



Youth justice custodial practice manual

Secure Services

(<http://intranet.dhs.vic.gov.au/youth-justice-custodial-manual>)

If you print and store this document, you may be looking at an outdated version and this may impact on your duty of care. Always check the latest version in the Youth justice custodial practice manual on the DHS intranet before taking action under this procedure. Please make sure the printed procedures are kept securely.

Youth Justice Custodial Services Practice Manual (<http://intranet.dhs.vic.gov.au/youth-justice-custodial-manual>) > Introduction to working in the custodial precincts (<http://intranet.dhs.vic.gov.au/youth-justice-custodial-manual/introduction-to-working-in-the-custodial-precincts>) > Risk management approach (<http://intranet.dhs.vic.gov.au/youth-justice-custodial-manual/introduction-to-working-in-the-custodial-precincts/risk-management-approach>)

Risk management approach

- Risk management means trying to eliminate or minimise risks – to the young person, to staff, other young people or to the broader community.
 - Risk assessment focuses on reducing the potential for an adverse event to occur.
 - It should be balanced with the young person's needs and should promote learning, growth and their ability to make positive choices.
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When to use this procedure

At all times when working in the precinct to manage and reduce risks associated with young people.

What else you need to know

Make sure you have read and understood the following procedures:

- [How we work with young people in custody](http://intranet.dhs.vic.gov.au/youth-justice-custodial-manual/introduction-to-working-in-the-custodial-precincts/how-we-work-with-young-people-in-custody) (<http://intranet.dhs.vic.gov.au/youth-justice-custodial-manual/introduction-to-working-in-the-custodial-precincts/how-we-work-with-young-people-in-custody>)
 - [Classification and Program Risk Tool](http://intranet.dhs.vic.gov.au/youth-justice-custodial-manual/sentence-management/admission-to-custody/classification-and-program-risk-tool) (<http://intranet.dhs.vic.gov.au/youth-justice-custodial-manual/sentence-management/admission-to-custody/classification-and-program-risk-tool>)
 - [Temporary Leave Risk Assessment](http://intranet.dhs.vic.gov.au/youth-justice-custodial-manual/sentence-management/temporary-leave/temporary-leave-risk-assessment) (<http://intranet.dhs.vic.gov.au/youth-justice-custodial-manual/sentence-management/temporary-leave/temporary-leave-risk-assessment>)
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Staff responsibilities

Find your role below to see what your responsibilities are:

- [All staff](#)
 - [Unit Manager](#)
 - [Unit management, Operations Manager, General Manager and Director Secure Services](#)
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All staff

At all times

- Be alert to the behaviour of young people and the 'climate' of the working environment.

When making decisions about what young people are allowed to do

- Weigh up the possible risks and outcomes before making decisions. Use the attached Risk Assessment Guide and Risk Assessment Matrix to help you make decisions.
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Unit Manager

At all times

- Ensure all unit staff use a risk assessment approach in their work.
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Unit management, Operations Manager, General Manager and Director Secure Services

As relevant

- Ensure that formal risk assessment processes are completed – including those for temporary leave, classification and program tool risk purposes.
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The procedure in detail

- [What is risk management?](#)
 - [Risk management in the youth justice context](#)
 - [Risk management thinking](#)
 - [Formal risk management processes](#)
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What is risk management?

What is risk?

Risk is the potential that a particular action or activity will lead to an undesirable outcome. It is the probability that damage, loss, liability or injury may occur in a given situation.

Risk management as the overall approach

A risk management approach is used in youth justice precincts to help staff make decisions about young people to maintain their safety and support their rehabilitation

Conducting a risk assessment involves making a value judgment based on all the information and evidence available to you at the time.

It is a way of thinking that allows risks – to the young person, to staff, other young people or to the broader community – to be eliminated if possible, or at least minimised.

It is not always possible to eliminate all risk. The level of risk of any option or activity should be balanced with the potential outcomes for the young person in their personal development and addressing their offending behaviour.

Identifying that there are risks associated with a particular activity does not necessarily mean the activity should not go ahead. When potential risks are identified, staff need to think creatively to identify ways to eliminate – or significantly reduce – the likelihood that they will occur.

Risk management is a formal process, which may involve using a specific template to evaluate risk – for example before a young person is allowed to go on temporary leave, or to evaluate whether they can attend a tooled program.

