

AN OPERATING PHILOSOPHY FOR VICTORIA'S YOUTH JUSTICE CENTRES

The first priority for Youth Justice is to keep the community safe. The purpose of this operating philosophy is to set out core operating principles that will ensure Youth Justice Centres make our community safer.



Skilled, safe and stable workforce

- A stable, professional and engaged custodial workforce will work with children and young people and service delivery partners to maintain a safe and secure environment that promotes positive behaviour and supports children and young people to achieve their case plan goals, and be accountable for their behaviour.
- The roles and responsibilities of all levels of custodial staff will be clearly articulated.
- Incident response roles and responsibilities are clearly articulated in a well-communicated incident response framework.
- Staff will respond to children and young people who are presenting a risk to themselves or others, in a timely, effective and informed manner that reduces risk.



Meaningful, structured activity

- Movement control systems and custodial staff, informed by security classification, will enable children and young people access to the programs and services they need.
- The structured day will provide a balance of education, health, offence specific program and recreational activities, tailored to individual needs identified in the case plan.
- Structured daily activities will be directly linked to classification and behaviour management decisions to incentivise participation and engagement.
- All children and young people will participate in education which includes skills and training, tailored to their individual growth and development, and linked to accreditation.
- Children, young people and staff will be engaged in a structured day of meaningful activity that maximises out of bedroom hours and prepares children and young people for participation on release.



Least restrictive environment

- A Classification and Placement Unit will assess, classify and place each child and young person based on risk, need and security rating.
- The custodial system will be configured in a way that incentivises children and young people to progress through the various security ratings and placement options.
- The risk of each child and young person will be regularly reviewed to provide opportunities to be accommodated in the least restrictive environment in preparation for release.
- Classification and placement decisions will aim to facilitate achievement of case plan objectives and the safety and good order of the environment.
- Placement decisions and service delivery will take into account the needs of children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ.



Relational security

- By performing the role of keyworker, custodial staff will establish effective relationships with children and young people, know their risk and triggers and help them achieve their goals.
- Behaviour management practices will be consistent, timely, fair and informed by the needs and stages of development of children and young people.
- There will be a shared, consistent approach with our service delivery partners to all aspects of working with children and young people.
- Staff will have the training, confidence and support to intervene and respond early to behaviours outside an agreed code of conduct.



Children and young people have distinct developmental needs

- All aspects of custodial service delivery will acknowledge and respond to the distinct developmental and neurobiological needs of children and young people.
- Custodial services and infrastructure will reflect our legal obligations to treat children and young people differently to adults.
- The *Achieve, Challenge Encourage* rewards and consequences model will be consistently applied across the custodial system.
- There will be a differential approach to children and young people with disabilities or mental health concerns that responds to their distinct needs.
- Life inside youth justice centres will be humane and seek to normalise the lives of children and young people consistent with community standards.

A collaborative, structured case management process is the mechanism for determining and responding to the individual needs of every child and young person in custody, and forms the basis of all interactions between custodial staff, service delivery partners and, children and young people.

Outcomes of a Healthy Custodial System

1. Children and young people know their case plan goals and are motivated to achieve them.
2. Isolation, restraint and use of force are strictly last resort and never used as punishment.
3. High levels of participation in education, training and rehabilitation programs.
4. High levels of family contact and community reintegration activities.
5. Children and young people progress through a transparent, objective classification system
6. A stable workforce who understand their role, are trained, supported, and feel safe.
7. Girls and young women receive gender responsive services and have equal access to services and facilities.
8. Staff know children and young people's risks, issues and triggers as the best form of safety and support
9. Cultural rights and recognition in line with self-determination principles
10. Accountability through transparent performance and outcomes.



A separate operating model for young women

- All aspects of custodial service delivery will take into account and respond to the specific risks and needs of girls and young women.
- Gender-responsive programs and interventions will be provided to address the unique issues faced by girls and young women.
- Custodial infrastructure will ensure there is equitable access to education, health, recreation and treatment spaces and services for girls and young women.



Responding to risk and needs

- Case management processes are the primary platform for planning and coordinating education, health, rehabilitation and reintegration services in custody.
- The risk, needs and responsivity of every child and young person admitted to custody will be assessed using a suite of validated screening and assessment tools.
- Assessments will identify and target needs related to a child or young person's offending and risk of re-offending, to inform individually focused case plans and interventions.
- Culturally appropriate and responsive case management services will be available to CALD children and young people to improve engagement and reduce over-representation.



Evidence based programs that target offending

- Case management activity and programs for children and young people in custody will be focused on facilitating rehabilitative opportunities and outcomes.
- Case management interventions will be based on research on effective practice and tailored to manage the impact of individual responsivity factors.
- Each child and young person will have a clear case plan that sets out achievable, meaningful goals to facilitate behaviour change and reduce risk of re-offending.
- Resources will be directed to the children and young people with the highest level of risk, and interventions put in place that to address the needs most closely related to their offending.
- Key workers and Classification and Placement staff will work in partnership with community Youth Justice staff and service delivery partners to achieve case plan goals.



Culturally strong and safe

- All Aboriginal children and young people will leave custody with a stronger understanding of, and connection to their family, community and culture, formalised in an individual Cultural Support Plan.
- Custodial services and infrastructure will protect Aboriginal cultural rights in accordance with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, AJA4 Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja's principles of self-determination and respect for Aboriginal knowledge, history, and experience.
- Restorative justice approaches will inform our work with Aboriginal children and young people, supporting transition from custody and community reintegration.



Community focussed

- Children and young people serving custodial sentences will have access to meaningful community reintegration activities directly linked to their case plan goals.
- Children and young people will have a voice so they can play an active role in developing and achieving their case plan goals, and contribute to custodial improvements through access to leadership councils, surveys, a complaints system and an Independent Visitors Program.
- In-reach by community based services will be encouraged in order to enhance the post release support network for children and young people.
- Custodial facilities will be welcoming, accountable and transparent environments that are accessible to family, community and professional support networks.