



Lighthouse expansion – General fact sheet

What is Lighthouse?

The Lighthouse model involves:

- early risk screening through a secure online platform
- early identification and management of family safety risks
- assessment and triage of cases by a specialised team who will can provide support and refer link the party to appropriate services
- safe, and suitable case management including referring high risk cases to a dedicated court list, known as the Evatt List.

What is the Family DOORS Triage questionnaire?

The Family DOORS Triage questionnaire is a risk screening process which considers a range of safety risks that are frequently identified within family law proceedings. Some of the identified risks include family violence, mental health issues or drug and alcohol abuse. The Family DOORS Triage risk screening process has been specifically developed for use in the Courts in conjunction with Professor Jennifer McIntosh and Relationships Australia South Australia.

The questionnaire is designed to be completed by the litigant and takes approximately 15 minutes. The questionnaire can be completed safely and conveniently from any device; computer, mobile phone or tablet. Alternatively, if a litigant does not have access to a device to complete the questionnaire or holds safety concerns in completing the questionnaire on their personal device, appointments can be arranged for the litigant to attend the Registry to complete the questionnaire. All questions seek a yes or no response and do not require detailed examples.

Why is undertaking the Family DOORS Triage questionnaire important?

There are unacceptable rates of family violence in our community, especially at the time of separation.

For practitioners: it is important that you give significant attention to the identification of family violence and other signs of risk, and to be aware of the benefits of screening through the Family DOORS Triage questionnaire.

By encouraging your client to undertake the Family DOORS Triage questionnaire, practitioners are strengthening their client's support in navigating the family law system.

For litigants: it is important to complete the Family DOORS Triage questionnaire to ensure you are connected with support services, and to inform the Court of safety risks you are concerned about.

By completing the Family DOORS Triage questionnaire, litigants are provided:

- an opportunity to self-identify risk
- responsiveness to serious risk issues
- online safety planning
- referrals to legal and social support (where appropriate), and
- placement onto the most appropriate case management pathway based on the identified needs and circumstances of their family.

The Family DOORS Triage questionnaire not only assists the Courts but also practitioners in enhancing the response to, and understand of, risk factors present. By completing Family DOORS Triage litigants will receive targeted support for their concerns.

How will contact be made to complete the Family DOORS Triage questionnaire?

Each litigant will be contacted directly by the Lighthouse Support team to complete the Family DOORS Triage questionnaire.

Upon filing an eligible Application or Response via the Commonwealth Courts Portal, each party will be prompted to provide their preferred personal email address and mobile number to enable the Court to invite litigants to complete the questionnaire.

Practitioners may also be contacted directly by the Lighthouse Support team to obtain their clients contact details if not provided at the point of filing.

Is risk screening confidential?

Part IIA of the *Family Law Act 1975* (the Act) prevents the disclosure and admission into evidence, of information that is in connection with a family safety risk screening process carried out by the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia in relation to a party to proceedings under the Act. This part provides that:

- a party cannot be asked to disclose whether or not they undertook risk screening
- the risk screen responses, classification and referrals as a result of the screening process cannot be used as evidence in a proceeding, and
- information shared or provided by a party to a triage counsellor in the course of conducting risk screening cannot be disclosed, or used as evidence.

Screening responses, triage interviews with Triage Counsellors and referrals are confidential and inadmissible in Court under Part IIA of the Act.

The confidentiality and admissibility provisions (ss10U and 10V the Act) are intended to ensure that a 'family safety risk screening person', including a Court officer or triage counsellor, cannot be compelled to disclose risk screening information, including to state or territory agencies, or in the context of proceedings in state or territory courts or tribunals. These provisions ensure that parties are able to freely and confidently participate in the family safety risk screening process, without fear that the information they provide may be used against them in other contexts.

Exceptions to disclosure are contained in s10U(6) of the Act.

The Evatt List

The Court appreciates that it can be very stressful for families who are experiencing family breakdown. The Evatt List has been created by the Court to ensure that families are provided with appropriate resources and support to ensure everyone's safety and wellbeing. It also aims to manage the cases as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The benefits of the Evatt List include:

- dedicated focus on early information gathering
- intensive support focused on safety and well-being
- tailored case management
- prioritised resources, and
- safer outcomes for families.

The Evatt List involves a dedicated specialist team, including highly skilled and trained Senior Judicial Registrars, Judicial Registrars and Court Child Experts who, in consultation with Judges have close oversight of the matters. The team approach is adaptable and flexible to the requirements of each particular matter.

This approach is designed to assist the Court in making the most appropriate decision as soon as practical and based on the evidence gathered, resulting in safe Court Orders and resolutions for Evatt List families.

Eligibility

Matters are eligible to be placed on the Evatt List where the application to the Courts is for parenting orders, or parenting and financial orders only. It does not include:

- matters where only financial orders are sought
- child support only cases
- child maintenance only cases, or
- contravention applications (which do not also seek parenting orders).

In order to be referred to the Evatt List, at least one of the parties to the proceedings must:

- complete the online risk screen, and
- be identified as high risk during the triage and risk screening process, including a review by a Triage Counsellor.

It is important for parties to be aware that matters cannot be placed on the Evatt List by way of transfer, order or request.

Practitioners are encouraged to discuss risk screening and the Evatt List with their clients.



Questions?

Contact Lighthouse@fcfcoa.gov.au.