

Mandatory minimum qualifications for family violence practitioners

Recommendation 209



ABORIGINAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Victorian Aboriginal people as the first peoples and Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely. We acknowledge and respect that Aboriginal communities are steeped in traditions and customs built on an incredibly disciplined social and cultural order. This social and cultural order has sustained up to 50,000 years of existence. We acknowledge the ongoing leadership role of the Aboriginal community in addressing, and preventing family violence and join with our First Peoples to eliminate family violence from all communities.

SUPPORT SERVICES

If you have experiences family violence or sexual assault and require immediate or ongoing assistance, contact 1800 RESPECT (1800 737732) to talk to a counsellor from the National Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence hotline 1800 RESPECT can also provide support to workers.

For confidential support and information, contact Safe Steps' 24/7 family violence response line on 1800 015 188. If you are concerned for your safety or that of someone else, please contact the police in your State or territory or call 000 for emergency assistance.

To receive this publication in an accessible format, email communications@familysafety.vic.gov.au

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

© State of Victoria, Department of Family, Fairness and Housing April 2021.

Available at <<https://www.vic.gov.au/mandatory-minimum-qualifications-specialist-family-violence-practitioners>>

Contents

Background	4
Royal Commission into Family Violence: Recommendation 209	4
Context of the Family Violence Industry Plan.....	5
Mandatory Minimum Qualifications.....	6
Workforce scope	6
Pathways to Employment.....	7
Ongoing Pathways	8
Time-limited pathway	9
Time Limits for 'Working Towards'	10
Equivalent and Related Qualifications	11
Equivalent qualifications	11
Related qualifications	11
Equivalency principles	12
Transition period.....	13
Role of Government and Sector	13
Frequently Asked Questions	14
Recommendation 209	14
Minimum qualification threshold.....	14
Pathways to Employment.....	15
Current Workforce	15
Future Workforce	16
Equivalency Principles	17
Policy Development, Impact and Monitoring	17

Background

Royal Commission into Family Violence: Recommendation 209

In March 2016, the Royal Commission into Family Violence (Royal Commission) handed down its report with 227 recommendations to combat family violence in Victoria. The Victorian Government committed to implementing all 227 recommendations.

Recommendation 209 of the Royal Commission called for:

'the Victorian Government to include in the 10-year industry plan for family violence prevention and response a staged process for the introduction of mandatory qualifications for specialist family violence practitioners, so that no later than 31 December 2020 all funded services must require family violence practitioners to hold a social work or equivalent degree.' (Recommendation 209).

The intent of this recommendation for mandatory minimum qualifications is to support the increased visibility and professionalisation of family violence specialists in way that respects the significant expertise that already sits within the sector.

The minimum qualification threshold will ensure that after the five-year transition period all **new** specialist family violence practitioners will have a consistent baseline of knowledge, skills and competencies. All practitioners hired prior to the transition period will be exempt from the mandatory minimum qualification requirements for the duration of their continued service as a practitioner.

During the five-year transition period, there will be three pathways to employment for new specialist family violence practitioners. From 1 July 2026, only two pathways will be available for employment for new specialist family violence practitioners.

Options	Working towards requirement	Availability
Candidate holds a Bachelor of Social Work OR equivalent qualification	Not required	Available during and beyond the transition period
Candidate brings significant cultural knowledge and experience, OR lived experience , AND experiences barriers to educational pathways	Over a ten-year period, candidate is <i>working towards</i> a Bachelor of Social Work OR equivalent qualification AND has appropriate support from a qualified and experienced practitioner	
Candidate does not have an equivalent qualification but holds at least 5 years of relevant professional experience OR a related qualification	Over a five-year period, candidate is <i>working towards</i> a Bachelor of Social Work OR equivalent qualification	Only available during the five-year transition period 1 July 2021 until 30 June 2026

Family Safety Victoria has worked in collaboration with stakeholders drawn from across the family violence, tertiary education and Government sectors to develop the policy and its implementation approach. The policy aims to:

