

CHO RESPONSE TO DFV – TOOLKIT

BUILDING UNDERSTANDING OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

MODULE ONE



Community Housing
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

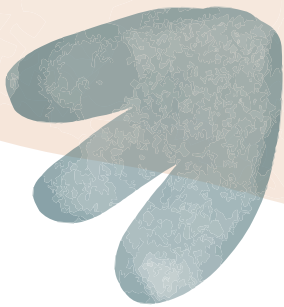
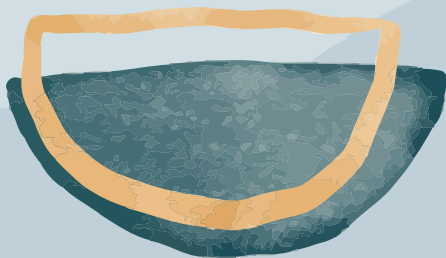


BUILDING UNDERSTANDING OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

MODULE ONE

CONTENTS

Defining domestic and family violence	3
Prevalence of domestic and family violence	7
Domestic and family violence across communities	5
Domestic and family violence against children and young people	8
Domestic and family violence against culturally and lingusitically diverse people	9
Domestic and family violence against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer communities	10
Domestic and family violence against Aboriginal people and communities	11
Domestic and family violence against older people (elder abuse)	12
Domestic and family violence against people with a disability	13
Rural, regional and remote communities	14
Domestic and family violence against men	14
Misidentification of the perpetrator	15
Intersectionality and domestic and family violence	16



DEFINING DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Domestic and family violence refers to a situation where one partner in a relationship, or a family member, is using violent and/or abusive behaviours in order to control and dominate another.¹

Domestic and family violence happens when one person tries to control or hurt another. This abuse may be physical, such as hitting, pushing or choking. It can also be other things such as putting a person down, making a person feel worthless, or being possessive and jealous to prevent the person from speaking to friends or family.²

Domestic and family violence is any behaviour that causes physical, sexual or emotional damage, or causes someone in the relationship to live in fear. Non-physical forms of abuse can be just as damaging as physical violence.

Domestic and family violence is also known as:

- Family violence
- Relationship violence
- Intimate partner violence
- Domestic abuse

Domestic and family violence does not usually take the form of a single incident. It is ongoing behaviour that gradually undermines the victim’s confidence and ability to leave the violent person. The severity and frequency of violence can escalate over time.

One of the challenges in seeking to address and prevent domestic and family violence is that there is a lot of misunderstanding and myths about the issue. Such misinformation not only creates further difficulties to prevent domestic and family violence but also reinforces stereotypes. Busting these myths and educating people about the realities of domestic and family violence is an important prevention strategy.^{3 4}

1 Queensland Domestic Violence Prevention Centre. Understanding domestic and family violence. <http://www.domesticviolence.com.au/>

2 <http://www.dvrcv.org.au/about-us/relationship-violence>

3 Family Violence Myths & Facts – Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre

4 Personal Safety, Australia, 2016: Australian Bureau of Statistics

MYTH
DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE IS RARE
AND DOESN'T AFFECT MANY PEOPLE

FACT

Domestic and family violence has long been a hidden and underreported problem, but it is a very widespread social issue in Australia and around the world. 1 in 4 Australian women has experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner. Intimate partner violence contributes to more death, disability and illness in Australian women aged 15-45 than any other preventable risk factor including smoking, obesity and high blood pressure. One in six women and one in sixteen men reported having experienced partner violence since the age of 15 in the Personal Safety Survey.

MYTH
DOMESTIC AND FAMILY
VIOLENCE HAPPENS
BECAUSE MEN GET
ANGRY & LOSE CONTROL

FACT

Domestic and family violence is about gaining control, not a loss of control. Using violence is a choice an abuser makes.

MYTH
DOMESTIC AND FAMILY
VIOLENCE ONLY HAPPENS
IN POOR, UNEDUCATED OR
MINORITY FAMILIES

FACT

Domestic and family violence occurs among all types of families, regardless of income, profession, region, ethnicity, educational level or race, including smoking, obesity and high blood pressure. One in six women and one in sixteen men reported having experienced partner violence since the age of 15 in the Personal Safety Survey.

MYTH
CHILDREN AREN'T REALLY
AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC
AND FAMILY VIOLENCE
BETWEEN THEIR PARENTS

FACT

Seeing violent behaviour perpetrated by one parent towards another and growing up in an unpredictable, fear filled environment can have significant detrimental impacts on children. Studies have shown that children exposed to domestic and family violence are at greater risk of developing depression and experiencing behaviour problems. They can also suffer at school, developing poor reading and language skills, and can struggle to make and maintain friendships.

