

Child FIRST

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Where a Child FIRST team forms a view that a child or young person is in need of protection they must report the matter to Child Protection. This would be done in consultation with Community-Based Child Protection. Child FIRST will inform you of the outcome of your referral and in most cases will invite you to be included in the assessment, planning and action to support the child and family.

How to make a referral to Child FIRST

Each Child FIRST site will publicise its phone number locally. You may also wish to refer to the following web link for contact details.

http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/family-services/home/_nocache

Will a referral to Child FIRST be confidential?

In most cases, better outcomes for the child, young person and family are achieved when a referral is made with their consent and participation. If making a referral to Child FIRST on behalf of a child, young person or family without their knowledge, you will be asked if you are willing to have your identity disclosed to the family if Child FIRST contacts them. You may choose to have your identity remain confidential; however, you should consider the impact of this on the ongoing engagement with the family by Child FIRST and Family Services.

If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format, email: everychildeverychance@dhs.vic.gov.au

Child and Family Services Alliances

To support the effective operation of Child FIRST, a Child and Family Services Alliance is established in each Child FIRST catchment.

The Child and Family Services Alliances include partners from Child FIRST, all funded family services (including Aboriginal family services), Child Protection and the Department of Human Services Family Services Partnerships. In catchments where an Aboriginal family service does not exist or does not have capacity to be actively involved in the Alliance, the Alliance will demonstrate how it is consulting with the Aboriginal community on Alliance activities.

More information:

For more information, fact sheets and supporting documents, see the every child every chance website: www.cyf.vic.gov.au/every-child-every-chance

Supporting documents:

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 Part 3.2 – Concern about Wellbeing of a Child*
- A strategic framework for Family Services 2006
- Reporting concerns about children or young people: a guide for professionals
- Information sharing guidelines
- Best Interests principles: a conceptual overview
- A Best Interests framework for vulnerable children and youth
- Best Interests Case Practice Model Summary Guide

You may also want to contact your regional Community Partnerships Unit Manager or Family Services team for further information.

Child FIRST – what do I need to know?

Child FIRST (Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Teams) have been established in designated sub-regional catchments across Victoria to provide a community-based referral point into Family Services.

The maps [overleaf] show the 24 sub regional catchments across the state.

When should I refer to Child FIRST?

A referral to Child FIRST may be the best way of connecting vulnerable children, young people and their families to the services they need to protect and promote their healthy development.

Families requiring the support of Family Services generally have complex needs, which can adversely impact on a child's development if appropriate supports and interventions are not provided in a timely manner. Significant concerns about the child's wellbeing and development are highlighted by how often issues are occurring, how serious the issues are and most importantly how the issues are affecting the child's development.

Who provides Child FIRST?

Child FIRST is staffed by Family Service practitioners, with experience in assessing the needs of vulnerable children, young people and families. In addition, Community-Based Child Protection staff facilitate collaboration between these community-based intake services and Child Protection, providing advice to Child FIRST and Family Services about the engagement of families with complex needs and the identification of significant risk factors, and ensuring timely Child Protection involvement if a child is at risk of significant harm.

Child FIRST and/or Family Services may also need to seek the professional advice of the Community Based Child Protection worker on specific case related matters. The ability to consult is a key component of the legislation which aims to promote and support the partnership, interface and operation of Child Protection and registered community based child and family services.

Community Based Child Protection – how will it work?

Community Based Child Protection supports every Child FIRST by facilitating collaboration between Family Services and Child Protection.

This is done through:

Facilitating referrals from Child Protection to Child FIRST; provision of consultation and advice on specific cases to Child FIRST and Family Services in the subregional catchment; provision of advice to the Child FIRST catchment Child Protection staff regarding making referrals to Child FIRST; participation in local professional and community education initiatives and identification of cases within Child Protection requiring enhanced referral.

