

Best interests case practice model

Date of Advice: 23 April 2007

Advice no: 1481

This Advice is current **only** if the date of Advice in the printed document matches the date of Advice in the online version.

This Advice is endorsed by: Director, Child Protection and Family Services Branch.

Introduction and purpose

This Advice describes the best interests case practice model which operationalises the best interests framework for vulnerable children and youth by directing and coordinating the interventions of practitioners and a range of other professionals in attending to the dimensions of a child's safety, stability and development with a focus on the whole of a child's life.

The structure of the model integrates elements of the Victorian Risk Framework, the looking after children (LAC) framework and the principles of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (CYFA) into the practice of assessment, planning and action.

The best interests case practice model, as described below, is subject to further development.

(1) Legislation



Note:

Use the Legislation link on toolbar to access full text versions of the legislation.

Any sections of an Act noted in this Advice are partial references only and should not be relied on. Practitioners should refer to the Act for full details.

Children, Youth and Families Act

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (CYFA)

Part 1.2 - Principles

- Division 1 – Decision Makers to Have Regard to Principles
- Division 2 – Best Interest Principles
- Division 3 – Decision-making Principles
- Division 4 – Additional decision-making Principles for Aboriginal Children

Part 4.3 - Responsibilities of Secretary

- Division 2 - Responsibilities of Secretary as Guardian or Custodian

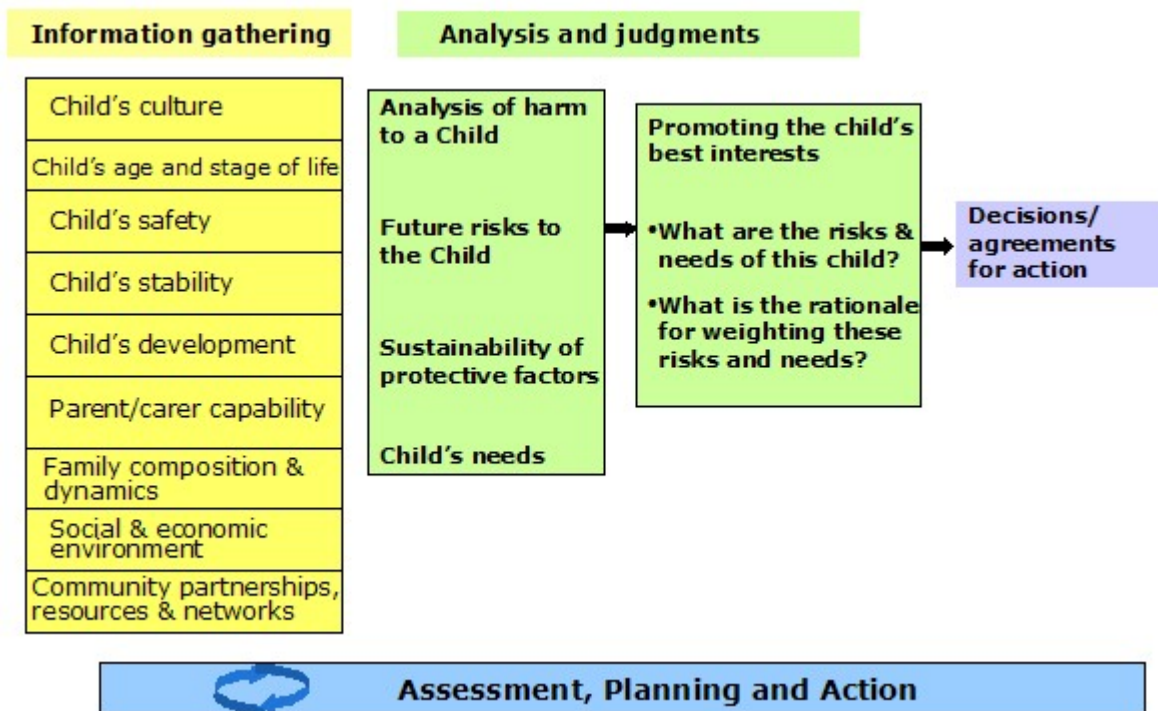
(2) Standards and procedures

Children's safety, stability and development are inextricably entwined and cannot be separated in a child's day to day experiences. The best interests framework for vulnerable children and youth (refer Advice number 1487) and the CYFA promote a holistic approach, based on the many issues and factors that make up the totality of a child's experience.

A key imperative and challenge for practitioners throughout all assessment, planning and action is to weigh up considerations relevant to the specific needs of a vulnerable child whilst also maintaining a focus on the broader aspects of health and wellbeing, learning and development.

Best interests case practice model

The best interests case practice model operationalises the framework for vulnerable children and youth and draws together the phases of information gathering, analysis and judgement and decision making across the core functions of assessment, planning and action.



Click on the below link for the detailed chart:

[Best interests case practice model](#)

The model considers:

- assessment - which informs
- planning - which guides and
- action - which benefits the child

as continuous processes occurring throughout Child Protection involvement with a child and family and incorporates information gathering, analysis and judgement and decisions and agreements for action, as the basis to all assessment, decision making, planning and casework action.

Analysis is based on information gathered with judgement being clearly and logically linked to analysis. Decisions made and the subsequent plan of action is directly related to the issues of safety, stability and development identified for the child and explain how it will seek to address the specific harm suffered and promote stability and positive development.

The recursive nature of the model requires that we are able to revisit the assessment and analysis phases at any point in the life of the case as an ongoing means to informing the best interests case plan which is a plan of action that relates directly to the issues identified for the child, in priority safety and needs order, and is transparent as to how it will seek to ameliorate the specific harm suffered and promote connectedness and positive development.

The use of a common framework for practice is intended to establish a common language and approach to our core business. It provides a coherent approach across family services, Child Protection and placement services to assist us to focus on the child's best interests. It provides an opportunity for transparency in practice across the services sector, which has not been available to us previously. While we will continue to debate and discuss our different conclusions in relation to case information, a common framework enables us to consider each others perspectives in a way that has not previously been possible, and will enhance our capacity to work collaboratively in the child's best interests.

For specific guidance on the assessment, planning and action phases of the model refer to the best interests case practice chapter (see section (5) for a link).

(3) Considerations for good practice



Note:

Use the Practice Research link on the toolbar to access further Practice Guidance and Research.



- For this Advice, there are no specific considerations for good practice.

(4) Contact for further procedural advice

- Direct supervisor
- Unit manager
- Best interests planner

(5) Related policy documents and procedures



Note:

Advice, Protocols and Policy Documents directly related to this Advice are listed below. To access the full range of Protocols and Policy documents use the Protocol and Policy links on the Home Page.

Related Practice Advice:

- Advice no. 1003 – [Every child, every chance - Victoria's approach to child protection](#).
- Advice no. 1487 - Best interests framework for vulnerable children and youth (Advice under development)
- Best interests case practice chapter incorporating assessment, planning and action for best interests.

Related Protocols:

- For this Advice, there are no specific related protocols.

Other related procedural documents:

- For this Advice, there are no specific related procedural documents.

Related policy documents:

- [every child every chance](#)

(6) Checklist of required standards



Note:

A checklist of the required standards follows. It can be utilised as a reference point for practitioners and supervisors or printed and utilised in supervision to assist in ensuring required tasks are undertaken.

- For this Advice, there are no specific standards.