

FAMILY VIOLENCE INFORMATION FOR LIFE GROUP LEADERS

What is Family Violence?

- Family and domestic violence is any violent, threatening, coercive or controlling behaviour that occurs in current or past family, domestic or intimate relationships. This includes not only physical injury but direct or indirect threats, sexual assault, emotional and psychological torment, economic control, damage to property, social isolation and any behaviour which causes a person to live in fear.

- Family violence directly affects one in five Victorian women over the course of their lifetime. It is the leading contributor to preventable death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15 to 44 years.

- The term "family violence" encompasses violence that might occur between family members, such as violence between siblings or across generations, in addition to violence between partners. Use of the term family violence also reflects indigenous communities' preference for the term because it more accurately reflects extended kinship ties and how the impact of violence affects all members of a family.

- While child abuse and family violence are generally considered separately, it is important to acknowledge the inter-relationship between family violence and child abuse. These forms of violence often coexist, with violence being directed towards both women and children. It is also a form of psychological child abuse, if a child hears or witness's violence directed towards their mother or a sibling, even if that child is not a primary victim.

- Family violence is predominantly, but not exclusively, perpetrated by men against women and children. Violence can occur in any kind of relationship including against people who are elderly or disabled. Family violence perpetrated against older people is often called elder abuse, although this term can also include abuse by professional carers.

Source: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/family-violence/what-is-family-violence>

Forms of family violence

Forms/types of FV: Domestic violence is any of the forms of abuse listed below. All types are unacceptable and some are criminal offences.

- Intimidation,
- Verbal abuse,
- Physical abuse,
- Emotional abuse,
- Social abuse,
- Economic abuse,
- Sexual abuse,
- Controlling behaviours,
- Spiritual abuse,
- Stalking,
- Separation violence,
- Spousal/domestic homicide.

Fear is a key element in domestic violence and is often the most powerful way a perpetrator controls his victim. Fear is created by any behaviour which can be used to intimidate and render the victim powerless.

Intimidation: Includes smashing things, destroying affected person's possessions, putting a fist through the wall, handling of guns or other weapons, using intimidating body language (angry looks, raised voice), hostile questioning of the affected person or reckless driving of vehicle with the affected person in the car. It may also include harassing the affected person at her workplace either by making persistent phone calls or sending text messages or emails, following her to and from work or loitering near her workplace

Verbal abuse: Using words as a weapon to cause significant damage. This may include screaming, shouting, put-downs, name-calling, swearing, using sarcasm or ridiculing her for her religious beliefs or ethnic background. Verbal abuse may be a precursor to physical violence.

Physical abuse: Behaviour such as pushing, shoving, hitting, slapping, attempted strangulation, hair-pulling, punching or restraining her in any way (physical injuries are often directed at parts of the body that other people will not see, and may or may not involve the use of weapons and harming pets. It could also be threats to destroy or actually destroying her prized possessions or causing damage to property. It can range from a lack of consideration for her physical comfort to causing permanent injury or even death. It could include not letting her sleep, eat, or take her medication.

Emotional Abuse: Behaviour that deliberately undermines her confidence leading her to believe she is stupid or that she is 'a bad mother' or useless or even to believe she is going crazy or is insane. This type of abuse humiliates, degrades and demeans the affected person. The perpetrator may make threats to harm the affected person, her friends or family members or to take her children or to commit suicide. The perpetrator may use silence and withdrawal as a means to make her comply with demands. Expressing extreme jealousy.

Social abuse: This involves isolating the affected person from her social networks and supports either by preventing her from having contact with her family or friends or by verbally or physically abusing her in public or in front of others. It may involve continually putting friends and family down so she is slowly disconnected from her support network. It involves controlling her life; not letting her have a life outside the home (e.g. not allowing her to visit the doctor alone or keeping her from people who support her and isolating her from her community and family.)

Economic/ financial abuse:	The perpetrator takes full control of all the finances, spending and decisions about money so the affected person is financially dependent on her partner. Also denying her access to money, including her own, and forcing her and her children to live on inadequate resources and demanding she accounts for every cent spent. It can include-forcing her to sign for loans or contracts; questioning her about purchases she made or where she spent her money; only giving her money for purchases he agrees to or requiring receipts or proof of purchases for items; using joint finances for personal use against her wishes or without her knowledge; incurring debts which she is also responsible for; incurring fines in her name – including speeding, toll roads, parking fines and so forth and not allowing her to work so she cannot have an income. This type of abuse is often a contributing factor for women becoming 'trapped' in violent relationships.
Sexual abuse:	Any unwanted sexual behaviours. This may include forced sexual contact, rape, forcing her to perform sexual acts that cause pain or humiliation, forcing her to have sex with others or causing injury to her sexual organs. Making her wear clothes she is not comfortable with. Making her watch sexual acts she does not want to – e.g. other people having intercourse or engaging in other sexual acts, forcing her to watch or view pornography (either with the perpetrator or with other people).
Controlling behaviours:	Dictating what she does, who she sees and talks to, where she goes, keeping her from making any friends or from talking to her family or having any money of her own. This can include preventing her from going to work, not allowing her to express her own feelings or thoughts or to make decisions for herself and not allowing her any privacy or forcing her to go without food or water.
Spiritual abuse:	Ridiculing or putting down her beliefs and culture, preventing her from belonging to or taking part in a group that is important to her spiritual beliefs or practising her religion.
Stalking:	Sometimes the affected person is stalked by the perpetrator either before or after separation. Stalking includes loitering around places she is known to frequent, watching her, following her, making persistent telephone calls and sending mail including unwanted love letters, cards and gifts although the relationship has ended. Stalking is a criminal offence. Under the stalking legislation more than one type of behaviour has to occur or the same type of behaviour has to occur on more than one occasion.
Separation violence:	Often after the relationship has ended violence may continue. This can be a very dangerous time for the victim because the perpetrator may perceive a loss of control over the victim and may become more unpredictable. During and after separation is often a time when violence will escalate leaving the victim more unsafe than previously.
Spousal/domestic homicide:	The victim and/or her children are killed by the intimate partner as a result of domestic violence.

