

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HANDBOOK

*For clergy and pastoral workers*



*I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*

*John 10:10*

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This handbook is intended to provide general information only. Readers are encouraged to consult the agencies listed for advice on specific situations.

This handbook is available online via [www.ucwesleyadelaide.org.au](http://www.ucwesleyadelaide.org.au)

May 2010

One of the most difficult things for a survivor of violence to do is to find the courage to tell someone they are being abused.

If you have been chosen as the one to disclose to, there is a reason that this trust has been placed in you, so trust yourself that you are the most appropriate person for the survivor at this time!

This booklet is a 'field manual' of basic information: a reminder to assist you in detection and response. We hope you find it useful in your pastoral role.

We encourage you to seek further training to enhance the skills you already have to deal with pastoral situations where violence is an issue. There are suggestions for further reading listed in the booklet.

While domestic violence occurs across all types of relationships, the majority is male to female violence, so for simplicity of wording this booklet uses "she"/ "the women" to refer to the survivor of violence, and "he"/ "the man" to refer to the perpetrator.

However, the principles apply regardless of gender, so are relevant to intimate relationships where violence is female to male, male to male, or female to female.

We believe some of the sensitivity of this topic is because it touches us so closely. As we read about or deal with domestic violence, most of us recall times when we have been victimised, or even when we have been abusive.

If you can use the pain to motivate your compassion and action, rather than allowing it to disempower you, you will be helping to create a safer society for all people.

*Most Rev Philip Wilson DD JCL D.Lit*

Chairperson

Heads of Christian Churches of South Australia

*Helen Lockwood and Rev Peter McDonald*

Project Co-ordinators

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*Emergency numbers*      Inside back cover

# INTRODUCTION TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## *A Story of Hope*

*The day my life changed...*

*'Four years ago I left a relationship of domestic violence and abuse.*

*During the 10-year marriage I experienced many forms of violence and abuse such as physical assault, property damage, emotional and verbal abuse.*

*I kept the secret for many years until it became unbearable and I knew I was faced with making a decision to leave the marriage for the sake of my two children.*

*I spoke with my pastor a few times. I felt stuck, afraid and guilty. I believed my marriage would be forever.*

*The turning point for me, which gave me the freedom to think about my marriage differently, was when the Pastor talked with me about the violence. He said that the violence was my husband's responsibility and that he chooses to behave and think this way.*

*The Pastor said that no matter what I said or did I was not the cause of him using violence and abuse. After a few more chats I felt strong enough and supported to leave with the children.*

*I will never forget the chats with the Pastor that helped me get stronger and understand what was happening; especially that one day he told me it was not my fault.*

# Introduction

During your ministry it is likely that you will be approached by somebody who is experiencing domestic violence. Domestic violence and abuse are issues that affect many people and occur both in Church communities and in the wider community.

This handbook is an introduction to increase your understanding and to support you in responding to individuals and families who are experiencing domestic violence and abuse. We encourage you also to engage with the resources offered by domestic violence services.

Domestic violence and abuse have devastating long-term impacts on the lives of women and children, and the fallout extends beyond those who are directly affected, into families, congregations and the wider community.

Domestic violence is a social, criminal, human rights, spiritual, child protection, physical health, mental health and housing issue. Domestic violence harms families across generations and communities and reinforces other violence throughout societies (United Nations, 2006).

In 2009 VicHealth advised that domestic violence...

[...IS THE LEADING CONTRIBUTOR TO DEATH, DISABILITY AND ILLNESS IN VICTORIAN WOMEN AGED 15 TO 44, BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR MORE OF THE DISEASE BURDEN THAN MANY WELL-KNOWN PREVENTABLE RISK FACTORS SUCH AS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, SMOKING AND OBESITY.](#)

Domestic violence exists in Church communities, and for many families the Church can be a first point of call for noticing and responding to domestic violence situations.

Women often have a greater connection with their Church than with domestic violence services, and for many women the support they receive from their Church is integral to their healing.

For these reasons it is crucial that Churches are equipped with knowledge and training specifically in domestic violence so they are able to respond in ways that promote the safety of women and children.

The gospel message invites the nurturing of respectful relationships between men, women and children. Living respectfully includes feeling safe. When the handbook refers to 'safe' or 'safety', it is important to understand that this means to be physically, emotionally and spiritually safe and free from fear of threats, intimidation and injury.

Similarly, when the handbook refers to domestic violence this must be understood as extending much further than only physical abuse, as domestic violence includes many forms of abuse.

It must also be recognised that the overwhelming majority of abuse is done by men against their female partners. For this reason the handbook deliberately focuses on the safety of women and children and refers to 'the woman' or 'women' as those experiencing violence and abuse and the 'man' or 'men' as those who use violence and abuse.

We hope this resource will be a helpful tool as you offer pastoral care in your community.

# What is domestic violence?

## Power and control

Domestic violence is a pattern of controlling and abusive behaviour used by an intimate partner during a relationship or after separation.

Domestic violence and abuse take many forms. Some are clearly violent, and others are more difficult to recognise. Whatever form domestic violence takes, fear, control and power are always components.

Domestic violence occurs in all walks of life, regardless of socio-economic status, race, age, religion, culture and sexual orientation. The term domestic violence also refers to intimate partner homicide.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A CRIME,  
AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN  
AND CHILDREN IS A VIOLATION  
OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS. IT IS  
A GENDER ISSUE WITH ROOTS  
IN UNEQUAL POWER RELATIONS  
BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN.

In Australia alone, 2.56 million women (1 in 3) have experienced physical violence since the age of 15 (ABS, 2005).

Domestic violence directly affects women, children, family, friends and co-workers, and there are also far-reaching financial, social and health-related consequences (ABS, 2005).

Women who experience domestic violence and abuse suffer a range of health problems, and as such their ability to participate in daily life is diminished. Similarly, whether or not children are subjected to or witness domestic violence and abuse, there are damaging impacts on the development of children and young people.

## Are only women subjected to domestic violence?

According to current statistics, 87 per cent of all domestic violence involves men being abusive towards their female partners. The remaining 13 per cent includes domestic violence in gay and lesbian relationships (10 per cent) and women being violent toward their male partners (3 per cent).



# Forms of domestic violence

## *Does domestic violence always involve physical violence?*

No. Domestic violence may involve any type of abusive behaviour, each having an emotional and psychological impact on the person experiencing the abuse and their children.

These impacts can include feelings of fear, shame, confusion, helplessness, hopelessness, guilt, anger, depression, anxiety, anger, a sense of entrapment, low self-esteem, loneliness and a sense of failure.

## *Physical violence*

### Physical Abuse

Using any physical force or object against a woman whether it leaves a mark or not. This can include pushing, holding, shoving, shaking, twisting limbs, restraining, punching, preventing sleep, slapping or drugging.

### Object Damage

Throwing crockery, breaking furniture or household goods, damaging doors or walls, smashing windows, destroying treasured possessions.

### Pet Abuse

Hitting, kicking, punching, throwing, choking, neglecting, sexually abusing, starving, killing or threatening to kill pets.

## *Psychological abuse*

### Threats, Intimidation and "Mind Games"

Making threats, stalking, or looking, acting or speaking in ways which are frightening or intimidating. This can include yelling, screaming, threatening punishment, ignoring her and acting like she is invisible, driving dangerously with her or the children in the car, threatening suicide or to hurt or kill her, the children, family or friends.

### Put-downs

Using put-downs regarding a woman's body shape, grooming, intelligence, mothering ability, home management skills etc. Telling her or making her think she is crazy, stupid, useless, worthless, and good for nothing. This can be in front of others or when she is alone.

### Maternal Alienation

Deliberately trying to destroy the relationship between children and their mother. This can include telling the children cruel, abusive and angry things about the mother when she is not there or sometimes when she is, or telling the children that the mother is incompetent, stupid or a bad parent.

## *Sexual abuse*

### Sexual Abuse

Forcing or coercing the woman into sexual acts against her will, physically attacking the sexual parts of her body, demanding sex, raping her, using bondage and/or objects against her will, treating her as a sexual object and not as a person.

## *Social abuse*

### Isolation

Constantly criticising and being suspicious of her family and friends. Using tactics that make friends and family feel uncomfortable about visiting or spending time with the woman. Not allowing her to have her own friends and keeping her isolated from social contact other than with him.

