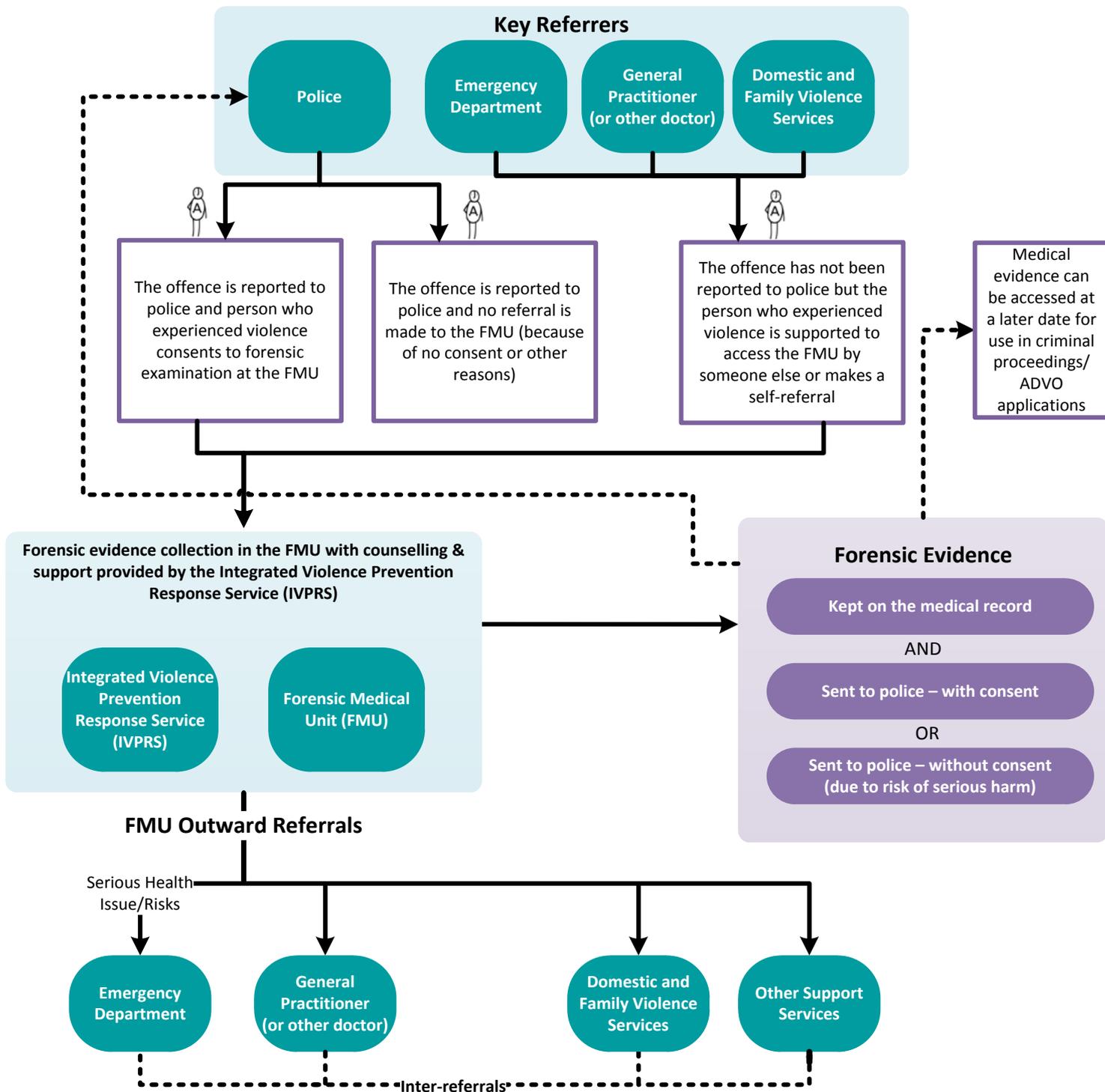


**Safety:** People experiencing Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) are already navigating their safety before they ever reach out for support. They are self-assessing the risks they face and use strategies to mitigate the risk of harm. Any advice given or action taken by a practitioner may unintentionally or unknowingly increase the harm and threat that a person may face as a result of not fully understanding a person’s situation and context. [Follow My Lead](#) is a resource designed for all social and service responders to build awareness of concepts of safety in order to improve and inform responses.