Source: <http://www.domesticviolence.com.au/pages/forms-of-abuse.php>

Factors impacting on the likelihood and severity of family violence

Pregnancy/new birth*	Family violence often commences or intensifies during pregnancy and is associated with increased rates of miscarriage, low birth weight, premature birth, foetal injury and foetal death. Family violence during pregnancy is regarded as a significant indicator of future harm to the woman and her child.
Depression/mental health issue	Victims with a mental illness may be more vulnerable to family violence.
Drug and alcohol misuse	Drug and/or alcohol misuse/ abuse Victims may use alcohol or other drugs to cope with the physical, emotional or psychological effects of family violence; this can lead to increased vulnerability.
Has ever verbalised or had suicidal ideas or tried to commit suicide	Suicidal thoughts or attempts indicate that the victim is extremely vulnerable and the situation has become critical.
Isolation	A victim is more vulnerable if she is isolated from family, friends and other social networks. Isolation also increases the likelihood of violence and is not simply geographical. Other examples of isolation include systemic factors that limit social interaction or support and/or the perpetrator not allowing the victim to have social interaction.
Use of weapon in most recent event*	Use of a weapon indicates a high level of risk because previous behaviour is a likely predictor of future behaviour. A weapon is defined as any tool used by the perpetrator, that could injure, kill or destroy property.
Access to weapons*	Perpetrators who have access to weapons, particularly guns, are much more likely to seriously injure or kill a victim than perpetrators without access to weapons.
Has ever harmed or threatened to harm victim	Psychological and emotional abuse has been found to be a good predictor of continued abuse, including physical abuse. Previous physical assaults also predict future assaults.
Has ever tried to choke the victim*	Strangulation or choking is a common method used by male perpetrators to kill female victims.
Has ever threatened to kill the victim*	Evidence suggests that a perpetrator's threat to kill a victim is often genuine

* May indicate an increased risk of the victim being killed or almost killed

Has ever harmed or threatened to harm or kill children*	Evidence suggests that where family violence is occurring, there is a likelihood of increased risk of direct abuse of children in the family. Children are adversely affected through experiencing violence directly and by the effects of violence, including hearing and (or) witnessing violence or through living in fear due to a violent environment.
Has ever harmed or threatened to harm or kill other family members	Threats by the perpetrator to hurt or cause actual harm to family members can be a way of controlling the victim through fear.
Has ever harmed or threatened to harm or kill pets or other animals*	A correlation between cruelty to animals and family violence is increasingly being recognised. Because there is a direct link between family violence and pets being abused or killed, abuse or threats of abuse against pets may be used by perpetrators to control family members.
Has ever threatened or tried to commit suicide*	Threats or attempts to commit suicide have been found to be a risk factor for murder–suicide.
Stalking of the victim*	Stalkers are more likely to be violent if they have had an intimate relationship with the victim. Stalking, when coupled with physical assault, is strongly connected to murder or attempted murder. Stalking behaviour and obsessive thinking are highly related behaviours
Sexual assault of the victim (including rape, coerced sexual activity or unwanted sexual touching) *	Men who sexually assault their partners are also more likely to use other forms of violence against them.
Previous or current breach of Intervention Order	Breaching Intervention Order conditions indicates the defendant is not willing to abide by the orders of a court. Such behaviour should be considered a serious indicator of increased risk of future violence.

* *May indicate an increased risk of the victim being killed or almost killed*

Source: *Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework and Practice Guides 1-3*. 2nd Ed. (2012). Victorian Government, Department of Health and Human Services, Melbourne, Victoria.

Important phone numbers for individuals experiencing family violence

1800 RESPECT

- National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service.

Safe Steps, Family Violence Response Service (formerly Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service Victoria)

-9322 355 or 1800 015 188.

- 24 hours, 7 days a week.
- Provides crisis counselling, refuge referral, information and support

Family Violence outreach services

- North- Eaglemont- 9450 4700
- West- Footscray- 9689 9588
- East- Ringwood- 9259 4200
- Southern
 - Frankston 9781 4658
 - Dandenong 9791 6111
 - Narre Warren 9703 0044
 - Pakenham- 5945 3200

Nominated Contact Officers for the reporting of concerns or disclosures of family violence

CLCC Intake and Policy Development manager- Christine D'Souza

- *PH: 03 9871 8905*

The CityLife Community Care Director- Zillah Everett

- *PH: 03 9871 8907*
- *Mobile: 0411 102 595*

The CityLife Church Associate Pastor – Daljit Gill

- *PH: 03 9871 8321*
- *Mobile: 0403 231 130*
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Additional resources

- **Domestic Violence Resource Centre** www.dvrcv.org.au
- **Department of Health and Human Services** www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/family-violence/what-is-family-violence
- **The Lookout** www.thelookout.org.au
- **Domestic Violence Victoria** www.dvvic.org.au
- **Family Violence Protection Act** www.vgso.vic.gov.au/content/family-violence-protection-act-2008
- **Mens Referral Service** www.mrs.org.au