- Signal the level of expertise and knowledge required to undertake family violence work
- Recognise the expertise already within the sector and support the retention of existing practitioners
- Signal the value of lived experience and/or cultural expertise in the workforce
- Ensure that the family violence workforce is drawn from a range of disciplines
- Support the supply of practitioners for the sector from all backgrounds to build a more diverse workforce
- Recognise the role of employers as holding the expert voice on who is employed
- Make clear that the mandatory minimum qualifications policy is not a replacement for good recruitment practices

Context of the Family Violence Industry Plan

This new policy is being implemented alongside significant other workforce and program reform across the specialist family violence sector. These reforms include organisational support such as new supervision and health and wellbeing programs, research into job role design, and substantial efforts to attraction and recruitment. This is supported by the rollout of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework, supporting new practice standards in identifying and responding to risk across all prescribed sectors. For more information about the Family Violence Industry Plan, please refer to <https://www.vic.gov.au/building-strength-10-year-industry-plan>.

A commitment to Aboriginal self-determination informs all of the Industry Plan activity, and this plan sits alongside [Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way](#), which provides a roadmap for this critical work. In particular, the Family Violence Industry Plan is a companion piece to the forthcoming Aboriginal Family Violence Industry Strategy, to be developed by the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum.

At the time of writing, work is progressing to develop more detailed advice and communications with the Aboriginal sector to support the transition of the Aboriginal specialist family violence workforce to this new policy.

Following feedback and advice from the sector, the working towards period for Aboriginal specialist family violence workforce has been extended to ten years, as noted in this policy document. This policy will continue to be updated as required.

Mandatory Minimum Qualifications

The introduction of mandatory minimum qualifications will mean that any specialist family violence response practitioner seeking employment in an agency funded by the Victorian Government for the delivery of family violence services **from 1 July 2021** must do so in line with the policy pathways to be considered eligible for employment.

The implementation of mandatory minimum qualifications will ensure new practitioners have the skills and knowledge they need while recognising the significant value of professional experience, cultural knowledge and lived experience, and the need for flexible pathways into the specialist sector.

The mandatory minimum qualifications policy requires that all new specialist family violence response practitioners hold a Bachelor of Social Work or equivalent degree. Seven equivalency principles have been developed, which demonstrate the key competencies required to work as a specialist family violence practitioner and are aligned with the Bachelor of Social Work. These seven principles ensure that there is sufficient flexibility to support recruiting and retaining a diverse family violence workforce.

New practitioners employed while not holding Bachelor of Social Work or equivalent qualification will be required to work towards meeting the equivalency principles. Employers will be required to ensure that a formal professional learning plan is in place with the new practitioner.

Employers recruiting to specialist family violence practitioner roles will be required to prepare recruitment documentation and assess candidates in accordance with this policy.

All specialist family violence practitioners employed prior to **1 July 2021** will be exempt from the mandatory minimum qualifications policy for the length of their continued service in a specialist family violence role and retain this even when changing employers, taking breaks, or taking carers', parental or long service leave, where breaks are no more than four years in length

Workforce scope

The scope applies only to practitioners delivering frontline specialist family violence services, and not everyone who works in a family violence service.