Moving the family to an isolated area away from family and friends. Social isolation can also include restricting the use of a car, keeping her reliant on him for transport and not letting her use the phone or computer.

## Forms of domestic violence cont.

Smothering, controlling and monitoring  
Controlling what she does, who she talks to and where she goes. Keeping in contact with her to “see how she’s going” when it is really to check up on what she is doing. Insisting on doing everything together so that she has no life of her own and insisting on knowing her whereabouts at all times.

### Put-downs

Making hurtful, humiliating or embarrassing remarks about her in front of company, or blatant verbal attacks on her in public.

### Economic abuse

#### Financial Dependence

Requiring her to ask him for money all the time, keeping her ignorant of available funds, excluding her from financial decisions, providing inadequate funds for household expenses, threatening or coercing her to sign legally binding financial contracts, opposing her getting or keeping a job, making her account for every dollar spent. Deliberately spending bill money to sabotage her efforts to keep on top of the household expenses. Putting accounts in her name. Urging her to abuse the system such as making false claims to Centrelink.

#### Gambling

Gambling the family income, selling or pawning things to pay debts, using credit cards to gamble, emptying the bank account, putting the family at financial risk.

### Legal abuse

#### Threatening Legal Outcomes

Threatening her with court or a legal body, telling her she is mad and could be committed, telling her she has committed crimes which will send her to jail,

threatening to give evidence against her and threatening that she will lose her children.

#### Forcing Legal Involvement

Using the Family Court against her. This can include lying about her mothering, calling her back to court over and over again, breaking legal agreements and blaming her.

### Spiritual abuse

Using scripture, ideas about God, pastoral “care” and the Church to justify violence and further control and abuse. These include denying access to faith communities, criticising spiritual beliefs, selective use of scripture to claim God’s blessing on violence, and warning of damnation if she leaves the relationship

### Male power abuse

#### Privilege

He thinks he is entitled to more: decisions, money and rights. He acts like “the master of the house” and treats other family members like servants. He makes all the big decisions and demands that she complies.

THE EMOTIONAL EFFECTS OF ALL OF THE ABOVE BEHAVIOURS ARE FEELINGS OF FEAR, SHAME, CONFUSION, HELPLESSNESS, HOPELESSNESS, GUILT, ANGER, DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, ANGER, A SENSE OF ENTRAPMENT, LOW SELF-ESTEEM, LONELINESS AND A SENSE OF FAILURE.

**This is not a relationship issue.  
The issue is his use of violence  
and abuse.**

# Patterns of domestic violence

While every domestic violence situation is unique, there are also many similarities. The information below outlines some of the common patterns in domestic violence situations.

It may help you to identify where domestic violence is occurring, and it also provides useful information for women, by preparing them for what may happen or by showing them that they are not alone.

Few women who find themselves in an abusive relationship knew that the man would become violent and abusive.

**Early in the relationship** all seems fine. He is attentive and charming.

**As commitment develops** he becomes more possessive, jealous, controlling.

**Different forms of abuse may develop:** physical, verbal, sexual, social and economic etc.

**A physical and/or verbal incident of violence occurs.** He believes it is deserved or appropriate and may not name it as abuse.

**It happens again** and again. It usually increases in severity and in frequency.

**The woman realises that something is not right;** however, she may believe she is responsible for her partner's happiness and wellbeing and that she is responsible for the family's stability. The man believes that she "provoked" the behaviour, or that something else is responsible for his behaviour, such as stress, financial pressures or alcohol.

**She may consider telling someone,** but this is difficult because he is charming to others. She doubts her judgement (he tells her she is crazy, too sensitive, etc) and she has kept the secret so long that others might ask why she has not left him, or they might doubt her truthfulness.

## *She considers leaving him, but*

- she believes he and the children should have a relationship so she may not want to split the family
- people may not believe her or believe that the problem is as bad as she says
- he apologises and says that he will never abuse her again
- she may have no money and nowhere to go or fear loneliness and believe that she will not be able to cope on her own
- she may believe he will not be able to manage on his own
- she may still love him, or she may have made a marriage vow or commitment that she feels is binding, despite the violence and abuse
- he may have threatened dire consequences if she leaves
- she may be ostracised from her family, friends and community

**She tries harder** to please him, not to provoke him, to make things the way he wants and to work out what she or the children could do differently.

**The violence and abuse continues** or escalates, in spite of her efforts.

When she has done everything possible, and the violence and abuse continues, she might leave. Or some other incident might bring home the seriousness of the situation and prompt her to leave (e.g. he hits the children, or the police are involved).

## *Once she leaves she may experience*

- guilt from feeling that she has "failed" as a partner and mother
- fear of being alone

## *Patterns of domestic violence* cont.

- humiliation before family and friends or her Church, who do not believe her or who blame her for the marriage/relationship break-up.

### *The man responds to her leaving by using various tactics to regain power and control, such as*

- pursuing her, buying presents, promising holidays, promising that he
- has changed, or by subtle “buy-back”, e.g. telling her he loves her, paying lots of attention and saying she looks nice

And/or

- getting angry about the fact that she is not there
- making the woman feel like his state of wellbeing is determined by her presence or absence. He may not eat, shower, sleep or go to work and may escalate claims of suicide if she does not return
- using the children to manipulate her into returning by telling her the children need them to be together as a family
- recruiting others to work with him/take sides with him
- becoming more violent and abusive.

*She wants to believe his promises.* She is feeling pressure to go home. This may be due to finances, housing or isolation, or pressure from the children and possibly from other family members or her Church.

*If she does not go home* he may escalate his pursuit. He may threaten her or the children with bodily harm or death if they do not return, he may stalk her, watch her every move, he may visit and behave violently, he may threaten to destroy the house and

belongings, he may phone up regularly to check on her.

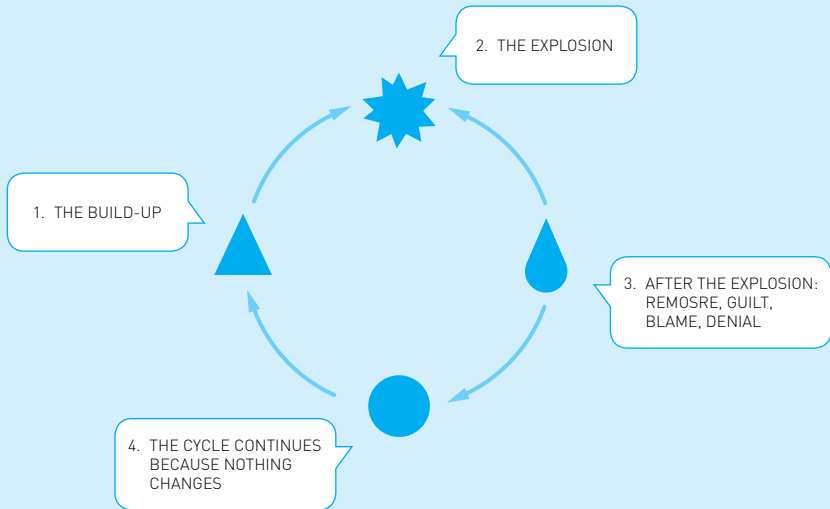
He also may try to extend the time for sorting out property settlement, residency, custody and contact of children and make the separation as difficult as possible, financially, legally and psychologically.

*At this point she may go home.* If she does, friends and family may think it is all sorted out, or criticise her for going back. The pattern starts again.



# The cycle of violence

THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE CAN BE THOUGHT OF AS OCCURRING IN A CYCLE OF SEVERAL PHASES. NOT ALL SITUATIONS FOLLOW THIS SEQUENCE; HOWEVER, IT IS A USEFUL WAY OF UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS HAPPENING IN A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SITUATION.



## 1. Build-Up

The man's behaviour escalates from controlling and abusive to threatening and increasingly violent and abusive. This might happen over days or minutes. He may say he feels his partner provokes him. He may show the build-up outwardly by his moods or actions, or he may be winding himself up inside his head, by his own way of thinking.

## 2. Explosion

This is the most dangerous time. The build-up of tension comes to a head and he "explodes".

The explosion is usually intense. It may take the form of a violent assault on his partner or children and it may involve the use of weapons. He may begin shouting, slamming doors, destroying objects or hurting family pets.

