

Response to question on notice

Questions on Notice Paper No 9 5 September 2025 Question No. 590

Ms Chiaka Barry MLA: To ask the Minister for Children, Youth and Families

1. What counselling services are provided to children affected by family and domestic violence, immediately after the event is reported and in response to ongoing need?
2. How is the provision of counselling support provided where exposure to family or domestic violence is ongoing?
3. What is the approval process for more intensive counselling support?
4. Are the counselling needs of a child considered separately to the counselling needs of the parent victim?
5. Are there any differences in the counselling support provided to children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities?
6. How does the ACT Government connect a child victim of family or domestic violence to an appropriate counsellor?
7. What ongoing counselling is provided to young people in Child and Youth Protection Services care, who are affected by family and domestic violence?
8. What counselling supports are available in ACT schools to support young people affected by family and domestic violence.
9. Has there been any change to the funding of services provided by Relationships Australia?

act.gov.au

Mr MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. Several community organisations are funded by the ACT Government to deliver supports for children and young people impacted by domestic and family violence:
 - a. Australian Childhood Foundation ACT - Heartfelt Program
 - b. Beryl Women Inc. - Kids & Young People Mobile Therapy Van
 - c. Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS)- Young People's Outreach Program
 - d. Canberra PCYC - Solid Ground
 - e. Doris Women's Refuge – Specialist support for children accommodated in refuge
 - f. YWCA – Specialist domestic and family violence children's support workers
2. Some of the abovementioned services programs offer time-limited interventions based on the model of the program. Others offer one-on-one support to children that is tailored to their unique needs and experiences.
3. There is no approval process to access more intensive counselling support. Organisations work on a case-by-case basis to assess need and provide the supports required to each child within the scope of their service.
4. Yes.
5. All ACT Government funded domestic and family violence services which provide supports to children and young people are expected to provide culturally safe and responsive services.

In acknowledging that mainstream service offerings may not be the preferred choice for someone who identifies as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or culturally and linguistically diverse, the ACT Government also funds:

- a. Multicultural Hub Canberra's Domestic and Family Violence Support program which supports multicultural women, children and young people who have been impacted by domestic and family violence.
 - b. Yerrabi Yurwang's NarraGunnaWali-Strong Pathways for Families program which supports Aboriginal women and children at risk of, or experiencing domestic and family violence.
6. Referrals are made directly to the service provider. Service providers accept referrals from a wide range of sources including from ACT Government staff and community sector organisations supporting children.
7. Children and Young People in the care of the Director-General who are affected by Family and Domestic Violence have access to ongoing counselling through trauma specialists including:
 - a. DVCS
 - b. Victims Support Services
 - c. Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Service
 - d. Yerrabi Yurwang
 - e. Australian Childhood Trauma Group
 - f. Australian Childhood Foundation
 - g. Melaleuca Place
 - h. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
 - i. Child and Family Centres
 - j. Supports through the Education Directorate

Children, Youth and Families division in the Health and Community Services Directorate is also connected with community organisations, for example:

- a. Marymead CatholicCare
- b. Woden Community Services
- c. Capital Region Community Services
- d. Headspace
- e. Relationships Australia Canberra & Region

This is not an exhaustive list. Services are engaged based on the need of an individual child and/or young person.

8. School psychologists provide psychological first aid to students following notification of an incident. It is acknowledged that trauma exposure for children, either as a witness or victim can lead to social, emotional, behavioural and cognitive harm based on their developmental age. School psychologists' approach is to:

- Assess student needs early and initiate the needed referrals to specialist services for long-term case management and therapeutic supports for students and/or family.
- Advocate and lead the school to take a whole school approach to trauma-informed practices. School staff have access to a trauma informed training package that has been developed by the school psychology service.
- Promote a child-focused response and work collaboratively with the student, family and school to support reasonable school-based adjustments.

9. Relationships Australia Canberra & Region were funded to deliver the Got Your Back pilot program from August 2020 to June 2023. This program is a therapeutic support group for young people aged 12-25 with experiences of domestic and family violence. Funding to the program ceased after an evaluation found participation had declined over time and the cost per participant had increased substantially.

To ensure there was no gap in services for children and young people who have experienced domestic and family violence the ACT Government funded two other programs, the Heartfelt program delivered by the Australian Childhood Foundation and the Solid Ground program delivered by Canberra PCYC.

Relationships Australia Canberra & Region have been funded to deliver other group programs and therapeutic services under the Children, Youth and Family Services Program at the same level since 2016, with annual increases applied in line with indexation.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Michael Pettersson MLA
Children, Youth and Families

Date: 2/10/25

This response required 1hrs 25mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$172.45.