Practitioners **in scope** for minimum qualifications

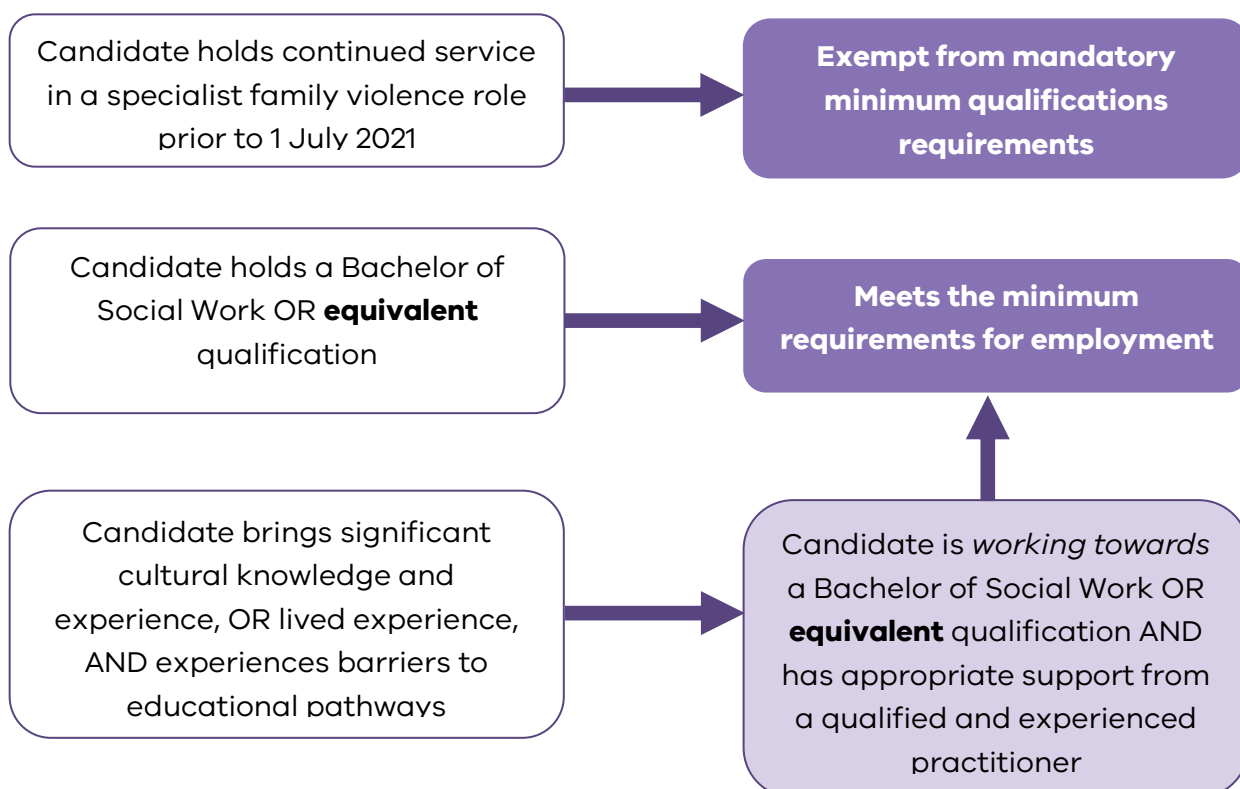
- Specialist family violence practitioners or non-specified specialist practitioners in either Government funded specialist family violence services; or Government funded non-specialist services **who are providing direct specialist services to victim survivors and/or people using violence such as:**
 - safety planning
 - assessment and intake
 - case management and service navigation

Practitioners in scope for minimum qualifications
Workers with oversight (e.g. managers, supervisors) of new specialist family violence practitioners who are working towards a minimum or equivalent qualification
Practitioners not in scope for minimum qualifications
- Government funded non-family violence specialist services who are providing other direct specialist services to victim survivors and/or perpetrators - Courts and Police staff - Staff in Government funded specialist family violence services that provide: - reception/appointment bookings - administration - service navigation (e.g. booking crisis accommodation) - staff managers who do not provide services to victim survivors - Primary prevention practitioners - Men's Behaviour Change facilitators

