

Victorian Forensic Paediatric Medical Service NEWSLETTER

WELCOME

Welcome to the first edition of the Victorian Forensic Paediatric Medical Service (VFPMS) Newsletter. After 18 months the service has taken shape, more children are receiving coordinated paediatric and forensic health care and service users are enjoying a more consistent response. While there is still some way to go before the model is fully operational, significant gains have already been made.

What is the Victorian Forensic Paediatric Medical Service?

The VFPMS is a medical service for vulnerable and abused Victorian children. A consortium of organizations including the Royal Children’s Hospital, Monash Medical Centre and the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM) provides paediatric and forensic healthcare in a manner that is integrated with mainstream paediatric health services. The aim is to work in a collaborative way with a broad range of professionals involved with vulnerable and abused children to deliver high quality health care. The service has been rolled out as a two stage process. The initial phase established the metropolitan service and the second phase will establish the service in regional and rural areas. Phase two will be challenging because models of care differ so much between regions. Each region will need to craft a model of care that builds on local expertise, uses the knowledge of enthusiastic professionals who are well aware of ‘what works best in our region’ and provides additional education where required.

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VFPMS 24 Hours Contact 1300 66 11 42

See our website

www.vfpms.org.au

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Health care should be provided in a manner that addresses all aspects of a child's health, safety, development, growth, emotional well being, and capacity to form stable relationships

10 Reasons for our "Existence"



Where can I find out about Clinical Practice Standards

Doctors who perform VFPMS evaluations are welcome to use material from the VFPMS members' web site. Reference material includes

- > **VFPMS proformas**
This is step by step "recipe" to guide doctors through a clinical evaluation of suspected child abuse in a quick and easy way.
- > **Guidelines**
- > **Access to** published protocols and guidelines used throughout the world e.g. American Academy of Pediatrics and the UK RCPCH publication Child Protection Companion.

How do we do it? What is the VFPMS 'Model of Care'?

The key words are 'integration' and 'holistic'.

We aim to enable children to access health care from the best qualified and skilled professionals, situated at the best place, at the best time, working with the best team! If that means that the health care is

provided by someone other than VFPMS staff, so much the better! Health care should be provided in a manner that addresses all aspects of a child's health, safety, development, growth, emotional well being and capacity to form stable relationships.

We have structured our approach using a framework that delivers medical care in conjunction with psychosocial assessments, health and mental health services.

What do we do?

1. Provide vulnerable and abused children with health care. This includes evaluation of children's vulnerability to harm, injury interpretation, opinion formulation and presentation of evidence in court.
2. Provide opinions about suspected child abuse and neglect to Child Protection workers, police, the courts.
3. Provide consultations and advice about individual children to Child Protection workers, police and health professionals. This might be in the form of advice per telephone, email, case conference attendance or as a written opinion based on case file review
4. Determine and implement clinical practice standards for the provision of paediatric forensic medical services in Victoria.
5. Provide education and training for health professionals, Child Protection workers and Police
6. Develop and implement the VFPMS education program. This program will be phased in according to the recommendations of Catalyst Consulting. This work will be delivered collaboratively with DHS.
7. Coordinate the health service response to Child Protection and police requests for paediatric forensic services for Victorian children.
8. Maintain the VFPMS website. The website serves as the repository for educational material, other reference material, provides newlists that facilitate communities of practice and provides the portals linking professionals throughout the state.
9. Collect and report data and identify trends in VFPMS service delivery across Victoria
10. Coordinate service delivery in relation to the health needs of vulnerable and abused children in Victoria. This includes providing a single financial accounting system for all VFPMS services.

How to invoice VFPMS for a service that I have provided?



First time contacting VFPMS?

Call Administration Officer

(03) 9345 4297

OR

Medical Director

(03) 9345 4298

Email:

enquiries@vfpms.org.au

Know the invoicing procedure.