Some men who use violence may claim that they have "lost control". Sometimes drinking is used to excuse or explain the behaviour, but the problem is his, and his beliefs about his rights to control the woman.

### 3. After the explosion

Although men who use violence behave in different ways after the explosion, three typical responses have been identified:

#### Remorse

The man may experience and express remorse, helplessness and guilt. He may believe, and try to persuade his partner, that it will not happen again.

He may make promises, buy gifts, fix things that he has damaged, and do a whole range of things to try to "make up".

He generally does not take responsibility for his actions. He often does these things to alleviate his guilt and feel better about himself.

#### Blame

The man who uses violence and abuse often blames his partner, saying she provoked the abuse because the children were troublesome or finances are bad.

He says that the abuse would not have happened if

- she had been a better partner or mother
- she had not nagged him
- the children had been better behaved
- he was not under so much financial or work pressure.

#### Denial

Some men will deny that the abuse ever happened. Most will probably deny

- responsibility for the abuse - "she imagined it"
- how serious the abuse was - "it was only a push"
- how often the abuse occurred
- how much he hurt his partner and children
- that he had any control over his actions - "I just snapped".

### 4. The cycle continues because nothing changes

There may be a period where things appear calm and seem to have improved. The woman needs to be aware that actually nothing has changed and promises are not followed up with plans and actions to ensure that the man deals with the problem of his violence.

The man is responsible for his violence and abuse, no matter what he may feel.

FOR SOME WOMEN, THE ABUSE GOES ON ALL THE TIME AND THERE IS NO IDENTIFIABLE CYCLE. OR, THE WOMAN MAY NOT CONSTANTLY BE SUBJECTED TO ABUSE; HOWEVER, SHE CONTINUES TO LIVE WITH THE EFFECTS OF THE ABUSE, AND ITS POTENTIAL IS EVER-PRESENT.

# Domestic violence and minority groups

## Gay, lesbian and bi-sexual relationships

Domestic violence occurs in same-sex relationships.

What is different in gay, lesbian and bi-sexual relationships is the social context surrounding the relationship.

In same-sex relationships both partners experience discrimination, rejection and isolation from the mainstream community because of their sexual preference. This acts as a barrier to accessing support.

They may also fear isolation from their own community if they end the relationship, or they may struggle to end a relationship that affirms their sexuality. One partner may use threats to 'out' the other partner to family, friends or work.

## Women with disabilities

Women with disabilities are more at risk of experiencing domestic violence than other women and also more likely to experience sexual violence and to sustain injury.

For these women home can be a vulnerable environment in terms of physical, sexual and psychological violence, whether they reside in their own home, a boarding house or supported accommodation.

These women are vulnerable to violence and abuse from paid and unpaid carers and can have greater difficulty in accessing support services.

## Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander women

Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander women are over-represented in domestic violence statistics and are at far greater risk of hospitalisation and death due to violence.

Many Aboriginal women experience violence combined with issues such as legacies of loss and grief, historic trauma, white privilege, discrimination, poverty, alcohol, drugs, and physical isolation.

Many have also found it difficult to break away from their families when violence affects their lives, due to cultural and traditional laws and beliefs. Leaving can result in alienation from the spiritual home and the family and can mean a lifetime of never belonging; it is literally 'like dying'.

When Aboriginal women approach mainstream services for support they are often fearful that the services will not understand their circumstances or provide culturally appropriate support.

Aboriginal women can also be reluctant to seek support from their own community where there are strong networks but also a possible conflict of interest for potential allies.

['FAMILY VIOLENCE' CAN BE A PREFERRED TERM TO REFER TO VIOLENCE IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES, AS MANY ABORIGINAL PEOPLE BELIEVE IT SUGGESTS THE NEED FOR A HOLISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF VIOLENCE.](#)



### *Migrant women and women from non-English-speaking background (NESB)*

For newly arrived women and women of non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB), the effects of violence and abuse are made worse by the isolation of moving to a new country where they may have no family or support networks or do not know of any domestic violence support services.

Migrant women and women from NESB can face barriers such as language and literacy difficulties, lack of knowledge of Australian laws, racist community attitudes, culturally inappropriate services, physical and cultural isolation if they leave a violent relationship, lack of financial help from the government and changes to immigration or residency status.

## Myths and facts about domestic violence

Myths are commonly held beliefs that are not factual. They give a false picture, and they shift the blame for domestic violence from the man who uses violence and abuse, to the woman who is abused.

Myths are a way of blaming women for the violence that happens to them. Because of this, many women do not tell anyone about the hardship and fear they experience. They do not want to be blamed.

Myths hide the extent of and support the continuation of domestic violence and abuse in our community.

**MYTH:** A woman can easily leave an abusive relationship

**FACT:** There are many factors that make it difficult for a woman to leave. These include:

- there are children who love the perpetrator
- she feels she should not deprive the children of their father
- financial reasons or uncertainty about resources and supports available
- pressure from friends and family to stay
- she feels paralysed by helplessness due to the violence and abuse
- loneliness and uncertainty, fear of change
- the fact that she still loves him and hopes that he will change
- fear of how he would react and what he would do
- stigma about being a single parent
- fear of not being believed
- fear that there is nowhere safe to go or no better option
- believes that she won't be able to cope on her own

- fear that he will follow her and hurt her and the kids.

**MYTH:** Domestic violence does not affect children

**FACT:** Witnessing domestic violence and abuse is traumatic and impacts on children and young people's physical, social, psychological and spiritual development.

Protecting children means ensuring women are safe and inviting men to take responsibility for their use of violence and abuse.

**MYTH:** If a woman is subjected to violence and abuse, she must have done something to deserve it. He would not have done it without a reason.

**FACT:** There are no reasons that can justify a man's use of domestic violence and abuse. No one deserves to be abused. The man may say "you shouldn't have ..." or "if only you hadn't ..." to justify his own behaviour, but using violence is a choice with a clear intention to exert power and control, and it is never appropriate.

**MYTH:** Only physical violence counts as domestic violence

**FACT:** Psychological, social, spiritual abuses etc are as destructive as physical violence. They can make a woman feel worthless, confused and erode her confidence and belief in her ability, skills and sanity.

**MYTH:** Men who use violence are unsuccessful, low achievers and unable to cope with the world.

**FACT:** Many men who use violence are educated, hold professional jobs and are highly successful. Poverty, alcoholism and drugs all add to stress, but violence happens throughout society - rich and poor, all ages, all cultures.

**MYTH:** Regret or remorse on the man's part means he has changed.

**FACT:** Many men feel regret or remorse and make promises after they use violence and abuse against their partner. Guilty feelings, apologies and promises to change are part of the domestic violence cycle and do not signify a man's commitment to accept responsibility for his use of violence and abuse.

**MYTH:** Violence is part of our culture

**FACT:** Domestic violence and abuse against women and children is a crime; it is never acceptable in this country and is a violation of basic human rights.

**MYTH:** The relationship will get better; everyone goes through "rough patches"

**FACT:** Violence and abuse do not go away. If ignored, the abuse often escalates. The man using violence and abuse needs to acknowledge that he has a problem and make specific changes to stop.

**MYTH:** It is because he is under a lot of pressure

**FACT:** The problem is how the man deals with the pressure, not the pressure itself. Pressure is a condition which we all experience and is not an excuse for abuse.

**MYTH:** Domestic violence is private - 'outsiders' should not interfere

**FACT:** Everyone has a right to live in safety and be free from violence and abuse, both inside and outside the home.

**MYTH:** alcohol ABUSE is to blame for domestic violence

**FACT:** Alcohol is often blamed for domestic violence; however, alcohol is an excuse, not a cause. Violence and abuse occurs without alcohol being present, and many people get drunk without becoming violent. Alcohol

lowers inhibitions; however, a person who uses alcohol is still responsible both for their drinking and their behaviour.

**MYTH:** Men who use violence are mentally ill

**FACT:** The majority of men who use violence are not suffering from a mental illness and have normal behaviour outside of their relationship.

Similarly, abuse towards women and children is too widespread to be explained by mental illness. Most men who assault their partners confine their violence to the privacy of their home and direct it toward particular parts of the woman's body so that she will not visibly bruise.