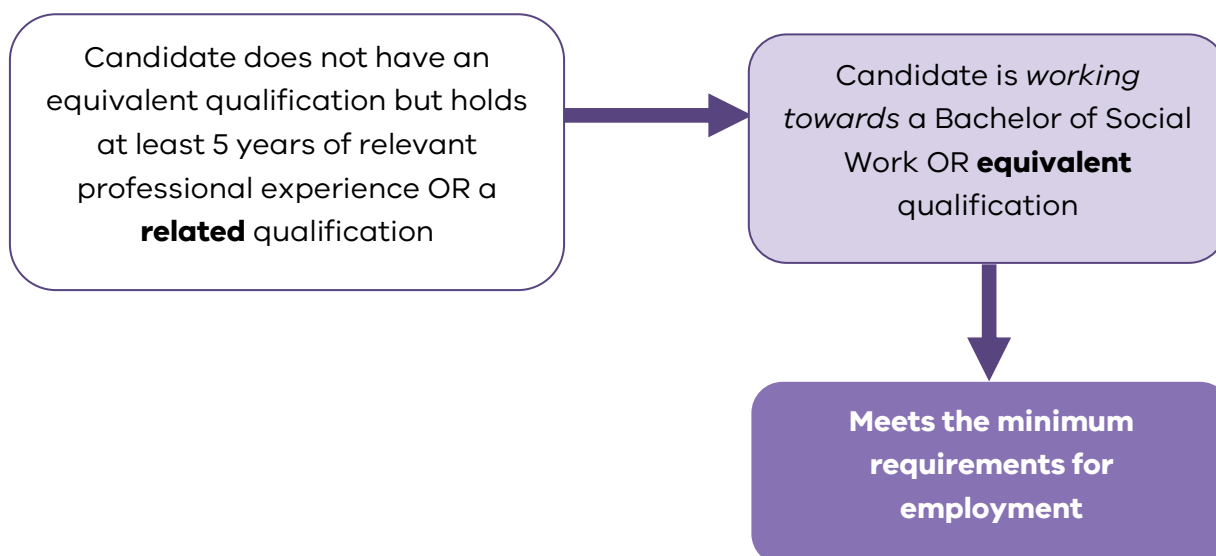
Pathways to Employment

During the 5-year transition period, there will be three pathways to employment for new specialist family violence practitioners. Existing specialist family violence practitioners who have held continued service will be exempt from the mandatory minimum qualification requirements.

Ongoing pathways



Time-limited pathway: Available during the 5-year transition period only



Ongoing Pathways

As of 1 July 2026, following the 5-year transition period there will be two ongoing pathways for candidates entering the sector.

Candidate holds a Minimum or Equivalent Qualification

After the transition period, new candidates must hold a minimum qualification, either Bachelor of Social Work or equivalent, to meet the minimum requirement for employment.

Employers will determine whether the candidate meets all equivalency principles.

Pathways to Employment: Case Study

Entering the sector with a Bachelor of Social Work

Meena has recently graduated with a Bachelor of Social Work and applies for a specialist family violence practitioner role. The content of her Bachelor of Social Work degree meets all 7 of the equivalency principles, therefore Meena meets the minimum mandatory qualification requirements for employment.

Candidate brings significant cultural knowledge and experience OR lived experience

Candidates with lived experience and cultural knowledge bring a depth of expertise about how to create a more inclusive system that can better respond to diverse needs, attributes and experiences, based on their own experiences of family violence, culture, disability, youth, or other aspects of their lives.

Candidates who bring significant cultural knowledge and experience and/or lived experience, and who experience barriers to education pathways can be employed if they are working towards a minimum qualification and will be required to have additional support from a qualified and experienced practitioner.

Employers will determine if the candidate meets the requirements for this pathway, and are responsible for ensuring that the candidate has the appropriate supports and oversight in place at the organisation, including a formal learning plan, to achieve a minimum qualification within the time limit.

Pathways to Employment: Case Study

Entering the sector on a significant cultural knowledge and experience pathway

Ayesha has been volunteering for a specialist family violence service for the past two years. She sought asylum in Australia 5 years ago and due to financial barriers has not been able to access formal study since.

Ayesha applies for a case practitioner role with the organisation she has been volunteering for. Due to the knowledge and lived experience she would bring to the role, and her existing relationships within the organisation, the recruiting staff members choose Ayesha as their preferred candidate.

Upon commencing her employment, Ayesha creates an educational/professional development support plan with her manager. The plan outlines that Ayesha will be supported by her organisation to work towards a preferred degree part-time to be completed within 10 years of commencement. It also outlines that her employer will subsidise day-care costs for Ayesha's 2-year-old while Ayesha is at university, and provide Ayesha with a mentor and regular supervision with an experienced practitioner. Her manager will slowly increase her caseload over time as Ayesha's knowledge and skills develop. Ayesha and her manager agree to check in regularly to ensure that she is receiving adequate support.

Employers will be encouraged to consult with local Aboriginal organisations or ethno-specific organisations to determine the best approach in supporting employees with significant cultural knowledge and experience who are employed through this pathway. Candidates with significant cultural knowledge and experience and lived experience may hold a related qualification and be working towards a minimum qualification.