MYTH
DOMESTIC AND FAMILY
VIOLENCE HAPPENS BECAUSE
WOMEN PROVOKE MEN

FACT

It is common for abusers to blame women for provoking them, but there is no excuse for violence. Domestic and family violence happens because a person chooses to act violently. Most women experiencing abuse try to do everything they can to please their partner and avoid further violent episodes, but they remain vulnerable to further abuse regardless of their behaviour.

MYTH
VIOLENT MEN COME
FROM VIOLENT HOMES

FACT

It is true that some men who are violent come from violent backgrounds, but many men who abuse women and children do not. Many men who do come from abusive backgrounds are also not abusive towards women and children. The relationship between exposure to violence in childhood and becoming an adult perpetrator is complex, but at the heart of the matter is the fact that violence is a choice and we can all choose to not act violently.

MYTHS
AND
FACTS

ABOUT DOMESTIC
AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

MYTH
ONLY PHYSICAL VIOLENCE COUNTS
AS DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

FACT

Domestic and family violence can be defined as any controlling or violent behaviour that causes emotional, psychological, sexual, financial or physical damage to a family member, partner or ex-partner or causes them to feel fear. As many victim/ survivors can confirm, supposedly "less serious" types of violence like emotional and psychological abuse can leave deep scars and be very hard to overcome. All violent behaviour regardless of type is harmful and inexcusable.

MYTH

IF A WOMAN WAS IN REAL DANGER, SHE WOULD JUST LEAVE. IF SHE HASN'T LEFT, IT CAN'T BE THAT BAD

FACT

A woman is at highest risk of extreme violence, including murder, when she does leave an abuser. Many women stay because they are justifiably fearful for themselves or their children if they do leave. If a woman chooses to stay in an abusive relationship, it doesn't mean the situation isn't bad, she's worried that leaving might make it even worse. Other reasons why a woman might stay in a violent environment include:

- Fear, low self-esteem, shame, guilt
- Lack of financial independence
- Desire to maintain the family unit. Sometimes there may be pressure to keep the family together
- Belief that the partner can and will change
- Isolation – a lack of family and social support networks

MYTH

LOTS OF WOMEN MAKE FALSE CLAIMS ABOUT DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE OR EXAGGERATE HOW BAD THE ABUSE IS

FACT

False claims about domestic and family violence are extremely rare. 82% of women who experienced violence from a current partner never contacted the police. When talking to family, friends and others, women are more likely to downplay their experience of violence than exaggerate it.

PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

While a range of contributing factors can increase the likelihood of domestic and family violence such as alcohol and substance misuse and early exposure to violence and discrimination⁵, the leading cause of domestic and family violence is gender inequality. Gender inequality sets the necessary social context in which violence against women occurs.⁶

Gender inequality is a social condition characterised by unequal value afforded to men and women and an unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunity between them. It results from, or has historical roots in, laws or policies formally constraining the rights and opportunities of women. Gender inequality is maintained and perpetuated today through structures that continue to organise and reinforce an unequal distribution of economic, social and political power and resources between men and women.

Official police and court data and the Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey demonstrate unequivocally that domestic and family violence is a gendered issue in terms of frequency, perpetration, the ongoing effects and the likelihood of victimisation. Women are at least three times more likely than men to experience violence from a domestic relationship.⁷

The 2021 National Homicide Monitoring Program report found women are over-represented as victims of intimate partner homicide.⁸ On average, one woman each week is killed by a current or former male intimate partner, who in the overwhelming majority (92.6 per cent) of cases was a primary perpetrator. In comparison, one man each month is killed by a current or former intimate partner, and similarly the majority of men in these cases were the primary perpetrator (60.7 per cent).⁹ Women are also more likely to experience sexual violence from a current or former intimate partner.

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE ACROSS COMMUNITIES

Family violence occurs in all cultures, communities and across all demographics including age, gender and socioeconomic status. While there are many similar factors across many groups, specific groups experience unique impacts and systemic barriers.

5. www.whiteribbon.org.au/understand-domestic-violence/what-is-violence-against-women/causes-domestic-violence

6. Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth (2015), Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia.