**A physical or sexual assault is committed**

The person who was assaulted has the right to access forensic medical services to record evidence of the assault. This assault may have been part of a pattern of behaviours that constitutes Domestic and Family Violence (DFV). Specific DFV services also exist outside of the FMU to support this person with their safety and wellbeing. Forensic medical services for children are not accessed via the pathways portrayed here.



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**Disclaimer:** This resource is an excerpt from the [DFV/ABI Project Report](#). Whist great care has been taken to do no harm and to improve responses, DVSM and the contributing organisations assume no responsibility for how the information in this resource is used.

**Emergency Department**

There are emergency departments at Westmead, Auburn, Blacktown and Mt Druitt Hospitals providing emergency medical services for the whole of Western Sydney Local Health District (LHD). All of these emergency departments can refer to the Forensic Medical Unit (FMU) (Western Sydney LHD & Nepean Blue Mountains LHD). Pathways through emergency care after physical or sexual assault are outlined in DVSM [Map 05 \(DFV/ABI Project\)](#).

**General Practitioner (or other doctor)**

General Practitioners (and other doctors in the community such as specialists, paediatricians and psychiatrists) are likely to see patients with injuries caused by sexual or physical assault. There are a range of resources available to support community doctors in having conversations about violence with their patients. See DVSM [Map 04 \(DFV/ABI project\)](#). General Practitioners can provide referrals to a FMU if the patient is an adult who wants and consents to have evidence of their injuries recorded. If the person with assault-related injuries is a child, reporting obligations apply, and referrals can be made to a Child Protection Unit for forensic evidence collection.

**Forensic Medical Unit (FMU)**

The FMU (Western Sydney & Nepean Blue Mountains LHD) – provides forensic medical and nursing services across Western Sydney (and the Nepean Blue Mountains). These services include examinations and collection of evidence for sexual assault cases and domestic violence cases. The unit also provides expert opinions for a range of assault matters. Referrals: **9881 7752**  
**Sexual Assault Assessments are available 24/7**  
**Domestic Violence Assessments** (Physical Assault) are by appointment only, in business hours.

**Integrated Violence Prevention Response Service (IVPRS)**

The Integrated Violence Prevention and Response Service (IVPRS) provides a coordinated approach to violence prevention and response across Western Sydney providing counselling and support services in the areas of: sexual assault; child protection; domestic violence, and for victims of crime. For referral to the sexual assault and domestic violence counselling programs: Blacktown, Mt Druitt – **9881 8700** or Westmead - **8890 7940**.

**Kept on the Medical Record**

In situations where a service user decides that their evidence should not be sent to the police the evidence will become part of the medical record and can be accessed by the person who experienced violence at a later date, or can be subpoenaed by the courts for legal purposes.

**Sent to Police – with consent**

As the purpose of the FMU is to provide forensic assessments to assist with the judicial process, information and evidence collected is usually sent to police within 10 working days of being collected. This is fully explained to all service users and it is possible for a person to request that the evidence not be sent to police.

**Sent to Police – without consent (due to risk of serious harm)**

NSW Health Services have reporting obligations when there is risk of serious physical harm to a person experiencing DFV, for example: when the person has very serious injuries, has been assaulted with a weapon, or there is considerable threat to the person's or the general public's safety. These obligations are outlined in NSW Health Resource, '[Policy and Procedures for Responding to Domestic Violence.](#)'

**Domestic and Family Violence Services**

Domestic and Family Violence Services – there are a range of services across Western Sydney that can support a person who is experiencing DFV. DFV services exist to support the person with their safety and wellbeing and can build on a person's knowledge of safety and risks. A menu of DFV services in Western Sydney has been outlined in DVSM [Map 01 \(DFV/ ABI Project\)](#).

**Other Support Services**

For information about a range of other services in Western Sydney that may be able to support people experiencing violence and other social injustices, the following resources are helpful:

- [Community Resource Network](#)
- [Ask Izzy](#)
- [HS Net](#)
- [DVSM Services Directory](#)

**Acknowledgements**

DVSM thanks practitioners from the Forensic Medical Unit (WSLHD & NBMLHD) for their feedback and contributions to this map.