Time-limited pathway

Between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2026, an additional time-limited pathway will be available for the 5-year transition period.

Candidates who do not have a minimum or equivalent qualification may enter the specialist family violence workforce if they hold at least 5 years of relevant professional experience OR a related qualification and are working towards the minimum requirement through completion of an equivalent qualification.

In recognition that the introduction of mandatory minimum qualifications may take some time, the 5-year transition period and accompanying time-limited pathway will ensure the continued flow of practitioners into the workforce, while the sector adjusts to the new requirements.

Employers will determine whether a candidate's professional experience is relevant, or their qualification is considered 'related' (please see below for the definition of a 'related' qualification).

Pathways to Employment: Case Study

Entering the sector during the limited 5-year transition period

Graham has been working in the community services sector for 10 years and holds a Bachelor of Arts, Sociology. The subjects that Graham studied include:

- *Families, Relationships and Society*
- *Law, Justice and Social Change*
- *Sex and Gender Present and Future*
- *Australian Indigenous Public Policy*
- *Sociology of Youth*
- *Sociology of Culture*
- *Sexualising Society: Sociology of Sex*

Graham's course content meets at least four of the equivalency principles.

Graham will therefore be able to work towards gaining the remaining equivalency principles through another course of study if he is employed during the transition period. Graham will need to complete this within 5 years of his employment commencing, with the support of his employer.

Time Limits for 'Working Towards'

Practitioners employed while not holding Bachelor of Social Work or equivalent qualification will be required to work towards gaining an equivalent qualification to support practitioners to hold a consistent level of skills and knowledge across services.

For a practitioner to be *working towards* meeting the equivalency principles, a formal professional learning plan is required to be in place with their employer. The learning plan should outline the formal education and/or training that will be undertaken to meet the required equivalency principles and the time period over which they will be finalised, in line with the *working towards* time limits.

When can they be hired?	Time limit	Why set this time limit?
Practitioners employed based on a related qualification or minimum 5 years professional experience		
During the transition period only (1 July 2021 to 30 June 2026)	Within 5 years from commencement of employment	Practitioners entering in this pathway are likely to have direct access to short-form qualifications to meet the minimum requirements such as Graduate Certificates delivered in either the higher education or vocational education and training sectors, which can be completed over 1 year (part-time). These practitioners are also likely to be able to gain advanced standing or recognition of prior learning into minimum qualifications, making their study duration shorter.

When can they be hired?	Time limit	Why set this time limit?
Practitioners employed based on significant cultural knowledge and experience, or lived experience, and have experienced barriers to accessing educational pathways		
Any time, where they have appropriate support from a qualified and experienced practitioner.	Within 10 years from commencement of employment	This approach signals the critical nature of minimum qualifications when providing family violence services and the need for employers to support practitioners to gain a minimum qualification in a realistic and timely manner. Practitioners will need to gain a minimum qualification which supports their autonomy at work (i.e. not having to work under supervision) and their career mobility and progression options.

Equivalent and Related Qualifications

The Royal Commission set the mandatory minimum qualification level in Recommendation 209 to a Bachelor of Social Work or equivalent.

Seven equivalency principles have been developed for consistency with the Bachelor of Social Work. These principles also ensure that there is sufficient flexibility to support recruiting and retaining a diverse family violence workforce.

The employer will hold the responsibility of assessing whether a candidate's qualifications and other formal learning meets the equivalency principles as being either equivalent or related.

Equivalent qualifications

A practitioner is deemed to meet the policy equivalent when all seven principles are met, either through a single qualification or through multiple courses or units of higher education or vocational education and training (VET).

For example, this may be through the completion of a related Bachelor degree and undertaking a Diploma or Graduate Certificate to meet missing principles.

Related qualifications

During the 5-year transition period, candidates may enter the sector with a related qualification while working towards an equivalent qualification. This can be done either through a single qualification or through multiple courses or units of education or training.

A related qualification must meet at least four of the seven equivalency principles to be considered related. Employers will need to determine whether a qualification can be deemed related for the purposes of employing people through this pathway.