7. Our Watch, 2016

8. Women comprised 73 per cent of all intimate partner homicides in Australia during the 2018–19 reporting period; Bricknell S and Doherty L 2021, Homicide in Australia 2018–19, statistical report no. 34, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra

9. Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network 2018, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network: 2018 data report, ADFVDRN, Sydney, p. xii

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Domestic and family violence has significant consequences for infants, children and young people. The impacts can be serious and long-lasting, affecting their health, wellbeing, education, relationships and housing outcomes. ¹⁰

Exposure to domestic and family violence negatively and cumulatively impacts the physical, neurological and emotional development of children and young people. It effects their sense of safety and security, cognitive and behavioural functioning, and ability to cope and adapt to different situations and environments. They don't have to see violence to be affected by it. An unborn child may be injured in the womb due to violence aimed at the mother's abdomen. A baby exposed to violence may have difficulty developing attachments with their caregivers and in extreme cases may suffer from failure to thrive. A school age child may struggle with peer relationships, academic performance and emotional stability. Evidence shows negative experiences in the first three years of life have long-lasting effects on development and increase the risk of future intergenerational violence.¹¹

Community housing organisations will all have mandatory reporting responsibilities in regard the impact of domestic and family violence on children and young people who are living within a tenancy where this is occurring. They need to ensure that all staff are trained and understand their responsibilities.

10. ANROWS (Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety) 2018. Research summary: the impacts of domestic and family violence on children. Sydney: ANROWS.

11. Family Safety Victoria (2019a), MARAM Practice Guides: Foundation Knowledge Guide, Melbourne, Vic: State of Victoria

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE AGAINST CULTURALLY AND LINGUSITICALLY DIVERSE PEOPLE

Research indicates that cultural values and immigration status enhance the complexities normally involved in domestic and family violence cases and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are generally less likely than other groups of women to report cases of domestic and family violence. ¹²

People from culturally and linguistically diverse communities can experience a number of systemic barriers that impact their access to services and supports.¹³

These include:

- the limited availability of appropriate translator/interpreter services and access to support services
- limited support networks and reluctance to confide in others
- community isolation
- lack of awareness about the law
- continued abuse from the immediate family
- cultural and/or religious shame; and religious beliefs about this

12. https://www.women.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/file/0012/300621/PDF_4_Full_Report_At_risk_groups.pdf

13. Maeve Lu., Xannel Mangahas. & Jessica Nimmo, 26 March 2020. Domestic and Family Violence in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities, Pro Bono Centre, University of Queensland.

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE AGAINST LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, INTERSEX AND QUEER COMMUNITIES

There is little population-wide data available on the prevalence of intimate partner violence in LGBTIQ communities. Large-scale surveys such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey do not collect data on LGBTIQ identity.

- The Australian Research Centre for Health and Sexuality conducted a national demographic and health and wellbeing survey of 5,476 LGBTIQ people¹⁴ and found significant levels of intimate partner violence:
- 41% of male-identifying respondents, and 28% of female-identifying respondents had experienced physical violence within a same sex intimate relationship; and
 - 25% of respondents had experienced sexual assault within a same-sex intimate relationship (with women-identifying and trans respondents more likely to experience sexual assault).

This means that LGBTIQ people are just as likely as people in the general population to experience DFV. However, research shows that LGBTIQ people are less likely to find support services that meet their specific needs.

- Abuse in LGBTIQ relationships has the same elements as all abusive relationships, but there are some unique differences for LGBTIQ people:
- Using someone’s intersex status, sexuality, gender, gender expression, transgender or HIV status against them
 - Threatening to ‘out’ someone to their family, friends, community or workplace. Outing can include someone’s gender, sexuality, intersex status or HIV status
 - Controlling someone’s medications, access to gender transition related healthcare, or pressuring them to conform to sex or gender “norms”
 - Confidentiality and lack of appropriate language to discuss abuse in LGBTIQ communities/relationships. There is currently no cohesive understanding or theory of intimate partner violence when it occurs within same-sex couples.
 - A lack of mainstream services that address the needs of LGBTIQ people, such as safe housing services for male victims, supports for female perpetrators, transgender and intersex inclusive services
 - A fear of lack of understanding, minimisation and/or discrimination from police and service providers
 - Fear around differing legal rights over children and assets.

14. Pitts, M., Smith, A., Mitchell, A., & Patel, S. (2006). Private lives: A report on the health and wellbeing of GLBTI Australians. Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE AGAINST ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

Family violence occurs at higher rates for Aboriginal Australians than for non-Aboriginal Australians. Family violence within Aboriginal communities needs to be understood as both a cause and effect of social disadvantage and intergenerational trauma¹⁵.

