

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Output 1.1

Question No. 22

Senator Crossin asked the following question at the hearing on 31 October 2006:

In relation to safety concerns and Family Relationship Centres (FRCs):

- (a) In what proportion of cases are clients declined service?
- (b) What are the reasons for declining service?
- (c) What proportion of cases are declined because of safety concerns for clients?
- (d) What proportion of cases are declined because of safety concerns for FRC staff?
- (e) Do all existing FRCs have safety plans to ensure the appropriate management of violent, abusive, intimidating or threatening behaviour?
- (f) What strategies have been adopted to provide urgent referral to appropriate services when clients present with crisis and emergency issues such as (i) domestic violence situations – violence and the threats of violence; (ii) risks of child abuse or neglect; (iii) child abduction; (iv) need for emergency accommodation or financial assistance; and (v) urgent mental health issues, including threats of self-harm.
- (g) What proportion of the pilot services are co-located with other services?
- (h) What kind of services are FRCs located with?
- (i) Do all existing FRCs have internal complaints procedures?
- (j) What happens when a client is not happy with the service provided by a FRC?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

(a), (b), (c) and (d) Under the Operational Framework for the Family Relationship Centres, Centres may decline to provide services to a client who may, for example, present a risk to the safety of staff or other clients; is clearly acting in bad faith or has already received appropriate services at the same or another Centre. Specific data in relation to decline of service is not available. However, the approach Centres adopt to this issue will be monitored as part of the ongoing evaluation of the Centres that the Department undertakes.

(e) Yes.

(f) The Operational Framework, which is part of each Centre's funding agreement, requires each Centre to develop strategies for urgent referral to appropriate services for when clients present with crisis and emergency issues. These cannot be standard across all Centres as they need to take into account the services and agencies that exist in each Centre's State/Territory.

(g) The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) administers the Family Relationship Services Program (FRSP) on behalf of both departments, including negotiating and managing the funding agreements with Family Relationship Centres. FaCSIA has advised that 7 Centres are co-located with other FRSP services. We do not have information about other services that may also be co-located with Centres from time to time.

(h) FaCSIA has advised that the FRSP services co-located with Centres are:

- Frankston – Family Relationship Counselling, Men and Family Relationship Services, Family Relationship Education and Skills Training, Specialised Family Violence Services
- Joondaloo – Men and Family Relationships Education, Family Relationship Education and Skills Training
- Mildura – Children’s Contact Service, Family Dispute Resolution, Men and Family Relationship Service
- Salisbury – Family Relationship Counselling, Men and Family Relationship Services, Family Relationship Education and Skills Training, Specialised Family Violence Services
- Strathpine – Family Relationship Counselling
- Sutherland – Family Relationship Counselling, Men and Family Relationship Services, Family Relationship Education and Skills Training, Specialised Family Violence Services
- Townsville – Family Relationship Counselling, Men and Family Relationship Services, Family Relationship Education and Skills Training, Specialised Family Violence Services

(i) Yes.

(j) A client is able to complain direct to a Family Relationship Centre. If the client does not wish to complain direct to the Centre or that does not resolve the issue, the client can complain to the State or Territory office of FaCSIA. If the issue is not resolved at that level, FaCSIA will refer the complaint to the Attorney-General’s Department.