



Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth
Working together to enhance the wellbeing and life chances of children and young people.

Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support (CAARS) Taskforce

Terms of Reference

Preamble

The CAARS Taskforce is a group of representatives from government, non-government and research sectors which have come together to promote a shared responsibility for the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

In specific terms the group has come together to help develop:

- A common approach to assessment and referral; and
- Improved mechanisms for information sharing.

1. Purpose

Overall the role of the CAARS Taskforce is to:

- Decide on a process for the development of a tool/s to be used as a national approach to the prevention of child abuse and neglect, supported by common assessment and referral;
- Agree on development of the tool/s to specifically target services most likely to encounter first warning signs of risk of child abuse and neglect;
- Consider and recommend possible tool/s trial options; and
- Agree on recommendations for future work.

In delivering on this purpose, the CAARS Taskforce will:

- i. Promote extensive stakeholder engagement across secondary prevention services, organisations and disciplines to achieve multi-level support for shared responsibility for the prevention of child abuse and neglect
 - Using their influence and networks to champion the need for a shift in focus from 'protection' to 'prevention' and to enable access to critical 'gatekeepers' in the secondary services sector
- ii. Develop a common approach to assessment and referral and improved mechanisms for information sharing

- Providing guidance and advice to the selected consultant/consortium who will investigate opportunities for a common approach to assessment and referral, mechanisms for information sharing and collaborative support for meeting complex needs
- Identify and develop evidence-based, workable strategies to provide a basis for the development of a common assessment tool/s
- Develop a useable, reliable and transferable common assessment tool/s
- Target the development of the Common Assessment Tool for use in services most likely to encounter first warning signs of child abuse and neglect
- Scope and develop improved mechanisms for information sharing to support the Common Assessment Tool
- Consider and recommend possible tool/s trial options for the tool and information sharing mechanism(s)
- Committing to a blueprint which brings together evidence-informed and workable strategies for a collaborative approach to the prevention of child abuse and neglect

2. Values underpinning the CAARS Taskforce's purpose

- The CAARS Taskforce is committed to progressing preventive strategies, including the use of a common assessment process(es), underpinned by research and principles of best practice.
- Members will actively embody the principles of collaboration and openness, and will share information (where appropriate).

3. Membership

- The CAARS Taskforce members will include individuals from the following groups: medical, nursing, teaching, family relationships, mental health, psychology, social work, disability, Indigenous children's services, school guidance and counselling, homelessness, child welfare agencies, alcohol and drug services, domestic violence, research and State and Territory Government representatives.
- The Taskforce meetings will be convened by ARACY and FaHCSIA, and co-chaired by their delegates. A facilitator will also be commissioned to conduct and report on these meetings.
- The Taskforce can also call for other people to be co-opted as members.

4. Terms of Appointment

- The CAARS Taskforce appointments will be made to June 2010, at which point the membership will be reviewed.
- A minimum of two meetings must be attended this year and one meeting next year, unless a decision making proxy attends.

5. Code of ethics for The CAARS Taskforce members

All CAARS Taskforce members are expected to:

- operate from a position of integrity, objectivity, accountability, honesty and openness;
- dedicate appropriate time and effort to Taskforce functions; and
- exercise independent judgment.

6. Time Commitment

- Meet twice this year (2009) and once in 2010 to report on and further the tasks associated with the purposes listed in item 1.
- Members may also be asked to participate in working sub-groups.

June 2009