THIS ABILITY TO USE RESTRAINT AND FORETHOUGHT DOES NOT FIT WITH THE EXCUSE OF 'LACK OF CONTROL DUE TO A MENTAL ILLNESS'. WHATEVER THE PERPETRATOR'S MENTAL STATE, THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR USING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE.

# RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



## *You are the first point of contact for a woman experiencing violence and abuse*

It is important that you create a safe, respectful and supportive environment where a woman can trust you with her experience. A woman may feel fear, shame, embarrassment, confusion and guilt when she tells someone that she is living with domestic violence and abuse. She risks being judged, blamed or discounted.

It is unlikely that you will be told in a direct manner that a woman is being abused. She may refer to relationship problems, her partner being angry with her, or present with "spiritual" problems around forgiveness or commitment.

Pick up the small clues, and ask the direct question: "How does he behave when he is angry?" "Do you become frightened?" "Are you worried about your safety or that of the children?" "Does this happen often?"

### ASKING THE QUESTIONS MAY BE THE BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE THAT IS SAFE AND FREE FROM VIOLENCE AND ABUSE FOR THE WOMAN AND HER CHILDREN.

A woman may approach you at very different stages of thinking and/or planning about her relationship. She may be weighing up the risks for the children and herself, and the implications for her partner, when considering whether to leave or remain.

Conversations with women who have experienced violence require a range of responses; these are briefly outlined below.

#### *Believe her!*

One of her fears is that she will not be believed, particularly when her partner is well respected. She is likely to be minimising

what is happening rather than exaggerating and may not yet have the understanding that she is living with domestic violence. To believe her is to begin a process of empowering her. It is particularly important to take her assessment of the situation seriously and never downplay her experience.

Her partner will usually have broken her confidence and self-esteem, and she may feel stupid or responsible for the abuse. Do not blame or judge her; criticism is already a part of the abusive relationship, so do not contribute to it further.

#### *Listen to her!*

That means be patient and allow her to share with you the pain that has probably been going on for many years. In listening, find out what it is that she is asking of you.

Validate her feelings and her responses and show compassion for her. Do not spiritualise the situation or the process. You can ask simple questions for clarification, but the less said the better.

#### *Unequivocally challenge the violence*

Domestic violence and abuse cannot be excused or justified. Assure the woman that she does not deserve the abuse, and that the violence is not her fault. 'No one deserves to be abused' 'I do not believe God wants you to live in fear.'

It is not her responsibility to stop him being violent, nor is she responsible for his choice to use violence. She needs to know she can trust you, so reassure her that confidentiality will be maintained, but also explain its limitations. Let her know she has your continuing support.

# You are the first point of contact for a woman who is experiencing violence and abuse cont.

## Confront the seriousness of the situation

Raise her awareness about the abuse. 'Are you afraid to go home tonight?' 'I'm concerned for your safety'. Encourage consideration for the wellbeing and safety of her, and her children, as the first priority: "I'm afraid for the safety of your children".

Emphasise that violence towards women usually gets worse, and highlight the effects of domestic violence on children – but do so in a way that will ensure that she does not feel blamed for the effects. While sharing your concerns, acknowledge her strength, resilience and wisdom.

## Explore options

Be guided by what she wants, not by what you think she needs. She is the expert on her life as she is the only one who knows the full circumstances of her situation.

You can demonstrate through your questions and responses that you not only believe that she is in a precarious position, but that she has the strength, resourcefulness and ability to make her own decisions.

## Safety

Have a conversation about safety planning and explore other possible options that would keep her and her children safe.

Offer her information about domestic violence services and encourage or support her to access them if necessary.

## Respect her decisions

Whether she chooses to stay or leave the abusive relationship, respect her decisions. She needs your support. She may surprise you and return to the relationship, and sometimes she will leave and return many

times before making a complete break or before arranging a safe reconciliation. Offer your continuing support in whatever decision she makes.

## Referrals

Make appropriate referrals, depending on her needs and decisions.

A referral on her behalf (with her permission) may include referral for individual counselling, a support group, shelter or other accommodation, legal and financial assistance or counselling and support for children.

If she is considering marriage/relationship counselling, have a discussion with her about what evidence of change the man has demonstrated.

UNTIL HE STOPS HIS USE OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE, NO OTHER RELATIONSHIP ISSUES CAN BE ADDRESSED.

## Ongoing Support

Offer genuine ongoing support alongside an appropriate domestic violence service.

Maintain contact in a way that does not place her at increased risk, see how she is going, and offer further information.

Ensure you offer support, whether or not separation occurs.

## *What not to do*

*Do not ask ‘What did you do or say to provoke him?’*

The man cannot blame the woman for his use of violence.

*Do not suggest she try to be a better partner and not make him angry.*

Remember the issue is the man's choice to use violence and abuse.

*Do not ask ‘Why do you stay?’*

Leaving a violent and abusive situation is dangerous and a very difficult decision to make, emotionally and practically.

*Do not advise the woman to return to a violent relationship.*

The safety of women and children must always take priority.

*Do not ask for proof of the violence.*

This is disempowering for the woman and she will likely feel that you do not believe her or support her.

*Do not attempt to mediate a couple or challenge the abusive partner.*

This can place you and the woman at serious risk.

## *When she plans to leave*

Women make decisions about staying or leaving relationships in their own time. Some women have practice runs at leaving the relationship.

Every time this happens she is gathering information and getting clearer and stronger in making decisions about the relationship.

We know that after separation is a particularly high-risk time for women and children. A safety plan is essential in identifying risks to women and children and informing decision-making.

Women know the cycle of violence and abuse they are living in best. You can add to the woman's knowledge to enhance her safety plan by exploring options such as:

- Storing identification, birth certificate, marriage certificate, passport, driver's licence, relevant paperwork relating to the house, car, other property and investments, recent bank statements, Medicare card, credit cards, personal telephone directory, own and children's medication and significant photographs and treasures of own and children, in a safe place at home or elsewhere
  - Seeking alternative accommodation through a domestic violence service or family and friends
  - Contacting a domestic violence service to help her become financially independent, explore housing options and/or deal with Family Court or property-related matters, or access the criminal justice system (so she can e.g. proceed with charges, or seek a restraining order). Domestic violence agencies can also assist with arranging counselling, and accessing women's support groups and services for children.
- Providing a list of available resources. She may take this with her or leave it with you as part of her safety planning.
  - Accessing an interpreter to assist the woman and children. It is preferable to do so rather than asking the children or other family members to assist with interpretation.

As previously stated, domestic violence affects women from all walks of life. It is important that you have good knowledge of the domestic violence services in your local area.

We encourage you to build strong working relationships with your local domestic violence service.

[THE MORE KNOWLEDGE YOU HAVE AND THE BETTER RELATIONSHIPS YOU BUILD WITH THESE SERVICES, THE MORE COMFORTABLE YOU WILL FEEL IN SUPPORTING WOMEN AND CHILDREN WHO EXPERIENCE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, AND MEN WHO WANT TO ADDRESS THEIR USE OF VIOLENCE.](#)



## Effects on children and young people

Living in a home where there is domestic violence and abuse has damaging and abusive impacts on children. Whether or not children and young people are physically abused themselves, domestic violence impacts on their psychological, social, behavioural, educational, emotional, spiritual, cognitive and physical development.

### WITNESSING EPISODES OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE FROM ONE PARENT TOWARD THE OTHER CAN AFFECT CHILDREN AS MUCH AS IF THEY WERE EXPERIENCING THE ABUSE THEMSELVES.

*Some effects on children who live with violence and abuse are:*

- Feelings of responsibility for the violence, guilt, anger, fear, anxiety, depression, grief, shame, powerlessness, confusion, despair, neglect, unworthiness, low self-esteem, isolation, helplessness and distrust.
- Stress-related conditions, such as headache or stomach pain, sleeping and eating difficulties and frequent illness.
- Behavioural problems such as aggression, acting out, running away, lack of concentration, poor school performance, difficulty making friends, misuse of drugs and alcohol, self-harming, risk-taking behaviour, cruelty to animals or bullying.
- Loss of a sense of personal safety. When children live with fear, trust is betrayed, and this may impact on the way they view themselves in the world and their ability to develop relationships with others. Their vulnerability may be increased as they are

unable to make informed decisions about entering relationships, or they may think that living with violence and abuse is an acceptable way of having relationships with others.