- In 2014-15, 1 in 7 (14%) Aboriginal women experienced physical violence in the previous year. Of these, about 1 in 4 (28%) reported that their most recent incidence was perpetrated by a cohabiting partner¹⁶
- From 2012-13 to 2013-14, 2 in 5 Aboriginal homicide victims (41%) were killed by a current or previous partner, twice the rate of non-Aboriginal victims (22%)¹⁷
- In 2014-15 Aboriginal women were 32 times as likely to be hospitalised due to domestic and family violence as non-Aboriginal women, while Aboriginal men were 23 times as likely to be hospitalised as non-Aboriginal men ¹⁸
- In 2015-16 Aboriginal children were 7 times as likely to be the subject of substantiated child abuse or neglect as non-Aboriginal children¹⁹

Aboriginal people facing domestic and family violence face many barriers to seeking help. This can include past and recent experiences of racism, judgment or lack of cultural competency from services. Aboriginal people may be reluctant to seek help that involves leaving their families and communities given previous government policies of dispossession and removal, including the Stolen Generations and current high rates of child removal. Community housing organisations should endeavour to have a range of partnerships established with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support services to enable them to access culturally specific support, with client consent, so that they are able to understand and develop the best approach to supporting the housing needs for victim-survivors.

15. ABS 2016. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2014–15. ABS cat. no. 4714.0. Canberra: ABS.
16. Ibid
17. Bryant & Bricknell 2017. Homicide in Australia 2012–13 to 2013–14: National Homicide Monitoring Program Report. Canberra: AIC.
18. SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision) 2016. Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage: key indicators 2016. Canberra: Productivity Commission.
19. AIHW 2017a. Child protection Australia 2015–16. Child welfare series no. 66. Cat. no. CWS 60. Canberra: AIHW.

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE AGAINST OLDER PEOPLE (ELDER ABUSE)

While there are many commonalities between women experiencing domestic and family violence in non-urban communities and women from other geographic locations, it is important to consider the compounding issue of isolation due to remote location:

- limited means to leave; and societal and/or familial pressure to stay in the relationship
- heightened concerns relating to privacy and confidentiality due to living in a small community with a limited number of service providers
- lack of services, or a lack of appropriate services
- delayed response times (e.g. by police) due to a lack of services and distance
- distance to services and transport access issues
- easy access to guns
- rural community norms/conservative or traditional norms, especially relating to family and gender roles
- lack of financial support or means to gain employment resulting in lack of income



DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE AGAINST PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

There are approximately 4.2 million people with disability in Australia constituting 18.5% of the population. Approximately 52% are women. Women with disability comprise 19% of all women in Australia.²⁰

Women with disability are estimated to be 37.3% more at risk of domestic and family violence than their peers.²¹ Disabilities can be cognitive, physical, sensory, acquired brain injury, neurological or related to mental illness.

Women with disability are vulnerable to violence due to a combination of gender and disability-based discrimination. They experience domestic and family violence in a range of ways such as:²²

- Physical violence such as the withholding of food, water, medication of support services, misusing medication as a restraint, using physical restraints and destroying or withholding disability related equipment
- Sexual violence such as inappropriate touching during care giving, taking control of reproductive processes and demanding sexual activities
- Emotional violence such as verbal abuse, forced isolation, denying or trivialising the disability, humiliating the individual, threatening violence, institutionalisation or the withdrawal of care, and threatening to hurt guide dogs, pets or other family members
- Financial violence such as stealing or taking control of money, taking control of investments and refusing to pay for essential medication or disability related equipment
- Particular forms of coercion and manipulation that result from existing hierarchies between people with disabilities and people without disability

20. ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics), 2012. '4430.0 – Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2012', Australian Bureau of Statistics

21. PWDA (People with Disability Australia), 2013. 'Key figures about women and girls with disability: Facts and figures', Stop the Violence Project

22. Women With Disability and Domestic and Family Violence: A Guide for Policy and Practice 2015, People with Disability Australia and Domestic Violence NSW

RURAL, REGIONAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Elder abuse is any form of violence or mistreatment that causes harm to an older person and occurs within a relationship of trust. Elder abuse can include acts of psychological, financial, physical, social and sexual abuse as well as neglect.

Elder abuse can be defined as a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.

