

Domestic and Family Violence

What is domestic and family violence?

Domestic and family violence is a crime. It's when there is violent, abusive or bullying behaviour or actions towards a partner, relative, carer or in Aboriginal communities, extended family or kin.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people prefer to use the term 'family violence' when referring to intimate partner abuse. Family violence can also include abuse that occurs in the community between siblings, parents, children, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

Children and young people are victims when they have to live with domestic and family violence, and it can be a form of child abuse.

You will need to respond to domestic and family violence when you are supporting a child who:

- has a case plan goal of restoration, but there are emerging worries about family violence in the home,
- has a case plan goal of restoration, and the child, their siblings and mother have experienced the trauma of family violence,
- is in care and has experienced the trauma of family violence,
- is living with carers or relatives, and there are worries about family violence in the carer or relative home.

Why do we talk about 'men' and 'women' when it comes to domestic and family violence?

'While domestic and family violence affects both women and men, it is violence perpetrated by men against women and children that makes up the overwhelming majority of domestic and family violence in Australia. Violence against women is a human rights issue.'

About family and domestic violence from the Australian Human Rights Commission

This fact sheet uses the term ‘men’ and ‘women’ because the majority of people you work with who use violence will be men. Their victims will be women and children.

Domestic and family violence also happens in same-sex relationships with the same set of consequences for children.

All victims of violence deserve our belief, dignity and respect.

What are types of domestic and family violence?

Domestic and family violence can be physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, social, financial and spiritual. Domestic and family violence involves a pattern of coercive control, where ongoing abuse or threats of abuse, stop a woman from being free to live the life she chooses.

[Listen to a practitioner explain](#) how this Power and Control wheel describes the way men use physical and sexual violence and other tactics to achieve dominance over women in their life.



Duluth Model <https://www.theduluthmodel.org/wheel-gallery>

Some types of violence and control are specific to sexual or gender identity. These include:

- threats to 'out' a partner,
- pressuring a partner to end transition-related healthcare, or

- pressuring them to begin an unwanted medical transition.

More information and resources on risks for the LGBTQIA+ community are available on the [ACON](#) website.

Key domestic and family violence statistics

Did you know?

- On average, at least 1 woman a week is murdered by a partner or former partner in Australia.
- 1 in 4 Australian women has experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner.
- Of those women who experience violence, more than half have children in their care.
- Domestic and family violence is the single largest driver of homelessness for women and their children and is the greatest risk to the health of women under 45 in Australia.

See the full list of facts, figures and sources at the [Department of Social Services' Our Watch](#) website and the [Australian Government Respect](#) campaign.

Some women are more at risk of being the victims of domestic and family violence than others, including:

- women with disabilities
- pregnant women
- young women
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women
- women from diverse communities.

Watch: [Making them count: Indigenous victims of family violence from the Feed on SBS](#)

Men's violence is a choice

Domestic and family violence is often talked about as being beyond the control of the man. Men may use this to excuse and justify the violence and control they inflict on women.

Most men who use violence already have the skills they need to be non-violent. They use these skills in many other areas of their lives, such as work and in social situations.

Examples of how intentional a man's violence can be include:

- only hitting their partner in places where bruises will not show
- pausing in a tirade of verbal abuse to answer the door or the phone, and resuming it after the interruption
- imposing conditions on attendance at a social event, such as their partner not talking to other men

Along with minimising or denying their violence, men who use violence will often try to make it seem like the violence isn't their fault or only partly their fault. They may also have a very good public image or may present very well to you as a professional.

The man may:

- **Manipulate or obscure his own responsibility** - 'she made me do it' or 'she provoked me'
- **Mutualise the violence** - 'we had an argument and things got physical'
- **Minimise the impact of the violence on the children** - 'they were asleep' or 'they weren't home'
- **Conceal the woman's responses and resistance to his violence** by overriding her feelings and experiences with those of his own
- **Blame or pathologise the woman** - 'she's crazy' or 'I'm very worried about my partner. I don't think she's well, and sometimes she doesn't tell the truth. I'd really like to get her some help'.
- **Blame alcohol and other drugs or external stresses** - 'I was drunk', 'she was drunk', 'we've been under a lot of money pressure at the moment' or 'I've been depressed'

Why is understanding Domestic and Family Violence important?

Domestic and family violence can impact every aspect of a child's life — from how they experience each day, to their self-esteem and their own relationships.

Children are not 'exposed' to domestic and family violence. They experience direct and lasting harm.

A woman's parenting practices, bond and attachment to her children are impacted by family and domestic violence. This effect may continue even once the violence has ended.

Domestic and family violence can lead to other forms of abuse and heighten the risk of childhood death. Keeping mothers safe often keeps children safe.

How do I learn more about domestic and family violence?

Read the fact sheets [What is the Impact of Domestic and Family Violence?](#) and [How Should I Respond to Domestic and Family Violence?](#) and this video about [Family violence: children's safety](#).

For information on trauma informed practice see [What is Trauma Informed Casework?](#)

References

Australian Government Respect Campaign

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