- Developmental delay or regression into a certain developmental stage. For example, a child may have been able to feed themselves previously, but they no longer can, as trauma has impacted on development. This is often because children and young people are distracted by what is occurring in their lives. Children and young people can also develop speech difficulties, such as stuttering.

### *Women and pregnancy*

Many women are subject to domestic violence and abuse while they are pregnant. Sometimes this is the first time they experience an incident of violence and abuse from their partner. He may display more controlling behaviours during the woman's pregnancy or after childbirth.

These may include making decisions about how she should parent, such as whether she should breastfeed.

Most women aim to create a safe haven and a secure base for their children to grow and develop. When there is domestic violence and abuse, this is often compromised.

Highly stressful domestic violence experiences over a period of time can impact on the cognitive, emotional and physical development of an infant. Babies are highly sensitive to their surroundings, even before birth, as they can hear what is happening and feel the aftermath. Babies are often in their mother's arms when a domestic violence incident occurs. This is a traumatic experience for the infant and the mother.

# Responding to children and young people

You are in a privileged position when conversing with a child or young person about their experiences of domestic violence and abuse. Children will often have allegiances to both parents.

However, there are times when some children, because of coercion and tactics of maternal alienation, may not be able to name that they are fearful of their father.

Similarly, children can take the stress of this situation out on their mother, as they know it is safe to do so, as their mother cares for them. Below are some things to remember when responding to children who experience domestic violence.

- Tell them that the violence is not okay and it is not their fault.
- Give them permission to explore their feelings and thoughts and the confusion that they may be experiencing.
- Acknowledge their feelings and confusion.
- Listen to their experience and their understanding of what is happening in their world.
- Provide a safe space to talk about their fears and worries.
- Give them time to assess if you are a trustworthy person to speak with, and inform them about confidentiality and its limits, in a way that they can understand.
- Let them know that domestic violence occurs in many families.
- Explore how fearful they are; this then informs what actions you can take. For example, ask "What happens when ...?"
- Develop a safety plan. How can the children be safer?
- A referral to a counselling or support service may be required. Remember

that safety needs to be prioritised, so precautions must be considered to make sure that children are not put into riskier situations.

- Find out who else they trust and who could be approached for support.
- Social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy and a sense of purpose and future are attributes that can assist in a child's recovery.

[REMEMBER, IF YOU ARE A MANDATED NOTIFIER YOU HAVE A LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY TO REPORT THAT A CHILD IS IN DANGER TO THE CHILD ABUSE REPORT LINE. THIS INCLUDES CHILDREN WITNESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE.](#)



## Responding to a man who is violent and abusive

*The first priority in your response to a man who has used violence is the safety of his partner/former partner and/or children.*

Some people's first reaction to hearing about women and children being subjected to violence and abuse is to feel compelled to confront the man.

However, to confront the man may endanger the woman and her children and also result in her being cut off from potential support networks.

For the women and children's safety it is important that all information shared by them be kept absolutely confidential,<sup>1</sup> and that you find out from the victim if/how/when it is safe for her to be contacted by you.

If a man who has used violence towards his partner and/or children approaches you he may deny, minimise, justify or blame others/ other things for his use of violence, or he may claim not to remember using violence.

When listening to men it is important to keep in mind that there is often a lot not being said. Men often talk about their use of violence without naming the behaviour for what it is: violence.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IS ANY ACTION THAT RESULTS IN WOMEN AND CHILDREN BEING PHYSICALLY INJURED, FEELING SCARED OR INTIMIDATED AND FEELING LIMITED IN WHAT THEY CAN DO OR SAY IN ORDER TO FEEL SAFE.

*Violence and abuse is a choice.*

Some men may talk about "losing it" or "snapping", and may locate responsibility for their choice to use violence and abuse outside of themselves; they may infer that they had no control over their actions.

Other men talk about their use of violence and abuse towards their partner and children as being a "communication problem", a "heated argument" or "relationship difficulties".

These explanations minimise the violent and abusive behaviours of the man and make invisible the experiences of women and children, while suggesting that there is a shared responsibility for the man's use of violence and abuse.

Other men talk about feelings of provocation - "she pushed my buttons" - which again makes women and children responsible for ensuring their own safety in the presence of the man.

Some men may talk about their use of violence and abuse as being a "once off" or "not like me", but instead try to search for an inherent problem to explain their behaviour and thus avoid taking responsibility.

Other men may blame alcohol consumption, loss of employment, financial difficulties, mental health issues or other factors.

However, it has been well established that these issues do not "cause" men to use violence and abuse; men can make clear decisions not to use violence and abuse, regardless of what other issues are impacting on their lives.

<sup>1</sup> Unless disclosure warrants a mandatory notification to the Child Abuse Report Line

## *The problem is the man's use of violence and abuse.*

Men may talk about their belief that they have an "anger" problem, and say they want to access "anger management" courses to stop their use of violence and abuse. But anger is not an action - it is an emotion, which all people experience. What is important is how a man chooses to act when feeling angry.

Some choose to behave respectfully, while others choose to use violence and abuse. For this reason "anger management" is not seen as appropriate intervention when the problem is violence and abuse.

It is important to note that violence and abuse can occur without a man necessarily feeling angry. Men's use of violence and abuse towards women and children is understood in the context of an abuse of power, where men use violence and abuse as a tactic to gain or maintain power and control over their partner and children.

VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IS A CHOICE AND NOT THE RESULT OF A "LOSS OF CONTROL"; RATHER, IT IS A DELIBERATE USE OF POWER AND CONTROL. WHEN MEN ARE BEING COMPLETELY HONEST WITH THEMSELVES THEY OFTEN TALK ABOUT HAVING USED VIOLENCE TO GET WHAT THEY WANTED AT THE TIME.

You may be able to ask questions, which invite the man to take responsibility for his use of violence and abuse and accept a

referral for a domestic violence intervention program. For example:

- "What are your hopes for your relationships with your partner and children?"
- "Have there been times you've handled yourself in ways that don't fit with your hopes?"
- "What's it like to face that?"
- "What sorts of things have you done?"
- "What would it take to name these actions for what they are [violence]?"
- "What might it mean if you were willing to address your use of violence and make a commitment to more respectful ways of being with your family?"

Throughout your conversations with the man it is important that you keep your focus on him and his behaviour and not get caught up in talking about what others could have done differently at a time when he used violence.

Regardless of what others were doing at the time, there is no excuse for the man's use of violence and abuse.

## *The responsibility of the man is to address his use of violence and abuse.*

It is not the responsibility of women and children to stay with him to support him in this. The man is the only one who can make a commitment to choosing safe and more respectful ways of being with his partner and/or children.

If a man is not committed to handling himself in ways that are safe for his family, then he may need to consider finding alternative accommodation options to ensure their safety.

## *Responding to a man who is violent and abusive* cont.

If the man's partner has left the relationship, and you are asked for help to "get her back" or for information about her whereabouts, be clear that you will not give that information.

Instead, offer him assistance in connecting with a service to address his use of violence and abuse and make a commitment to alternative ways of being that prioritise the safety of his partner and children.

*It is important that the man is invited to consider the impact his use of violence and abuse may have had on his partner and children.*

It also may be useful to invite the man to consider what it might mean for his partner and children if he does not address his use of violence and abuse. Violence and abuse have significant impacts for women and children.

It is imperative that the man work towards gaining a greater appreciation of what it's been like for his partner and children to be on the receiving end of his violence and abuse. [\(See pages 19-24 of this booklet for more discussion regarding the impacts for women and children.\)](#)

Women and children who have experienced violence and abuse often talk about the impact of this behaviour on their sense of safety and their ability to trust the man.

Women and children often talk about wanting to see "evidence of change" in a man when he makes a commitment to non-violence. If there is no evidence of change in the way he is choosing to behave, then his commitment is nothing more than words.

Men need to make a commitment to non-violence and continue to find ways – every

single day - of reminding themselves of the importance of prioritising the safety of their partner and children.

*Marriage or couple counselling is not appropriate when violence has occurred.*

While they may have many issues that they need to deal with together, these cannot be addressed until the violence has stopped. Joint counselling is likely to escalate the violence and the danger to women and children.