Equivalency principles

The equivalency principles outline the key competencies required for work as a specialist family violence practitioner. These have been developed in close consultation with the specialist family violence sector, peak bodies and representatives from the higher education and vocational training sectors.

1	Hold a related qualification that is at a Bachelor degree or higher level (Australian Qualifications Framework level 7 or above) to meet the complexity of learning required to demonstrate autonomy, well-developed judgement and responsibility in contexts that require self-directed work and learning, and within broad parameters to provide specialist advice and functions.
2	Knowledge of and ability to manage the ethical issues that can arise when working with victim survivors and perpetrators of family violence, including to: – Recognise and manage personal values, prejudices, discrimination and bias, and understanding of how they can affect inclusive service provision; and – Apply critical and reflective thinking to practice, to examine the power dynamics between client-practitioner and victim survivor-perpetrator.
3	Understanding of the social, political, legal, historical, cultural and organisational contexts/systems impacts on people and communities; human behaviour and development; and life cycle stages in a family violence context.
4	Ability to apply principles of self-determination and cultural safety in professional practice, informed by an understanding of Aboriginal culture and the injustices experienced by Aboriginal people due to colonisation, and the impact this has on service experience.
5	Ability to transmit knowledge and skills to others, and to engage in a respectful, professional and culturally safe manner that builds rapport and trust with victim-survivors to work towards recovery and healing, using a trauma-informed approach that demonstrates belief, respect, and valuing of knowledge, culture and lived experience.
6	Ability to analyse and apply critical aspects of the regulatory environment and service system to practice, including accurate record keeping, data management and information sharing obligations, in consideration of confidentiality, informed consent and accountability. This includes: – Compliant provision of family violence work in accordance with legislation and industry frameworks (for example the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework); – Compliant provision of family violence work in accordance with International Charters of Human Rights, Indigenous Rights and Children's Rights and Victims' Charter Act; – Providing a coordinated response and advocating with, or on behalf of, victim-survivors to secure their rights and access to resources; and – Evidence-based domestic and international research and ability to apply it to practice.
7	Ability to analyse and evaluate information to inform practice approaches.

Transition period

There will be a 5-year transition period for the implementation of the policy, commencing on 1 July 2021.

Implementation of mandatory minimum qualifications will be monitored by Family Safety Victoria and an external transition monitoring advisory group comprising industry and employer representation.

A review will make recommendations about any changes required to the approach prior to the end of the transition period.

Role of Government and Sector

Implementation of this policy is dependent on the critical roles of the core parties involved with the policy.

Family Safety Victoria – to administer, communicate, support and monitor the policy;

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing – to administer the funding contractual requirements for Government-funded family violence organisations;

Industry Bodies – to administer transition supports and encourage the adoption of the policy;

Employers – to embed the policy through employment approaches, requiring adherence to the policy, appropriate professional learning plans to be in place for employees who are working towards holding equivalent qualification and have appropriate oversight and supports; and

Education providers – to ensure that pathways to minimum qualifications align with the policy and employer requirements which are communicated to prospective and current students.

Frequently Asked Questions

Recommendation 209

What is meant by mandatory minimum qualifications?

Mandatory qualifications will result in a **minimum qualification threshold**, to ensure that from 1 July 2021 all new specialist family violence practitioners have formalised knowledge, skills and competencies that are consistent across the specialist family violence sector. This baseline must be sufficient to support the safety and wellbeing of adult and child victim survivors of family violence, and to work with perpetrators to take accountability for their behaviour.

When will Recommendation 209 be implemented?

From 1 July 2021, any new practitioner employed as a specialist family violence practitioner in a Government funded service must meet the minimum qualification threshold or be working towards satisfying the threshold through the various pathways to employment.

Why does there need to be a mandatory minimum qualification?

Recommendation 209 is intended to professionalise the specialist family violence sector and sets a consistent service standard for people accessing Victorian family violence services. Minimum qualifications are not being implemented to address a skills-deficit.

What is the role of organisations in supporting practitioners work towards meeting the minimum qualifications?

Organisations are required to have in place a professional learning plan with practitioners that are working towards meeting the minimum qualifications policy. This plan will outline the program of formal learning that practitioners will undertake to meet the policy within the appropriate time limit as per the pathway that they have entered the workforce.

