Preventing and responding to domestic and family violence guide

Women with Disabilities Victoria has collaborated with National Disability Services to develop four short films for disability workers on family violence and disability. The films are:

* Preventing and responding to family violence (3.15 minutes)
* Prevention of domestic and family violence (8.45 minutes)
* Early intervention in domestic and family violence (9.22 minutes)
* Responding to domestic and family violence (9.58 minutes).

The purpose of the films is to help disability workers identify and respond to family violence. Research shows that people with disabilities experience higher rates of violence than people without disabilities. Women with disabilities in particular experience very high rates of family and domestic violence. The disability workforce has a vital role to play in preventing, identifying and responding to domestic and family violence. The films model best practice in accessibility. One version has an Auslan interpreter and subtitles. A second version of each film is audio described.

# What is family violence?

Family violence is a violation of human rights. Family violence involves one person using fear and abuse to control another person. Family violence can include threats, physical, sexual, psychological abuse and neglect. It can include forms of abuse that range from subtle to severe. Both women and men experience family violence, however the evidence tells us that most victim survivors are women and most people who use violence are men. Women with disabilities are twice as likely to experience family violence compared to women without disabilities. Family violence can escalate from subtle exploitation of power imbalances to overt forms of abuse. Family violence is preventable.

## To learn more about domestic and family violence and get support

### 1800RESPECT

Phone:1800 737 732

[Online Chat](https://chat.1800respect.org.au/#/welcome)

[Website](https://www.1800respect.org.au/)

[1800 RESPECT Accessibility Information](https://www.1800respect.org.au/accessibility)

[List of safety apps](https://www.1800respect.org.au/help-and-support/safety-apps-for-mobile-phones)

1800RESPECT is the national counselling, referral and information service for anyone affected by abuse, family and domestic violence and sexual assault. 1800RESPECT supports victim survivors and their family and friends as well as frontline workers who may want to debrief or seek a secondary consultation. It operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 1800RESPECT can help you locate domestic and family violence services in your state or territory.

### Men’s Referral Service

Phone:1300 766 491

[Online chat](http://www.ntv.org.au/get-help/live-chat/)

[Website](http://www.ntv.org.au)

The Men’s Referral Service provides advice for workers supporting clients who use violence, and for men who are using controlling behaviour toward a partner or family member.

### DV alert - Domestic and family violence response training

[Website](http://www.dvalert.org.au)

DV-alert is a free, nationally-accredited learning program designed to build the capacity of frontline workers to recognise and respond to domestic and family violence. DV-alert offers a range of face-to-face and e-Learning programs. Face-to-face programs include a general stream and tailored streams: Disability, Indigenous, Multicultural and Settlement. Backfill is provided for eligible workers to attend the two-day, face-to-face program.

### Our right to safety and respect

[Website](http://www.wdv.org.au/our-work/our-work-with-organisations/safeguards)

Our right to safety and respect is a video and video guide developed by and for women with disabilities about violence, abuse, safety and respect. It aims to build their confidence, knowledge and actions to identify and seek support if they experience violence and abuse

### Our Watch

[Website](http://www.ourwatch.org.au)

Our Watch has been established to drive nationwide change in the culture, behaviours and power imbalances that lead to violence against women and their children.

## Preventing and responding to family violence

This film provides an overview of domestic family violence and introduces the three other films. The films use scenarios to assist disability workers to identify, understand, prevent and appropriately respond to domestic family violence.

Research shows people with disabilities experience higher rates of violence than people without disabilities. Women with disabilities experience very high rates of domestic and family violence.

## Prevention of domestic and family violence

This film focuses on prevention of violence against women and people with disabilities. Prevention of violence means doing things to change the causes of domestic and family violence.

### More about prevention

Family violence is preventable. To prevent violence, we need to understand its causes. The causes are also called ‘drivers’. The drivers of domestic and family violence include beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that make it possible and acceptable for someone to use violence.

Drivers of violence against people with disabilities include negative attitudes toward disability, and control of decision-making by people without disabilities.

Prevention of domestic and family violence is about doing things to change the drivers of violence - like challenging negative beliefs about people with disabilities and sexist attitudes and behaviours and increasing education. It’s about changing our culture and changing society, so we can help stop family violence before it starts.

### Points for reflection

What positive examples of prevention did you see in the film? What did people do to:

* support respectful relationships?
* support financial independence and decision-making?
* provide access to appropriate education?
* speak up and against disrespectful language and actions?

Have you seen anything similar to these examples of prevention in your own work?

## Early Intervention in domestic and family violence

This video focuses on intervention in response to family violence early warning signs. Early intervention aims to ‘change the course’ for people at higher risk of experiencing violence.

### About early intervention

* It’s important to understand what family violence is so you can recognise early warning signs and take action.
* Warning signs can include subtle or repeated patterns of control or coercion.
* Loss of power and control increases the risk of family violence. It can be hard for people with disabilities to recognise and challenge a pattern of control or abuse if they don’t know their rights and don’t have the power to make their own decisions.
* Early intervention means understanding who is at risk of family violence and doing things to support them to be safe, before violence happens.
* A good example of risk is when someone has a communication board but there is no symbol they can use to report abuse.
* Early intervention can also include educating people about knowing what family violence is, what their rights are, and what they can do if they experience family violence. An example would be making sure people have information about what family violence is and where they can get help.

### Points for reflection

* Did you recognise the early warning signs?
* What sort of supports were suggested by the support workers?
* Have you seen something similar to the scenario in this film?

## Responding to domestic and family violence

This film focuses on how to respond to family violence experienced by people with disabilities.

### About responding to domestic and family violence

* When you are working with someone experiencing family violence, safety is a priority. It is essential to get advice so your actions don’t increase the risk of harm for the person you are supporting.
* Talk to your organisation and make sure you understand your professional and legal obligations.
* An example of responding would be helping a person call a family violence service for support or the police to report the family violence.
* A family violence service can help make a safety plan and provide other support.
* Some people may need to go to a refuge to be safe.
* Supporting someone experiencing family violence can be confronting. It’s important to remember you might need support for yourself to understand and deal with what has happened. Remember you can use phone services like 1800RESPECT to debrief. You can also talk to your manager or use your employee assistance program.

### Points for reflection

* Where can you get advice to support someone experiencing domestic and family violence?
* When is it appropriate for police to be involved?
* How can you support yourself?

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