The immediate goal of intervention is for the woman and her children to be safe and for the man to stop his use of violence and abuse. The long-term future of the relationship can only be considered when the violence has stopped.

*Men can and do make changes and choose alternative ways of being that prioritise the safety of partners and children.*

However, this will not happen by itself. It requires a man to step into a space of taking full responsibility for his use of violence and abuse.

[THIS MEANS STEPPING AWAY FROM EXPLANATIONS OF FEELING PROVOKED, OR THAT HE "LOST CONTROL", AND INTO A SPACE OF ACKNOWLEDGING HIS BEHAVIOUR AS A CHOICE AND MAKING AN ONGOING COMMITMENT NOT TO USE VIOLENCE AND ABUSE.](#)

Without making this ongoing commitment some men can get caught up in making empty promises to change, as a way of winning back their partners and children and as a way of easing their own guilt. The focus must always be on the key issue: his use of violence and abuse.

Acknowledging that there is a problem is the first step towards addressing it. For a man to stop using violence and abuse in his relationships, it is paramount that the man accept that:

- he has used violence and abuse
- he is responsible for his own use of violence and abuse
- he needs to make changes to prioritise the safety of his partner and children and make this an everyday commitment

### *Available services*


There are services available to support men in their commitments to wanting to address their use of violence and abuse - these include individual counselling and group work interventions. It is critical that the services offered to men are guided by the following principles of intervention:

- safety of women and children as priority; men are responsible for their use of violence;
- all intervention is accountable to those women and children who have experienced violence and abuse;
- all intervention is conducted in a context of respect (Colley et al, 1997).

Appropriate assistance is only provided when counsellors and intervention workers have an understanding of domestic violence.

Part of taking responsibility for using violence and abuse involves men taking the initiative in:

- accessing services
- keeping the safety of their partner and children the priority
- stopping their violence/ abuse toward their partner and children
- monitoring their own thinking and behaviour and not expecting others to take on this responsibility
- acknowledging and working towards gaining a better understanding of what it has been like for their partner and children to have been subjected to his use of violence and abuse.

A dark, narrow hallway with a large window at the end. The window is divided into a grid of panes, with a larger pane at the bottom. The light from the window illuminates the hallway, creating a strong contrast with the dark walls and floor. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

*Jesus said to her, "Daughter,  
your faith has made you well;  
go in peace."*

*Luke 8:43-48*



## *Pastorally caring for women traumatised by domestic violence*

*Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith  
has made you well; go in peace."*

*Luke 8:43-48*

### *Pastoral Theology - Jesus stops, turns and sees her*

#### *For reflection....*

As we pray with and ponder on this Gospel story, let us reflect on the pattern of behaviour that seems to be present. How are we to respond to those who are suffering from violence?

The woman is living on the very edge of society – she is 'invisible' or 'untouchable' to those around her. She has been ostracised by the community and she feels diminished and almost defeated by her circumstances. The story tells of both her pain and her hope.

The crowds are surrounding Jesus – pushing in on him, calling on him and jostling for a place alongside him.

Jesus is in the centre of the crowd, feeling himself being pushed in various directions and struggling to move forward. In spite of the pressure around him, he is aware of the presence of the woman: he knows that someone is trying to reach him.

The crowd discourages him and behaves as if to say 'it's your imagination'; 'there's nothing there'; 'ignore it'. Deadlines to meet. Places to go.

But Jesus is not deterred in his response to the woman: he stops, he turns and he sees her.

And in that moment, the woman becomes 'visible' and at peace; her full dignity as a human being has been restored.

There are three pastoral principles which arise from Jesus' encounter with haemorrhaging women: that you make the effort to 1) stop, 2) listen and 3) believe those who come with critical pastoral issues.

The next section provides you with specific advice on how to apply these principles for women experiencing domestic violence.

### *Some major initial observations*

Domestic violence (see page 6) has been described as a pattern of controlling and abusive behaviour used by an intimate partner during a relationship or after separation.

The abuse or violence takes many forms including physical, psychological, sexual, social, economic, legal and spiritual. It is also a misuse of male power.

Consequently, women who have been disempowered are suffering from grief, trauma, a major loss of self-love and a difficulty in relating to the world.

### *The key tasks of a pastoral carer (or Minister) are addressed in the following questions:*

- How can I empower this woman?
- How can I assist this woman to journey towards healing?

It is important to address these two questions in every dimension of the pastoral session.

### *It is important for the pastoral carer (or Minister):*

- To provide a safe environment, a centre of hospitality, in which the woman is free

## *Pastorally caring for women traumatised by domestic violence* cont.

to share her story in whatever way she chooses, and to disclose or not disclose aspects of her experience. (Cf. Jesus at the well with the Samaritan woman)

- To be empathetic, compassionate (i.e. sharing and understanding her pain) and non-judgmental.
- To remember that the woman will not only have difficulty sharing her story with him/her, but also in articulating it aloud to herself.
- After listening intently to the story to assist the woman to embrace her strengths, including the ability to survive and, often, an ability to hope for a better life.
- To assist this woman to understand abuse from the perspective of losses to personhood (which are enormous), and the many ways this abuse has damaged her ability to relate to the world.
- To share insights you've gained from her story, and from grief literature, that assist her to expand her understanding of grief. It is particularly important to help her to begin to discern the difference between love (the nurturing of a person) and control (taking away a person's autonomy and integrity); love and violence; and love (building up self-worth) and intimidation (destruction of self-worth).
- To assist the woman with ways of ensuring her children are safe. Sometimes the partner has used fear and intimidation to turn the children against her, which adds further pain to her grief, and complicates it even more.
- To confront injustice (noting that abuse has physical, psychological, sexual, social, economic, legal and spiritual dimensions, and is a misuse of male power)
- To assist her in understanding that domestic violence is not simply an individual issue or a relational issue but also a social, national and world issue.
- To assist her to slowly journey through her grief and trauma towards healing, by sharing encouragement, empathy, hope and wisdom.
- To remember once again that every dimension of the pastoral session should seek to empower this traumatised woman to journey towards healing and wholeness.
- To decide honestly when to refer the woman to skilled practitioners in this specialised area of counselling.
- Women can receive help by phoning the Domestic Violence Crisis Service on **1300 782 200**. This service can arrange emergency accommodation as well as referrals for outreach support services. (They have the contact details for all the South Australian services, so can refer women/workers to their appropriate local service). Providing options is another way of empowering women traumatised by domestic violence.

[IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT TO HELP THE WOMAN REALISE THAT SHE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR HER PARTNER'S BEHAVIOUR.](#)

- To find ways together for her to strengthen her damaged personhood and explore ways to re-engage with the world.

# The Church and healing

Faith communities play an important role in supporting women who experience domestic violence and abuse. For many women, their trust in God and the support they receive from their faith community is integral to their healing.

THE FAITH COMMUNITY AND ITS LEADERSHIP CAN SUPPORT WOMEN AND CHILDREN BY MAKING IT A PRIORITY TO KEEP THE VICTIM/S IN THE CHURCH – NOT THE PERPETRATOR – IF A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESTRAINING ORDER IS IN PLACE; WOMEN SHOULD FEEL SAFE TO REMAIN IN THE CONGREGATION AND BE CLEAR THAT THEY ARE SUPPORTED BY THE FAITH COMMUNITY TO DO SO.

The Church can also raise awareness about domestic violence through prayerful collaboration, education and interventions. It can do such things as:

- Create a church policy/procedure for handling domestic violence (see [www.ccada.org](http://www.ccada.org) for an example of a church policy).
  - Post literature, posters and brochures around the Church office and bathrooms, etc.
  - Have a list of domestic violence resources in the Church office and give these to clergy and pastoral workers.
  - Organise domestic violence training for pastors, staff, ministry leaders and volunteers on how to effectively address domestic violence issues.
- List the domestic violence helpline phone numbers, in the Church bulletin/newsletters.
  - Speak about domestic violence at ministerial meetings and sessions.
  - Provide teachings on domestic violence and respectful relationships in classes (adult, teen and children's Sunday School, Bible study, small groups and youth groups).
  - Where possible incorporate teachings about respectful relationships in lessons and sermons.