Minimum qualification threshold

What are minimum or equivalent qualifications?

A minimum qualification is a Bachelor of Social work or equivalent. Equivalent qualifications are qualifications or a combination of qualifications and formal learning that meet all seven equivalency principles. This can be met either through a single qualification or through multiple courses of education or training. These qualifications encompass the baseline attitudes and values, knowledge and practice skills required to promote the safety and wellbeing of victim survivors of family violence, including children, young people and older people, and to hold people who use violence to account for their behaviour.

For example, this may be through the completion of a related Bachelor degree and undertaking a Diploma or Graduate Certificate to meet missing principles.

What is a related qualification?

Related qualifications are qualifications that meet four or more of the equivalency principles. During the 5-year transition period, candidates who hold a related qualification can be employed while working towards an equivalent qualification. Related qualifications provide a solid foundation for further education and training to reach equivalency.

If a candidate holds a related qualification or has significant professional experience, what are they expected to do?

If the recruiting organisation deems that a candidate has significant professional experience and/or a related qualification (the qualification meets at least four of the equivalency principles), the

candidate must be working towards an equivalent qualification to be eligible for employment as a specialist family violence practitioner. This pathway is only available during the 5-year transition period.

What is meant by a candidate 'working towards' a qualification?

A practitioner must have a professional learning plan in place with their employer which outlines the way that the employee will meet the minimum qualifications policy within the time limit according to the pathway that they entered employment. This may include being enrolled in a course and studying part-time or full-time.

Pathways to Employment

When does the transition period begin/end?

The transition period will begin on 1 July 2021 and end on 30 June 2026.

What will happen after the transition period?

After the 5-year transition period, all new specialist family violence practitioners must:

- hold a minimum or equivalent qualification; or
- be working towards meeting the policy where they have entered on the pathway for people who hold significant cultural knowledge and experience, or lived experience and experience barriers to accessing formal study.

What is meant by lived experience?

Candidates with lived experience bring a depth of knowledge and expertise about how to create a more inclusive system that better responds to diverse needs, attributes and experiences, based on their own experiences of family violence, culture, disability, LGBTIQ, or other aspects of their lives.

What is meant by 'appropriate support' for candidates with significant cultural knowledge and experience, or lived experience?

Support must include supervision with a qualified and experienced practitioner and may also include a mentoring relationship, allocated hours for study within the working week and/or study leave, professional development opportunities, etc.

During the transition period, will employers be required to accept candidates that hold a related qualification or have significant professional experience?

The mandatory minimum qualifications policy sets a minimum requirement to be considered for a position in the specialist family violence sector. This policy does not replace organisational recruitment policies and processes, and as such, employers can set a higher minimum qualification for their positions where required by business needs.

Current Workforce

Does this affect current specialist family violence practitioners?

No, **the existing specialist family violence workforce is exempt**. Anyone who is employed as a specialist family violence practitioner up to 30 June 2021 or has been on a break for four years or fewer, will not be required to meet the minimum qualifications.

What if a practitioner is on carer's leave or long service leave at the time of implementation?

Practitioners already employed in the specialist family violence workforce as at 30 June 2021, including practitioners on approved leave (including maternity and long service leave) at that date, are considered exempt from the policy and will not be required to meet the minimum qualifications.

What is meant by continued service?

Continued service refers to the ongoing period in which a candidate has been employed in a specialist family violence role, including when changing employers, or when taking carers', parental and long service leave or leave without pay.

Specialist family violence practitioners are permitted to be absent from the industry for up to 4 years without being required to hold a mandatory minimum qualification. This aligns to the Community Services Portable Long Service Leave scheme enacted on 1 July 2019.

Future Workforce

Which future practitioners will this change apply to?

Specialist family violence practitioners or non-specified specialist practitioners in Government funded specialist family violence services or Government funded non-specialist services who are providing direct specialist services to victim survivors and/or perpetrators including:

- risk assessment and safety planning
- intake and crisis support
- case management and service navigation

Workers with oversight (e.g. managers, supervisors) of new specialist family violence practitioners who are working towards a minimum or equivalent qualification

Which future practitioners won't this change apply to?