Send invoice and related documents by post to:

Administration Officer
VFPMS Royal Children's Hospital
Flemington Road
PARKVILLE VIC 3052

Fax (03) 9345 4105

Did you know that VFPMS Service fee structure & claim form can be downloaded from

www.vfpms.org.au/pages/R_and_R_claim.php

What will I EARN?

Fee for service payments are identical to payments from VIFM for services of the same duration and complexity. Higher rates are paid for after hours' work than in hours' work.

Currently this is \$144 in hours and \$163 after hours for a consultation lasting one hour.

\$55 is paid for a simple report and \$100 for a more complex but routine report. Attendance at court is also paid.

What else do we get?

Each Acute Health regional health service will develop and implement the Vulnerable Children Framework.

Funding will be directed towards coordinating service delivery.

Each hospital will also be responsible for providing facilities, administrative support and infrastructure.



What is the catch?

Phase one of the VFPMS taught us that one of the quickest and most effective ways of implementing quality assurance is to review all of the medical reports prior to sign off'.

In Melbourne, doctors' reports are reviewed by a peer prior to sending to Child Protection workers or police. This review process increases the chance that minor errors or inconsistencies will be identified and it allows

an opportunity for improvements to be made. Initially, we all felt a little 'sensitive' about this process. We wondered whether we would be subjecting ourselves to unnecessary and unjustified criticism (resulting in more work). However, as time progressed we came to see it as a safe and sensible approach. We value the lessons we teach each other and we welcome the opportunity to include others in this peer review exercise.

Talking of peer review... we also know that this sort of work can be like walking blindfolded and barefoot through a minefield. This is not the sort of work to tackle alone. The VFPMS metropolitan service provides a 24 hour consultation and advice service. Doctors are strongly encouraged to use their peers and colleagues as sounding boards.

Tips for VFPMS Report Writing when child abuse is suspected

Many doctors providing care for abused children already demonstrate proficiencies in this area. A few simple tips are offered below



1. Clearly identify the child in question. Provide their full name (and alias names) and date of birth. Do not include their address or parents' names.
2. State the identity of the person for whom the report is written. State the reasons you have been asked to provide the report.
3. Clearly identify who you are. List your qualifications and experience.
4. As for all good forensic reports, clearly state all sources of information on which your opinion is based, how you obtained the information and from whom. Clearly document the time and nature of your involvement with the child.
5. As for all good paediatric assessments ensure that you have addressed questions related to the child's needs for optimal growth, health, safety, emotional well being and development.
6. Use a heading for the section containing your opinion. Headings for "Background", "Examination Findings", "Investigations", "Treatment", "Summary" sections can also be useful.
7. Use terms a non-medical person could easily understand. Explain medical terms. Use easily recognized "landmarks" when referring to anatomy. Interpret results of investigations.
8. State your opinion using words such as "is evidence of" or "is caused by" or frame your opinion in terms of probability.
9. Be a doctor. If the child requires health care or intervention for developmental delay, ensure that they access these services. Ensure follow up is provided if required. Provide referrals.
10. Make recommendations. As medical professionals with skills in paediatric and forensic medicine, we are in an ideal position to advise Child Protection and the Children's Court about a range of interventions to improve the quality of children's lives.

Don't hold back!

Your association with VFPMS and feedback for improvement of the service is greatly appreciated.



The VFPMS Regional Champion's Award

In the interests of distracting everyone from the seriousness of this work, we have created "the Award". Commencing on the 1st of January 2008, regional and rural VFPMS members will be able to claim reward points for their region

based on exceptionally good medical reports, work above and beyond the call of duty, efforts that demonstrate 'good clinical practice', stellar performances in court and all other endeavours that ultimately schmooze and impress.

Nominations from work colleagues are encouraged (yes, even with bribes!)

Points may be attributed to regions for group efforts.

VFPMS

Royal Children's Hospital
Flemington Road
PARKVILLE VIC 3052

Metropolitan Locations

VFPMS 24 Hours Contact
1300 66 11 42

VFPMS

Monash Medical Centre
246 Clayton Road
CLAYTON VIC 3168