



Explanatory notes – Victorian Child Protection Program

Data source

The Victorian child protection program (the program) is a service which provides assistance to vulnerable children who are suspected of being abused, neglected or harmed, and whose parents are unable to provide adequate care or protection.

The main functions of the program are to:

- Receive and assess new reports concerning children under 17 (including unborn children) regarding abuse and neglect.
- Investigate matters where it is alleged that a child is at risk of significant harm.
- Refer children and families to services that assist in providing the ongoing safety and wellbeing of children.
- Make applications to the Children's Court if the child's safety cannot be ensured within the family.
- Administer protection orders granted by the Children's Court.

Populations

Data included in visualisations and data tables published within the Family Violence Data Portal concerns four populations of administrative data:

1. Investigation of reports: The number of investigations commenced following a notification made to the program about the welfare of a child.
2. Substantiated reports: The number of reports of alleged risk of harm or abuse to a child made to child protection, which were substantiated following an investigation.
3. Children on orders: the number of unique children who were on a protection order (as at the last day of each specified month).
4. Children in care: The number of unique children who were in care (as at the last day of each specified month). Children are placed in statutory care when child protection has substantiated abuse or neglect and makes an application to the Children's Court for an order to protect the child from further harm that has the effect of the child being placed outside parental care. Where the Children's Court determines the child is in need of protection and makes a protection order that has the effect of the child being placed outside parental care or the child is unable to reside at home while the matter is considered by the Court (interim Accommodation Order), the child may be placed in care.

Reference period

Data in the current reference period covers a five financial year span, dating from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2023. The number of investigations and substantiated reports counts all records occurring within a specified financial year, while data pertaining to children on orders and children in care counts all children as at the last date of a specified financial year (30 June).