

Secure welfare service (SWS)

This Advice provides information for Child Protection practitioners and managers regarding the Secure Welfare Service (SWS). It outlines the target group, eligibility and considerations for good practice.

In this practice advice:

- [Introduction and purpose](#)
- [Legislation](#)
- [Service description](#)
- [Considerations for good practice](#)
- [Contact for further procedural advice](#)

Date of advice: 5 November 2012

Advice no: 1069

Endorsed by: Assistant Director, Child Protection Policy, Practice and Planning

Service description

[Display entire practice advice](#)

 [Print this section](#)

Secure Welfare Services (SWS) form part of a continuum of strengthened care and protection services for child protection clients (10 to 17 years) who are at a substantial and immediate risk of harm.

Placement at a SWS is one response option within the statutory protection and care system for children who need a highly structured setting during a significant crisis. This service is considered an option of last resort, where containment is deemed necessary, and when the broader protection and care network cannot manage or reduce the risks to the child. As SWS is a secure facility, placement at a SWS is the most extreme form of protective intervention and all other options must be explored first and relevant human rights considered.

A child subject to a custody or guardianship order may be placed at a SWS for a period not exceeding 21 days if the Secretary or the court (if the child or young person is subject to an Interim Accommodation Order) is satisfied that there is a substantial and immediate risk of harm. In exceptional circumstances, the period at a SWS may be for one further period not exceeding 21 days. The intent of the legislation is to use this placement only when children or young people are at extreme risk and existing community services cannot manage the risk. Lack of adequate accommodation is not by itself a sufficient reason for placing a child at a SWS.

The SWS is a specialist state-wide service located in the north and west region. It provides two 10-bed gender specific residential units that are staffed on a rostered 24 hour 'stand up' model.

Admission to a SWS is likely to be precipitated by a significant crisis in a child or young person's life. The aim of the SWS is to keep the child or young person safe whilst a suitable case plan is established to reduce the risk of harm and return the child or young person to the community as soon as possible in a safe and planned way.

As outlined in the legislation above, placement at a SWS can occur through an administrative decision for children subject to custody to Secretary order or a guardianship to Secretary order or long term guardianship order via judicial order on an interim accommodation order. As with all administrative decisions, the decision to place a child at a SWS can be appealed. Young people and their parents must be informed of their right of appeal. See Advice no. 1522 – Internal reviews.

Placement of Aboriginal young people

Consultation with ACSASS is to be sought where placement at a secure welfare is being considered for an Aboriginal child or young person. Where possible consultation is to occur prior to the relevant authorisation for admission to secure welfare (Department of Human Justice admission or Children's Court interim accommodation order (IAO)) being sought. See Advice no 1059 – Responding to Aboriginal children and young people

Authority to place

A 'reside as directed' condition does not permit placement in a SWS without returning to court.

Eligibility

Children aged 10 to 17 years who are at immediate and substantial risk of harm and for whom no alternative safe options exist, and subject to a Protection Order or Interim Order.

Secure Welfare Transport Service

The purpose of the Secure Welfare Transport Service (SWTS) is to assist Child Protection practitioners to safely transport and supervise young people between the Melbourne Children's Court and the SWS.

The service comprises two SWTS staff and a vehicle fitted with a screen that separates the driver from the back seat passengers. The vehicle can transport up to four young people at a time. An assessment will be made at the time as to how many children and young people can be safely transported. The service operates between the hours of 9 am and 5 pm Monday to Friday.

Priority will be given to assisting with the supervision and safe transport of young people to be placed at a SWS via a court order or who are returning to court from a SWS. The SWTS may also provide assistance to metropolitan regions transferring young people on custody or guardianship to Secretary orders to a SWS where resources are available.

Target group

The key target group for the transport service is children or young people placed at or to be placed at a SWS and travelling to or from court.


Eligibility

The arrangements regarding the supervision and transportation of children or young people between SWS and the court need to be carefully and collaboratively planned by the allocated Child Protection practitioner, the SWS team leader and SWTS staff on a case-by-case basis.

In this practice advice:

- [Introduction and purpose](#)
- [Legislation](#)
- [Service description](#)
- [Considerations for good practice](#)
- [Contact for further procedural advice](#)

For information relating to this page contact:cpmanual@dhs.vic.gov.au
Authorised by: Director, Child Protection, Placement and Family Services
Last updated: November 4, 2012

 Disclaimer: If you print and store this document you may be looking at an obsolete version. Always check the latest version of this document online before taking action.