child safety and promote shared responsibility for child safety across all MCH staff as well as other Council staff supporting the administration and management of the MCH service.

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<sup>1</sup> KEYS – Kids Early Years Services

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Council's MCH service takes all reasonable steps to protect children and young people from harm, including complying with Council's obligations under State and Federal child protection legislation and the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

The MCH service is committed to supporting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety for culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and the safety of children with a disability.

Child Safety practices at Council's MCH services are governed and underpinned by Council's operational Child Safe Policy, as well as Council's Staff Code of Conduct, which is signed by all staff.

### **Family violence**

MCH service providers are in a unique position to identify and respond to family violence risk. Maternal and Child Health nurses currently use a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) to guide their work in this area.

### **Funding**

The Universal Maternal and Child Health Program is 50 per cent funded by the State Government, with the remaining 50 per cent required from local government via both cash and in-kind contributions (e.g. via building provision and maintenance, vehicles, administration and overheads). The Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Service is 100 per cent State funded.

The program is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Education and Training and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV). In addition, from time to time Council accesses other state-wide funding initiatives and other early years opportunities for things such as training, networking, partnerships and strengthening local community connections of parents.

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#### RELATED DOCUMENTS

Operational Child Safe policy

Information Privacy Policy

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#### TRANSLATION SERVICES

If you need assistance having this policy verbally translated into a language other than English, you can access the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 13 14 50. The TIS also offers a free paper-based translating service to people who meet specific criteria. For more information visit:

<https://www.tisnational.gov.au/en/Non-English-speakers/Document-translations>

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