# ONGOING RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



## *Self-care issues for clergy and pastoral workers*

Providing support to women, children and men who experience or use violence can be difficult and frustrating work.

Do not blame yourself or feel responsible for any incident of domestic violence and abuse in your congregation, and remember it is not your job to 'fix' the violence and abuse.

The violence and abuse is the responsibility of the man, and the woman ultimately needs to make choices about her and her children's safety. Your task is to provide support and supply information.

[BECAUSE IT'S NOT YOUR ROLE TO 'FIX' THE SITUATION, DO NOT FEEL PRESSURED TO OFFER A SOLUTION. YOUR ROLE IS TO OFFER GENUINE ONGOING SUPPORT ALONGSIDE AN APPROPRIATE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICE.](#)

You may need support yourself, so take great care in choosing someone with whom to debrief. It is important that the person giving you support understands the basic principles around domestic violence and abuse, and understands that breaches of confidentiality may be life-threatening.

It is very important that you continue to develop your knowledge and skills in responding to domestic violence and abuse by seeking out training when available.

## *Further reading*

The books listed below deal with domestic violence specifically in a church context.

[\*Battered into Submission: The Tragedy of Wife Abuse in the Christian Home\*](#), James Alsdurf and Phyllis Alsdurf, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1998.

[\*Battered Women: From a Theology of Suffering to an Ethic of Empowerment\*](#), Joy Bussert, New York: Division of Mission in North America, Lutheran Church in America, 1986.

[\*Counseling Families Across the Stages of Life: A Handbook for Pastors and Other Helping Professionals\*](#), Andrew Weaver, Linda Revilla and Harold Koenig, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002.

[\*Counseling Women – A Narrative, Pastoral Approach\*](#), Christie Neuger, Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2001.

[\*Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know\*](#), Al Miles and Catherine Kroeger, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000.

[\*Family Violence: The Compassionate Church Responds\*](#), Melissa Miller, Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1994.

[\*Healing Spiritual Abuse: How to Break Free from Bad Church Experiences\*](#), Ken Blue, Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1993.

[\*Healing the Hurting: Giving Hope & Help to Abused Women\*](#), Catherine Kroeger and James Beck (Eds), Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998.

[\*Keeping the Faith: Guidance for Christian Women Facing Abuse\*](#), Marie Fortune, San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995.

[\*No Place for Abuse: Biblical & Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence\*](#), Catherine Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001.

## Further reading cont.

*Render unto God: Economic Vulnerability, Family Violence, and Pastoral Theology*, James Poling; with contributions by Brenda Ruiz and Linda Crockett, St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002.

*Telling the Truth: Preaching About Sexual and Domestic Violence*, John McClure and Nancy Ramsay (Eds), United Church Press, 1999.

*The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse: Recognizing and Escaping Spiritual Manipulation and False Spiritual Authority Within the Church*, David Johnston and Jeff Van Vonderen, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1991.

*The Verbally Abusive Relationship: How to Recognize it and How to Respond*, Patricia Evans, Holbrook, MA: Adams Media Corporation, 2nd edition 2003

*Violence Against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook*, Carol Adams, Marie Fortune and Mary Fortune (Eds), New York: Continuum, 1995.

*Violence in the Family: A Workshop Curriculum for Clergy and Other Helpers*, Marie Fortune, Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2002.

*Weep Not For Your Children: Essays on Religion and Violence*, Lisa Isherwood and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Eds), London: Equinox Publishing, 2008.

## Useful websites

*This handbook can be accessed online via*  
[www.ucwesleyadelaide.org.au](http://www.ucwesleyadelaide.org.au)

### *Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearing House*

National organisation providing high-quality information about domestic and family violence issues and practice.

[www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au](http://www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au)

### *Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse*

Information and advice focussed on the enhancement of family relationships across all ages/stages.

[www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/](http://www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/)

### *Australian Institute of Family Studies*

Statutory authority established to promote the identification and understanding of factors affecting marital and family stability in Australia.

[www.aifs.gov.au](http://www.aifs.gov.au)

### *Christian Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (Florida)*

Information and resources that can guide church development of knowledge, policies, procedures and practices in relation to domestic violence.

[www.ccada.org](http://www.ccada.org)

### *Courts Administration Authority*

SA-produced manual providing up to date information and an inter-agency approach to community responses addressing DV, that involve the criminal justice system

[www.courts.sa.gov.au/courts/magistrates/Documents/CJS\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.courts.sa.gov.au/courts/magistrates/Documents/CJS_Manual.pdf)

## *Legal assistance*

### *Domestic Violence Services SA*

Information about DV services in SA under a single umbrella.

[www.dvsa.asn.au](http://www.dvsa.asn.au)

### *Eddie Gallagher's Website*

Information on violence towards parents and abuse of parents.

[www.eddiegallagher.id.au](http://www.eddiegallagher.id.au)

### *Office for Women*

Information in relation to Aboriginal women, women's safety, women's leadership, and our commitment to ensuring women's voices are heard across the South Australian Government.

[www.officeforwomen.sa.gov.au](http://www.officeforwomen.sa.gov.au)

### *Relationships Australia*

One of Australia's largest community-based organisations providing relationship support to people regardless of age, religion, gender, cultural or economic background.

[www.relationships.com.au](http://www.relationships.com.au)

### *White Ribbon Foundation*

National media campaign as well as education & male leadership programmes.

[www.whiteribbonday.org.au](http://www.whiteribbonday.org.au)

### *Women's Legal Service (SA) Inc.*

Phone: **8221 5553**

Phone: **1800 816 349**

Phone: **1800 670 864** (country callers)

Free legal advice is available by telephone and by appointment, referral, representation, interpreters and a rural women's outreach program.

### *Women's Legal Service- Indigenous Women's Program*

Phone: **1800 685 037**

### *Legal Services Commission Legal Help Line*

Phone: **1300 366 424**

Free legal advice is available by telephone and by appointment.

### *Domestic Violence Worker*

Phone: **8205 0111**

Phone: **1800 816 349** (Country Callers)

### *Women's Information Service*

Phone: **8303 0590**

Free legal advice is available by telephone and by appointment.

Chesser House, 91-97 Grenfell St, Adelaide

[www.wis.sa.gov.au](http://www.wis.sa.gov.au)

### *Family Court of Australia, Adelaide Registry*

Phone: **1300 352 000**

Duty lawyers and solicitors available for free legal advice. No appointment necessary. Family Law Court counsellors available for advice and negotiating disputes about

## *Legal assistance* cont.

children, in a conference setting. (This may avoid court proceedings.)

When making an appointment to see a counsellor, for safety reasons the client should stress that it is a domestic violence situation.

Roma Mitchell Commonwealth Law Courts,  
3 Angas Street, Adelaide

### *Victim Support Service Inc.*

Phone: **8231 5626**

Support for victims involved in criminal and civil cases, throughout the court process.

11 Halifax Street, Adelaide

**[www.victimsa.org.au](http://www.victimsa.org.au)**

### *Family Violence Courts*

Phone: **8204 2444**

Held in Elizabeth and Adelaide Magistrates Court one day per week. These courts provide a safe and supportive environment for women to lodge applications for Restraining Orders and Summary Protection Orders at a designated time, separate from other criminal hearings.

These courts also provide Violence Intervention Programs, information, advocacy and support services to survivors and their children.

### *Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement*

Phone: **8113 3777** (24 hours)

Advice and representation and assistance with preparing documents and appeals.

321-325 King William Street, Adelaide

## *Financial assistance*

### *Centrelink*

Phone: **13 61 50** (Families) or  
**13 10 21** for appointments

Women may be eligible for income from Centrelink if they leave their partner. This could include a one-off crisis payment to assist a family in moving, a part-payment if the woman is working, Family Payment, Family Tax Benefits or Newstart. Appointments can be made with a Centrelink social worker.

### *Centrelink Multilingual Service*

Phone: **13 12 02**

**[www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)**

### *Families SA (Metropolitan and Country)*

Phone: **8226 7000** (General Enquiries)

Emergency financial assistance for transport costs, some whitegoods and emergency accommodation and referral and advice. Offices located statewide.

### *Child Abuse Report Line*

Phone: **131 478**

Women should contact their local community centre or service provider for information about other financial or material supports, including food vouchers, clothing and financial counselling.