The minimum qualification threshold **does not apply** to the following practitioners:

- Government funded non-specialist services who are providing direct non-family violence specialist services to victim survivors and/or perpetrators
- Courts and Police staff
- Staff in Government funded specialist family violence services that provide:
 - reception/appointment bookings
 - administration
 - basic service navigation (e.g. booking crisis accommodation)
 - staff managers who do not provide services to victim survivors
- Primary prevention practitioners
- Men's Behaviour Change facilitators

Do any exemptions apply for candidates without a minimum or equivalent qualification?

If a candidate has significant professional experience in a related field, and holds a related qualification, they must be working towards an equivalent qualification to be eligible for employment as a specialist family violence practitioner during the 5-year transition period.

If a candidate brings significant cultural knowledge and experience, or lived experience (for example: Aboriginal people, people with disability, migrant or refugee experience, lived experience of family violence) and experiences barriers to accessing educational pathways, they may be eligible for employment as a specialist family violence practitioner. The candidate must be working towards a minimum or equivalent qualification with appropriate support and must have supervision with a qualified and experienced practitioner.

What if a candidate is returning to work in family violence after more than 4 years in another sector?

The candidate may be eligible to be employed during the 5-year transition period where they hold at least 5 years' relevant professional experience or a related qualification. After the transition period, the candidate would need to meet the minimum qualifications policy to be considered for employment.

Do candidates need to be registered with the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW)?

No, candidates do not need to be a registered member with the AASW to be employed as a specialist family violence practitioner.

Equivalency Principles

What are the equivalency principles?

The equivalency principles were designed to assist individuals, organisations and government to determine whether a candidate holds a minimum, equivalent or related qualification for the purposes of engagement as a specialist family violence practitioner. The decision about whether a qualification meets the threshold is at the discretion of the recruiting organisation.

The equivalency principles outline the key competencies required for work as a specialist family violence practitioner. These have been developed in close consultation with the specialist family violence sector, peak bodies and representatives from the higher education and vocational training sectors.

While the attributes have been designed to be specific to specialist family violence work, they also align with the social work practice standards, established by the Australian Association of Social Practitioners (AASW), and reflect key learning outcomes of the Bachelor of Social Work degree, accredited by the AASW.

The alignment between the assessment framework and the Bachelor of Social Work directly reflects the purpose and intent of Recommendation 209. The Royal Commission recommended that, no later than 31 December 2020, all specialist family violence practitioners in a funded service hold a Bachelor of Social Work degree or equivalent.

How are the equivalency principles used?

A qualification may be considered an **equivalent qualification** if it meets all seven equivalency principles.

A qualification may be considered a **related qualification** if it meets at least four equivalency principles.

The final decision regarding whether a qualification is an equivalent or related qualification will be made by the recruiting organisation.

Policy Development, Impact and Monitoring

Do minimum qualifications replace the need for training and professional development?

No, minimum qualifications do not replace organisational induction, training and professional development processes and policies. Employees must continue with ongoing professional development, to ensure their practice evolves with new research, evidence and developments.

How will mandatory minimum qualifications be monitored during the transition period?

The impact of the implementation of mandatory minimum qualifications on the family violence sector will be monitored by Family Safety Victoria and an external transition monitoring advisory group, which will include representation from the specialist family violence sector including employers the education sector. A review of the impact of the policy will be undertaken prior to the completion of the 5-year transition period.

Will this impact the number of applicants for advertised specialist family violence roles?

No. Similar sectors have shown that qualified practitioners hold a professional career path in high esteem, therefore professionalising the specialist family violence sector is likely to be more attractive

to some potential candidates. Analysis of the impact on recruitment applications will also be included in the review.

How were Aboriginal services and communities engaged in the development of this process?

In line with self-determination, the design of the approach for Aboriginal specialist family violence practitioners is being led by Aboriginal communities through the development and implementation of Dhelk Dja, the Aboriginal 10-year Family Violence Agreement. The Aboriginal Strategy Unit at Family Safety Victoria is supporting this process.