

MEMBERS CHARTER

OMCFS Alliance believe that families in Ovens Murray have a right to access appropriate and timely support and assistance, which is culturally responsive, in order to maintain and enhance their family relationships, roles as parents, child development and social connectedness.

The member agencies of the OMCFS Alliance commit to forming strategic alliances with other agencies, alliances, networks, community groups and services to enhance the effectiveness of the OMCFS service system.

OMCFS MEMBERS MISSION

To ensure a high quality, integrated, flexible, responsive and culturally safe system of support to vulnerable children (including unborn), young people and their families across the local government areas of Alpine, Benalla, Indigo, Towong, Mansfield, Wangaratta and Wodonga.

ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The OMCFS Alliance is not a legal entity and each agency remains autonomous and retains responsibility and accountability for the management, organisation and delivery of its services. This includes responsibility for the management of day-to-day operational risk.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Ovens Murray Child & Family Services Alliance acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of Ovens Murray area.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and to their children and young people who are our future Elders and caretakers of this land.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Alliance is to provide stewardship of the whole of the child and families service system, enabling responsiveness and driving continuous improvement through the development and delivery of a Strategic Plan.

ALLIANCE MEMBERSHIP

Membership may change but will consist of funded service providers, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and key stakeholders who can positively and effectively influence the system to be responsive, adaptable and continuously improving.

Membership of the Alliance is based on principles of:

- Mutual respect
- Trust
- Equality
- Professionalism

Member agencies are mutually accountable for:

- Effective representation and participation at appropriate OMCFS Alliance Governance levels
- Collaborative service delivery and decision making based on community need
- Transparent data and information sharing and analysis
- Local level planning and service delivery
- Transparency regarding operational capacity and capability

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

The *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* (the Act) provides the legislative basis for an integrated system of services for vulnerable children, young people and their families.

The legislative context promotes the safety, permanency and healthy development of children. It also places a strong emphasis on the need to consider the impacts of cumulative harm and to preserve cultural identity.

In accordance with the Act, early parenting, family and placement prevention services are required to provide their services in relation to a child in a manner that is in the best interests of the child.

The Roadmap for Reform: Strong Families, Safe Children - the first steps (Roadmap) released in 2016 provides a blueprint for transforming the child and family system from a crisis response to early intervention and prevention.

OMCFS ALLIANCE MEMBERS

- Benalla Rural City Council
- City of Wodonga
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
 - Child Protection Ovens Murray
 - Agency Performance and System Support
 - The Orange Door
- Gateway Health
- Junction Support Services
- MacKillop Family Services
- Mansfield Shire Council
- Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation
- NESAY
- The Queen Elizabeth Centre (QEC)
- Upper Murray Family Care (UMFC)
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)

DATA INFORMATION SHARING

Transparency in service performance between stakeholder agencies is considered critical to the stewardship of a responsive and effective service system.

The Alliance partners agree to share performance data in order to strengthen the understanding of catchment demand and determine most effective demand management strategies.

ROLE OF COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Is an established platform for sharing, learning and collaboration by OMCFS members and invited stakeholders. The purpose is to create a structure that allows our members to connect and promote best practice and build common capability in Child and Family Services across Ovens Murray.

The next phase is focussed on developing new 'pathways' to support vulnerable children and families. The pathways approach looks at how all parts of the child and family system connect and work with other service platforms, including universal and specialist services.

OMCFS ALLIANCE PRINCIPLES

The Primary commitment is:

To be accountable for a responsive and effective service system for the Ovens Murray Community.

Specific principles are:

- The child is at centre of all actions
- The strengths and diversity of all stakeholders are valued
- Services should be culturally appropriate, responsive, respectful and safe
- Services to children, youth and families are prioritised
- Funding and resources are always best placed to meet evident need

MANAGING THE ALLIANCE

Governance of the OMCFS Alliance is characterised by activities at two levels.

State-wide legislation and policies

- [The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005](#)
- [Strategic Framework for Families 2007](#)
- [Wungurilwil Gagapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement](#)
- [Program requirements for family and early parenting services in Victoria](#)
- [Procedural Guidelines for referral and consultation endorsed by Director, Child Protection, Placement,](#)
- [Alliance Planning and Oversight Policy for Child and Family Services](#)
- [Alliances Demand Management of child wellbeing and safety concerns](#)
- [Roadmap for Reform: Strong Families, Safe Children 2018.](#)

Area based activities.

The OMCFS Alliance, taking into consideration the current Victorian context in which child and family services are being delivered, is responsible to meet the following expectations:

- Coordinating service continuity, responding to critical environmental contexts and ensuring that effective pathways are in place for priority groups,
- Bringing together family services and placement prevention programs,
- Advancing Aboriginal self-determination,
- Supporting operational management to ensure integrated, efficient and coordinated services,
- Managing demand and resource allocation,
- Shared strategic planning,
- Establishing and maintaining Alliance operational administration mechanisms,
- Advancing Alliance partnership health,
- Supporting development of cross sector partnerships,
- Support and facilitate workforce capability.

