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| **safe steps** data shows instances of family violence perpetrators threatening to harm or kill children have increased by 76 per cent since 2014. |
| Each night **safe steps** is accommodating an average of 40 children who are deemed to be at high risk of harm or death. |
| Vulnerable children need more resources to protect them from family violence and help them heal from abuse. |
| Two new websites launched by **safe steps** designed specifically to help young people impacted by family violence; safesteps4children.  org.au and safesteps4  youth.org.au |

**For immediate release 19 June 2017**

**Threats aimed at children in family violence incidences up by 76 per cent over past three years – safe steps data shows**

Instances of family violence perpetrators threatening to harm or kill children have increased by 76 per cent since 2014, according to new data from **safe steps,** Victoria’s 24/7 statewide family violence response service.

Almost one third (30.4 per cent) of the women who have contacted **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre since July 2016 report that the perpetrator has harmed, or has threatened to harm or kill, their children. In the 2013-14 financial year, this figure was 17 per cent.

According to **safe steps** CEO, Annette Gillespie, this has resulted in greater numbers of children and their mothers seeking support in safe accommodation.

“Currently, an average of 40 children are being accommodated by **safe steps** every night across Victoria. 70 per cent of those children are aged eight or younger,” Ms Gillespie says.

“National data tells us that children are present in 61 per cent of family violence situations, and children who have witnessed family violence are more likely to suffer depression, anxiety, behavioral issues and learning difficulties.

“Children exposed to family violence are in real danger. More must be done to protect them from abusive environments, and help them to heal from trauma.”

In order to provide additional assistance for children and young people experiencing family violence, **safe steps** has launched two new websites created specifically for youth; [**safesteps4children.org.au**](file:///\\ssfile01\Marketing%20&%20Fundraising\Eleani%20Drafts\www.safesteps4children.org.au) (targeted to children aged 3-7 years) and [**safesteps4youth.org.au**](file:///\\ssfile01\Marketing%20&%20Fundraising\Eleani%20Drafts\www.safesteps4youth.org.au) (for young people aged 12-18 years).

**safesteps4children.org.au** is an interactive, simple to navigate site designed to assist young children who have experienced family violence and are entering safe house or refuge accommodation. It features colourful imagery, simple information and stimulating play activities that introduce and explain the concept of family violence to children in an age-appropriate way, while also helping them feel comfortable in a safe house or refuge setting.

The children’s site also provides information for parents and specialist family violence support workers, including how family violence can affect children emotionally and behaviourally, how to create a safety plan that includes children, and how to help children who have witnessed violence start to recover and heal.

**safesteps4youth.org.au** features information specifically relevant to teens who may be experiencing family violence or dating violence. Clearly signposted sections explain what family violence and dating violence are, how to get help if you feel unsafe, advice on technology safety and answers to frequently asked questions submitted by school students.

“**safe steps** has been helping keep children and their mothers safe from family violence by providing emergency accommodation and support services for more than 40 years,” Ms Gillespie says. “That is something we will always continue to do, but we hope these two sites can provide additional assistance to young people by acting as a resource for age-appropriate factual information and trustworthy advice.

“Educating our youth about family violence, and helping those who have experienced abuse to heal and overcome that trauma, are going to be key in breaking the cycle of violence for the next generation.”

**safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre CEO Annette Gillespie is available for comment.

***If you or someone you care about is living with an abusive partner or family member, call safe steps Family Violence Response Centre 24/7 on 1800 015 188.***

About **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre:

**safe steps** is Victoria’s only state-wide, 24/7 first response service for women and children affected by abuse in the home. For more than 40 years, we have supported the highest risk women and children in our community by providing risk assessment and safety planning, emergency accommodation, information and advocacy training. Our role is to assist women and children anywhere at any time to have the support, resources and protection they need to live their lives free from violence.

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