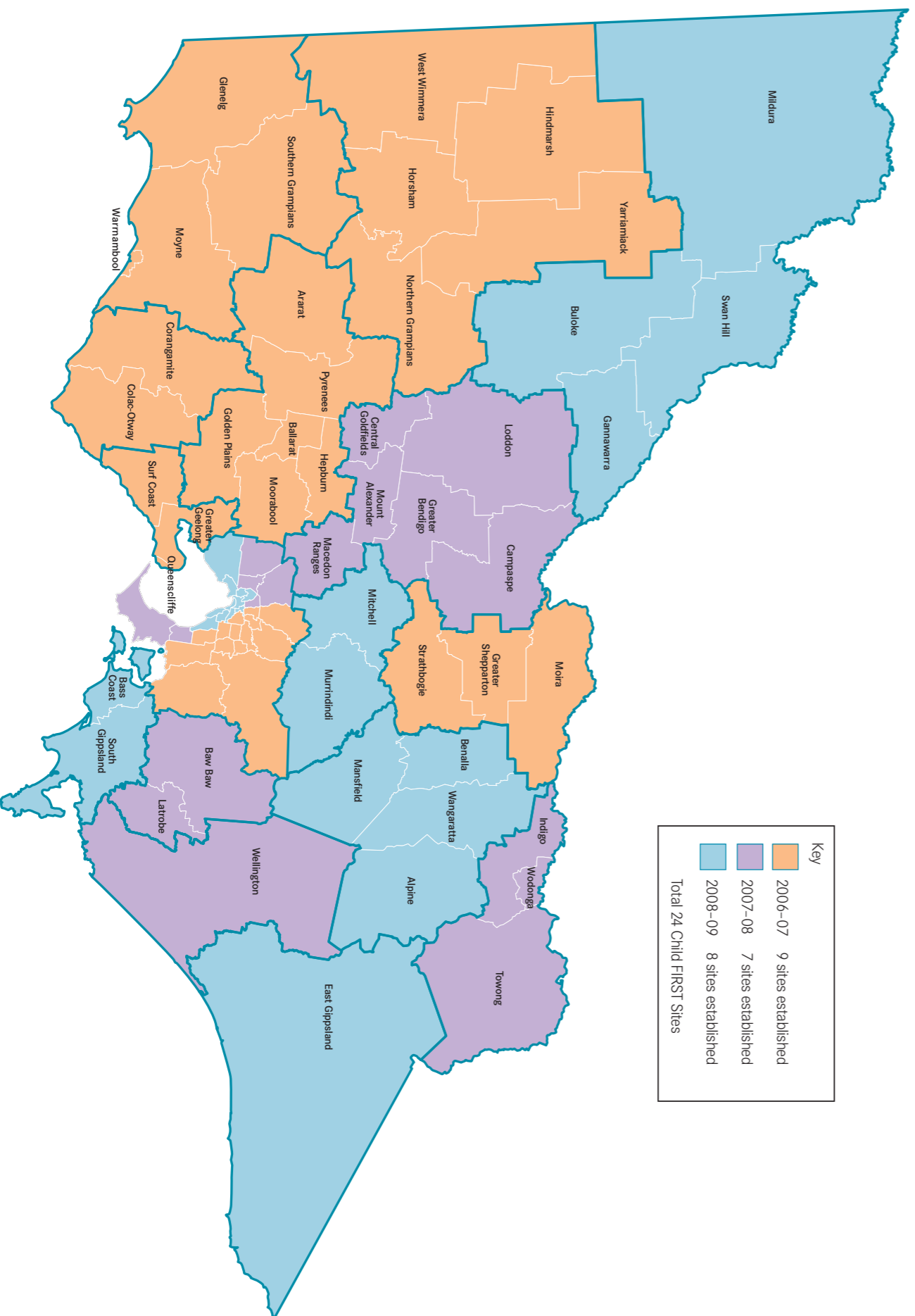
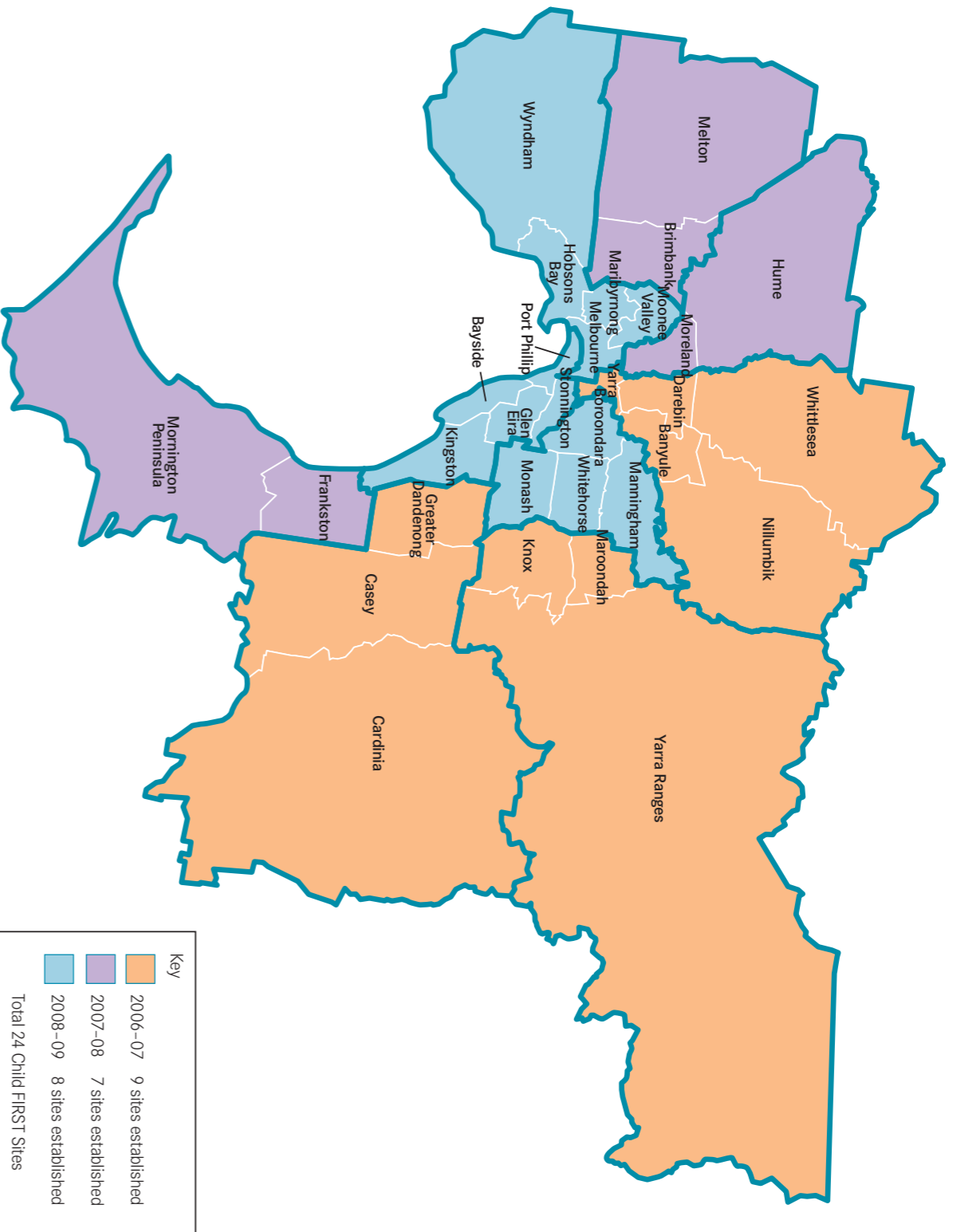
What happens when I make a referral to Child FIRST?

Child FIRST will discuss with you the initial needs of the child, young person and family that you have concerns for to determine the most appropriate response. Services will be prioritised to families on the basis of need, to prevent difficulties escalating to a level that will significantly impact on the child's development and consequently lead to entry into Child Protection.

Some families may be assisted by the provision of information and advice only, however, for most families referred to Child FIRST, a cycle of assessment, planning and action will commence. Child FIRST will engage with the child, young person and family to begin the process. Once a plan is in place for how best to support the child's healthy development and improve parenting capacity, Child FIRST will arrange for a Family Services agency to support the family. Part of the role of the Family Services agency is to facilitate connections with other appropriate services, eg universal services, drug & alcohol, mental health, housing or family violence services.

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Victorian Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Team (Child FIRST) Sites 2006–2009



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