ROLE OF WORKING GROUPS

Working groups may be authorised by the Executive Group or Operations Groups and will have a clear purpose, membership and lifespan determined by the scope of the group activity.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The OMCFS Alliance will engage strategic partners for the purposes of information exchange, developing local agreements and scoping joint planning activities.

ROLE OF FACILITATING AGENCY

The Alliance system enabler facilitation funding is allocated to the Alliance facilitating agency UMFC (as the previous provider of Child FIRST).

The facilitating agency is responsible for monitoring the Alliance budget and is charged with making standard decisions on expenses /costs already allocated within the Alliance budget and will provide a bi-monthly budget report to the Alliance Executive Group members.

The facilitating agency receives no financial benefit from the Alliance enabling funds.

The facilitating agency is the OMCFS Alliance nominated provider of the Alliance Chair for both Executive and Operation Governance Groups.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Leadership of the OMCFS Alliance is provided through the governance groups:

- The Executive Group
- The Operations Group
 - Community of Practice
 - Working Groups

EXECUTIVE GROUP

The Executive is the key governance group for the OMCFS Alliance.

The purpose of the Executive Group is:

- To provide leadership and to support the effective operation of the child and family services across the Ovens Murray area,
- To understand and analyse community need
- To provide, deliver and monitor a strategic plan, and
- To support the operations group to be most effective

OPERATIONS GROUP

The purpose of the Operations Group is:

- To inform and support the development and delivery of strengthened practice models and a cohesive service system,
- To contribute to strategic planning through elevating advice, information and/or risks to the Executive Group
- To deliver the goals of the strategic plan

FUNDING

DFFH system enabler funds for the Alliance network and Alliance facilitation are provided to the Alliance facilitating member agency. An Alliance budget is prepared each year and reported to Alliance Executive at each Alliance Executive meeting.

The co-ordinator will prepare system enabler fund reporting for the Alliance and DFFH each financial year.

FLEXIBLE PACKAGE FUNDING

DFFH provide flexible funding to be used by families receiving supports to enable positive change/s which promote safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

The facilitating agency will hold the flexible package funds and will be responsible for the distribution of the funds.

Each agency will be allocated a nominal amount based on approximate EFT / funding percentage.

Any unallocated portion of Flexible Package funding amount may be allocated upon approval as additional funding to agencies.

The Alliance reports monthly expenditure to DFFH.

The Alliance acquits the Family Services funds each financial year at 6months and then 12months.

The Alliance facilitator will prepare the acquittal and reports to DFFH.

ROLE OF ALLIANCE COORDINATOR

The OMCFS Alliance will employ an Alliance Coordinator. The coordinator's role is to support the Alliance to effectively meet its purpose.

The facilitating agency is responsible for the employment of the coordinator and ensuring they are effective in their role.

REVIEW AND TERMINATION

This MoU will be effective from final sign-off and will be reviewed 12 months from that date or earlier as agreed to by Alliance Members.

The annual review of the MoU will be an agenda item for the scheduled Executive Group meeting which occurs at the end of the financial year for the life of the Alliance.

APPENDICES

Appendices to this MoU are created as standalone documents:

- Terms of Reference OMCFS Alliance Executive Group
- Terms of Reference OMCFS Alliance Operations Group

Other relevant documentation includes:

- OMCFS Alliance Operations Guidance & Demand Document
- OMCFS Alliance strategic and common process documents which are developed according to guidelines (and are stored on the [Alliance website](#))

DECISION MAKING

The Alliance commits to decision-making in the best interests of a responsive and effective service system.

Where possible evidence and data will inform decisions so that the whole of the OM community is best served by available resources.

Where funding or resource allocation decisions fall to the Alliance vested members will declare their interest and recuse themselves from voting. Voting will then fall to non-vested members. DFFH will be the arbiter where agreement around funding/resource decisions cannot be reached.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Each member agency has its own governance, rules and boundaries which will be respected in resolution of issues arising in the performance of agreed tasks within the MoU.

The OMCFS Alliance will endeavour to settle any dispute through collaboration. This MoU has been entered into in the spirit of cooperation and goodwill. All involved agree to discuss and resolve any issues in such a spirit and will use direct negotiation as a method of resolution for issues of member performance or any dispute.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Through participation in the alliance OMCFS Alliance members may become aware of information relating to the internal operations and business of individual members.

Each member undertakes to:

- Behave in a professional manner,
- Use established processes to manage differences and disputes,
- Not engage in any behaviour which could negatively affect the reputation or operation of any member agency.

COMPLAINTS

Complaints against the Alliance or the co-ordinator will be investigated by the Facilitating agency using its relevant policy and procedures.

Complaints against Member agencies are the responsibility of individual agencies. Any complainant is to be referred back to the service providing agency(s). If more than one agency is involved, the agencies are to communicate and provide a coordinated response (while recognising that responses may be different).