Elder abuse can take various forms such as physical, psychological or emotional, sexual and financial abuse. It can also be the result of intentional or unintentional neglect.²³ Elder abuse is a highly complex social problem. The abuse takes many forms, including financial, physical, psychological, social and sexual as well as the more passive form of neglect. Lack of recognition and under-reporting means that the extent of elder abuse is difficult to estimate, but research indicates it is experienced by approximately 2-6 % of older people in Australia.²⁴

DOMESTIC & FAMILY VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN

Men generally experience domestic and family violence at lower rates and with less severe consequences than women.²⁵

However, the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence acknowledged male victim-survivors are most likely to experience domestic and family violence from either female partners or another male family member such as a brother, son or father.²⁶ Men's experiences of domestic and family violence also occur in the context of same-sex relationships, in childhood or as a young person and in the context of elder abuse.

23. The Toronto Declaration on the Global Prevention of Elder Abuse, World Health Organisation, 2002

24. Kurrie, S. & Naughtin. G. An overview of elder abuse and neglect in Australia. *Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect* 2008; 20(2): 108-125

25. Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (2018). *Violence against women: Accurate use of key statistics* (ANROWS Insights 05/2018). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS

26. Royal Commission into Family Violence (2016), *Royal Commission into Family Violence: Summary and recommendations*, Parl Paper No 132 (2014-16). Melbourne, Vic, State of Victoria

MISIDENTIFICATION OF THE PERPETRATOR

In some instances, victim-survivors may be misidentified as perpetrators, with terrible consequences in relation to their experience of the service system and ability to seek and access help, their interaction with the justice system and criminality, and importantly, their risk and safety.

Some victim-survivors may be misidentified as a perpetrator for their use of self-defense or violent resistance during an incident or series of incidences of domestic and family violence, or for actions taken to defend other members of the family. Victim-survivors are also misidentified as a perpetrator based on misinterpretation of their presentation or behaviour.

Perpetrators may be misidentified as victim-survivors for a range of reasons. Perpetrators may use the criminal justice system to control the victim-survivor by contacting the police and making false accusations or may misrepresent themselves as the victim-survivor.

A community housing organisation would always be able to gain advice from their partner domestic and family violence support services about this complex issue and how they might best respond to this should it arise.

INTERSECTIONALITY AND DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Intersectionality is about taking an approach that considers the complexity of a person's lived experience. It considers the multiple forms of discrimination that can be experienced as they relate to a person's identity and how systems and structures interact to reinforce the discrimination.

Aspects of a person's identity that can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination can include gender, class, ethnicity and cultural background, religion, disability and sexual orientation.

The tick box exercise of filling out a form is a good example of the assumptions inherent in our systems. It is important that we consider the complexity of someone's identity and how that manifests in their lived experience, as well as about the ways in which systemic forms of violence and discrimination can interact to create multiple barriers, or opportunities for individuals.

Exploring diversity is important as a first step as you consider 'the boxes' of people's individual identities, but intersectionality is thinking about how multiple boxes intersect both at an individual or relationship level as well as at a structural level. Intersectionality is about trying to capture the whole picture of people's lived experience and how that can intersect with the institutions, social norms and structures they navigate in their daily lives.

The following examples highlight the importance of taking an intersectional approach.²⁷

EXAMPLE 1:

Gender inequality means women are most at risk of experiencing domestic and family violence.

The risk for women in diverse communities is exacerbated by intersecting social and institutional disadvantages, which create additional barriers to service access and disclosure. Aboriginal women are significantly more likely to be exposed to domestic and family violence and require hospitalisation for injuries than non-Aboriginal women, which may be explained by the intersection of race and gender-based discrimination and inequality.

EXAMPLE 2:

Older people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds who have recently migrated to Australia may experience social isolation as they often lose their support networks through the process of relocation.

They may also experience difficulties in accessing services, including facing language barriers or having apprehension about contacting a mainstream service. As a result, older people may become dependent on family members more fluent in English to meet their daily needs which is problematic if these family members are responsible for perpetrating violence against them.

Community housing organisations can take an intersectional lens to their data for example and review key metrics such as evictions to monitor for any trends that may require service review to address

EXAMPLE 3:

Children with disability are at increased risk of experiencing abuse, neglect and other forms of maltreatment, perpetrated by a parent or carer.

Statistics on the victimisation of children with disabilities are limited, however international studies have found that children with physical, sensory, intellectual and mental disabilities are twice as likely to experience violence than children who do not have disabilities.

EXAMPLE 4:

Some CALD communities may hold more conservative views on gender and sexuality due to their cultural and religious backgrounds.

These attitudes and beliefs may support or reinforce discrimination and violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people. The rejection of people on the basis of their sexuality or gender and threats of 'outing' someone may be used as a form of control and abuse within some CALD communities.

27. <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-family-violence-data-collection-framework/intersectionality-and-family-violence> (accessed 28/01/2022)