

Recognising and Responding to Family Violence: Guidance for Professionals

Understanding family violence

Family violence comes in various forms. This includes physical violence, emotional or psychological abuse, coercive or controlling behaviours, financial control, social isolation, threats or intimidation and sexual assault.

Family violence occurs in all types of relationships including between family members and intimate partners.

Family violence is not always disclosed or visible. There are other ways that you may form a suspicion that someone you are working with is experiencing family violence.

What you may notice

People experiencing family violence may:

- Becoming withdrawn, anxious or “on edge”
- Frequently cancel or miss appointments
- Worry about getting home late
- Frequently check their phone or receive many calls/texts during appointments
- Have difficulty concentrating on tasks
- Appear fearful of going home or seeing family members
- Be socially isolated from friends and family
- Minimise concerning behaviour

Children and young people are affected by violence even when it directed at their parent or caregiver.

Taking a trauma-informed approach

Always prioritise the safety of your client and any children in the family.

Support choice and control – allow the person to make their own decisions regarding involvement of police or services where safety permits

Listen without judgement and validate their experience

Go at their pace and don't rush them to tell you all the details of what they are experiencing

Your role and responsibility

If you believe someone you are working with is experiencing family violence, be sure to follow any legal, organisational and professional responsibilities.

Always stay within the scope of your role while prioritising safety for victims and children

Support linkage with appropriate services such as **The Orange Door**: <https://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/support-near-you>. The Orange Door can complete a comprehensive risk assessment for the victim and family. They also provide professional secondary consultation about family violence.

Ensure you take the victim's concerns seriously. Evidence tells us that victims are able to self-assess their own risk

Taking care of yourself

It is important that you seek guidance and support from supervisors or family violence specialists when responding to concerns for family violence. Utilise internal or external professional supports where appropriate to help you unpack your own experiences of responding for family violence risk.

Additional training can support confidence to recognise and respond to family violence. In Victoria, specialist family violence training is provided by SAFE+EQUAL <https://safeandequal.org.au/> including foundations of family violence identification and responding.

SECASA offers customised training suited to your workplace – contact Secasa_Training@MonashHealth.org