**[www.dfc.sa.gov.au](http://www.dfc.sa.gov.au)**



## *Housing assistance*

### *Domestic Violence Crisis Service*

Phone: **1300 782 200** (24 hours)

Telephone counselling, professional face-to-face short-term counselling, information, referral, assistance to get women and/or children into safe temporary accommodation, possible transport to accommodation, support for women who are staying with relatives or friends.

### *Housing SA*

Phone: **131 299** (General Enquiries)

Assistance to survivors of domestic violence, including: public rental housing, financial assistance to rent privately, home finance assistance. Eligibility requirements apply. Offices located statewide.

### *The Women's Housing Association*

Phone: **8349 4460**

Safe, secure, affordable and long-term housing for women and children who have experienced domestic violence.

## *Aboriginal services*

### *Nunkunwarrin Yunti*

Phone: **8223 5217**

Medical service, counselling, support, advice and support to access accommodation and financial assistance.

182-190 Wakefield Street, Adelaide

### *Aboriginal Family Support Service*

Phone: **8212 1112**

Provides support, assistance and advocacy to Aboriginal children, youth and families.

134 Waymouth Street, Adelaide

### *Aboriginal Housing Authority- Housing SA Aboriginal Advisor*

Phone: **131 299**

## *Migrant women of non-English speaking backgrounds*

### *Migrant Women's Support & Accommodation Service*

Phone: **8346 9417** (24 hours)

MWSAS provides free and confidential support services, including crisis accommodation to migrant women - with or without children - from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds who experience domestic violence.

**[Note: As at November 2010, there is a restructure of DV service sector. Migrant Women's Support and Accommodation Service may no longer have its own accommodation and may, therefore, need to change its name – contact 8346 9417].**

### *Migrant Resource Centre of SA*

Phone: **8217 9500**

Provides settlement and specialist services to young people, women and families at risk, through early intervention programs. These include crisis intervention, case coordination, and empowerment and mentoring initiatives.

59 King William Street, Adelaide

### *Migrant Health Service*

Phone: **8237 3900** | **1800 635 566** (Clinic)

Multilingual health service and counselling.

21 Market Street, Adelaide

### *Non-English Speaking Background DV Action Group*

Phone: **8365 5033**

Encourage Non-ESB communities to reduce domestic violence.

### *Department of Immigration and Citizenship*

Phone: **131 881**

### *National Translating & Interpreting Service*

Phone: **131 450** (24 hours)

## *Women's Community Health Centres*

### *Northern*

Phone: **8252 3711**

### *Port Adelaide*

Phone: **8444 0700**

### *Enfield*

Phone: **8342 8600**

### *Southern Women's*

Phone: **8384 9555**

### *Women's Health Statewide (1-4:30pm)*

Phone: **8239 9600**

Phone: **1800 182 098** (Country Callers)

Phone: **1300 882 880** (Helpline)

## *Services for women, children and young people*

### *Children, Youth and Women's Health Service (CYWHS)*

Phone: **8303 1500**

Provides information and a range of services and programs for parents, carers, children and young people in South Australia.

**www.cyh.com**

### *Child, Adolescent and Mental Health Service (CAMHS)*

Phone: **8161 7198** (Central)

Provides a range of programs for children, young people and prenatal women and infants in a number of locations across the state. Staffed by clinical psychologists, community nurses, social workers, speech pathologists and psychiatrists.

### *UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide - Family and Relationship Services*

Phone: **8202 5190**

### *UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide - Youth and Parent Services*

Phone: **8202 5160** (YPS)

YPS provides counselling to families where a young person 12-18 years of age is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

### *Women's Information Service*

Phone: **1800 188 158** (Toll free)

Provides information, referral and support. Free phone link up for Women outside of metropolitan Adelaide.

## *Services for men*

### *Men's Helpline*

Phone: **1300 789 978** (24hours)

Provides men with information, counselling and referral regarding relationships, work, fathering, separation and stress.

### *Northern Violence Intervention Program (Men's Program)*

Phone: **8396 1345**

### *Central Violence Intervention Program (Men's Program)*

Phone: **8100 8155**

### *UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide - Family and Relationship Services*

Phone: **8202 5190**

## Other specialist services

### *Lesbian Health Line*

Phone: **1800 182 089**

### *Gay & Lesbian Community Services of SA*

Phone: **8334 1623**

Phone: **1800 182 233** [Country callers]

Phone counselling service 7-10pm 7 days, plus Sat and Sun 2-5pm.

### *Aged Rights Advocacy Service*

Phone: **8232 5377**

Abuse prevention program and services to older people.

### *Disability SA*

Phone: **1300 786 117**

Information, clinical services and equipment and transportation programs for people with a significant disability.

### *Family Relationship Centres*

Phone: **1800 050 321** [Advice Line]

Provide all families (whether together or separated) with information and services about building better relationships, parenting orders, counselling, dispute resolution and supporting children after separation etc.

**[www.familyrelationships.gov.au](http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au)**

### *Drug and Alcohol Services Council*

Phone: **8274 3333**

Offers a range of drug and alcohol prevention programs, treatments, information, education and community-based services for all South Australians.

Information Service (counselling and information) Phone: **1300 13 1340** (24-hour)  
**[www.dassa.sa.gov.au](http://www.dassa.sa.gov.au)**

### *Crisis Care*

Phone: **131 611**

Statewide telephone service operating 4pm to 9am on weekdays and 24 hours on weekends and public holidays. The service helps people in crisis and when they need urgent help.

### *South Australian Police*

Phone: **131 444**

Domestic violence, physical abuse, threats and stalking are all criminal offences. Special units cover domestic violence in metropolitan Adelaide.

The police can help by attending the scene and some possible outcomes are: to arrest and charge the man with criminal or sexual assault, help make an application for a Restraining Order, provide assistance, intervention and referral advice and arrange temporary accommodation, transport and protection.

**[www.sapolice.sa.gov.au](http://www.sapolice.sa.gov.au)**

### *Yarrow Place*

Phone: **8226 8787**

Yarrow Place is the lead public health agency responding to adult rape and sexual assault in South Australia.

**[www.yarrowplace.sa.gov.au](http://www.yarrowplace.sa.gov.au)**

*Notes*

# Notes

## Emergency numbers

### *Police, Fire, Ambulance Emergency*

Phone: **000**

### *Police Assistance*

Phone: **131 444**

### *Domestic Violence Crisis Service*

Phone: **1300 782 200**

### *Crisis Care, Weekends, Evenings*

Phone: **131 611**

### *Domestic Violence Helpline (24 hours)*

Phone: **1800 800 098**

**[Note: Will cease operating as of 1 December 2010]**

### *Lifeline Counselling (24 hours)*

Phone: **131 114**

### *Migrant Women's Emergency Support*

Phone: **8346 9417**

### *Yarrow Place & Sexual Assault Service*

Phone: **8226 8787**

### *Kids Help Line (24 hours)*

Phone: **1800 551 800**

### *Parent Help Line (24 hours)*

Phone: **1300 364 100**

### *Child Abuse Report Line*

Phone: **131 478**

### *National Translating & Interpreting Service (24 hours)*

Phone: **131 450**

## Federal government helpline

### *Confidential Counselling and Information Service*

#### **1800 RESPECT**

#### **National Sexual Assault, Family & Domestic Violence Counselling Line**

is for any Australian who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

**1800 RESPECT** is free, confidential and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Professionally qualified, specialist counsellors will provide counselling, information, advice and referrals to relevant local services.

You can access this service by calling **1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)**.

Workers and counsellors in isolated and remote areas who work with victims of physical or sexual violence can also call **1800 RESPECT** to access clinical supervision, advice and debriefing services.

Please note that phone numbers are subject to change so we recommend you search the **White Pages** or contact your local **Domestic Violence Action Group** for up to date phone numbers and information about locality-specific services.

Although every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this handbook is correct at the time of printing, **UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide** accepts no liability for actions taken based on this information.

This handbook can be accessed online via [www.ucwesleyadelaide.org.au](http://www.ucwesleyadelaide.org.au)



**South Australian  
Council of Churches**



**Government  
of South Australia**

Through SA Health & Department for  
Families and Communities – Families SA



**LUTHERAN  
community care**



**UnitingCare Wesley  
Adelaide**