

Family violence and abusive behaviours

Information for supported residential services (SRS)

May 2016

Defining family violence

Family violence is a pattern of abusive behaviour where a family member or someone 'like' a family member seeks to control and dominate another person.

The *Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)* defines 'family violence' as 'behaviour that is physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically or economically abusive; threatening or coercive; or in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes them to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person.'

Family violence and abusive behaviours in SRS

Violence and abusive behaviours can occur in shared living environments, including in SRS.

In an SRS, family violence or abuse can happen between:

- residents who are in a relationship
- a resident and a friend (who may be another resident)
- a resident and a family member
- a resident and someone else who lives outside the SRS.

Examples

Some examples of family violence and abusive behaviours include:

- stopping a resident from seeing their friends or family
- controlling a resident's access to money
- damaging property
- verbally threatening or physically abusing a resident
- stopping a resident from practising their religious beliefs or cultural practices.

Signs

Residents may be vulnerable to abuse and violence because of physical and/or intellectual disability. Staff should be aware of signs that a resident may be experiencing abuse or violence, including if a resident:

- seems nervous, ashamed or evasive
- can't access their money
- describes their partner/friend/family member as controlling or prone to anger
- seems uncomfortable or anxious around their partner/friend/family member.

Identifying and responding to family violence and abusive behaviours

Assess	the situation and make the environment safe for the affected resident(s)
Support	the affected resident(s) by discussing their options with them and asking them how they would like to be supported
Seek consent	from the resident(s) to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform their case manager • Inform the resident's person nominated /guardian as soon as possible
Complete	an incident record
Notify	the department if it is prescribed reportable incident by the end of the next business day

In an **emergency call 000** for police assistance or if emergency medical assistance is required. Police should also be called if a crime has occurred or is suspected of having occurred.

Advise police if the resident(s) has difficulty communicating and organise an Independent Third Person (ITP) by calling **1300 309 337**.

Resources and assistance

Service	Description	Contact
For women		
Safe Steps Family Violence Resource Centre	Provides a 'no cost' service to women including, refuge and accommodation options, outreach services and information and advocacy support.	03 9928 9600 Toll Free 1800 015 188 (regional) <i>(24 hours, 7 days a week)</i>
Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV)	Provides information by phone or website and has a referral book with contact details for family violence services throughout Victoria.	03 9486 9866 www.dvrcv.org.au
For men		
Men's Referral Service	For men who want to stop violence or abusive behaviour towards family members.	03 9428 2899 Free call 1300 766 491 <i>(9am to 9pm, M-F)</i>
For older people		
Seniors Rights Victoria	A free helpline, specialist legal service and advocacy service to provide information, support, advice and education to help prevent elder abuse and safeguard the rights, dignity and independence of older people.	1300 368 821 www.seniorsrights.org.au
For people whose first language is not English		
State-wide Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Domestic Violence Service	Provides information and resources for CALD community members who are dealing with domestic violence or homelessness issues.	www.cald-dv.org.au
General information		
The Lookout	Referral and other information about family violence specifically for workers.	www.thelookout.org.au
Tell someone	Aims at educating people with mild intellectual disabilities and their family and community about family violence.	www.tellsomeone.org.au