However, and perhaps more importantly, it is also a continuous informal process that underpins all decisions made in a custodial precinct – it is a way of thinking that allows us to identify risks and put in place strategies to address them.

All staff, regardless of their level and responsibilities, need to think about, and reduce, the risks involved in all of the decisions they make during their work day.

Risk management in the youth justice context

Risk assessment in a youth justice precinct:

- is ongoing and dynamic
 - is applied to any situation that may pose a risk, such as client placement, program involvement, temporary leave, personal visits, client movements, use of cutlery and so on
 - is specific to the young person's age and development, offending history and level of vulnerability
 - considers the young person's past behaviour, both positive and problematic, and in particular any incidents they have been involved in – including frequency, severity, duration, type of harm caused
 - takes into account any new information as it emerges – such as changes in personal circumstances, new or changed patterns of behaviour, new clients entering the unit, staff changes and so on
 - pays attention to received 'intelligence' – information that has been obtained from other staff, young people, area youth justice, the 'grapevine' and so on
 - considers the young person as a whole – including contributing factors such as mental health problems, substance use, violent behaviour, disability and so on
 - thinks about the physical and social context – what is happening around the young person, who influences them, things in the environment that may be a stressor or may trigger unwanted behaviours.
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Risk management thinking

A risk management approach should be second nature for staff. It should be used at all times and in every circumstance when working with young people in custody.

The following case studies show how staff informally use **risk management thinking** in everyday situations.

Risk management thinking: case study 1

Sandra, a Unit Supervisor, notices that clients Paul and Matt are sitting side by side on a couch, watching a movie together. Although they seem okay at the moment, Sandra knows that Paul and Matt have a history of co-offending, that they have often had conflict while in custody and that they had a serious altercation a week ago.

She overhears a few exchanges between them that trouble her - she thinks they may be about to fight again. Sandra considers whether to ask one of them to move to another seat to avoid this, but thinks this may unsettle them and they may escalate.

Instead, Sandra quietly directs Jim, a YJW 1, to sit nearby, watching the movie with them, but alert for any signs of trouble. Paul and Matt sit there quietly until the movie ends then get up and move away to separate areas.

Sandra has avoided making a big issue of the situation, but managed any potential risk by putting in a safeguard to watch for problems and respond quickly should they occur.

Risk management thinking: case study 2

Chloe and Ruby have asked to go outside together for a walk after lock down. YJW1 Luke considers their behaviour throughout the day: how they have interacted with each other, if there has been anything that suggests they may have other intentions than just going for a walk, what their mood has been. After deciding that the two young women would be low risk he checks with the Unit Supervisor for confirmation, in case he is needed on the unit, and then takes Chloe and Ruby outside for a walk.

As they are walking around the perimeter wall, Luke notices that Ronan, a particularly challenging young man from Barnett, is being escorted from the school by a number of staff; it appears he is becoming quite agitated.

Luke quickly considers what the potential risks might be if Chloe or Ruby notice Ronan, and diverts their attention, asking them to go the other way. By doing this he is ensuring that they are not given an opportunity to interact with Ronan in his present distressed state, potentially becoming unsettled and heightened in behaviour themselves.

Formal risk management processes

As well as an overall risk management approach, there are a number of formal risk management processes, used at specific times, which include:

- initial classification
- Program Risk Tool
- Temporary Leave Risk Assessment Plan.

You need to ensure the appropriate risk management assessment is undertaken for these specific circumstances.

A **Risk assessment guide and matrix** is attached to help you undertake a formal risk management process (see **Additional information** below). These tools are not mandatory but may help when it is particularly important that the risks be carefully considered.

Risk management stages

Formal risk assessment has four broad stages:

1. Gather information from:

- client files
- CRIS
- key workers
- family
- area youth justice workers
- others involved with the young person
- the young person themselves
- your own knowledge of the young person.

2. Analyse the information – using the knowledge you have gathered and your own experience to think about the possible outcomes.

3. Make a decision about the intervention under consideration.

4. Review the approach after a period of time to make sure it is still working.

Additional Information

- [Risk assessment guide and matrix \(59.5 KB, MS Word\) \(http://intranet.dhs.vic.gov.au/youth-justice-custodial-manual/additional-information/practice-guidelines/safety2/Risk-assessment-guide-and-matrix.doc\)](http://intranet.dhs.vic.gov.au/youth-justice-custodial-manual/additional-information/practice-guidelines/safety2/Risk-assessment-guide-and-matrix.doc)
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