

Family Violence

Fact sheet

What is family violence?

Family violence is any behaviour towards a family member of that person which is:

- physically or sexually abusive;
- emotionally or psychologically abusive;
- economically abusive;
- threatening;
- coercive; or
- controlling, dominating and causes the family member to feel fear for their safety and well being and that of another; and
- includes causing a child to hear, witness or otherwise be exposed to the effects of such behaviour.

Family violence is sometimes called “domestic violence”, “abuse” or “an abusive relationship”.

Family violence can happen to anyone.

You have the right to feel safe at home. You have the right to BE SAFE at home. You should not be living in fear.

Who causes family violence?

The *Victorian Family Violence Protection Act 2008* views family violence as happening between people in a family, or a family-like relationship. Under this Act, family violence can be caused by:

- a current or former spouse (husband or wife)
- a current or former partner, male or female
- a current or former relative, eg:
 - a son or daughter
 - a parent
 - an uncle
 - a cousin
 - a grandparent
 - for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person – (relative) includes a person who, under Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander tradition or contemporary social practice, is the person’s relative.
- a person who has, or has had, an intimate personal relationship – sexual or not – with you
- someone who you think of as like a family member. The Act explains in detail how the court will decide this.
- a child who normally or regularly lives with you
- a child who used to normally or regularly live with you
- a carer

How do you know if it is family violence?

“Sometimes there is trouble at home. How do I know if this is family violence?”

YOU MAY BE EXPERIENCING FAMILY VIOLENCE if you have been:

- hurt by a family member
- worried about someone in your family hurting you or your children
- putting up with abusive or controlling behaviour that causes physical, sexual or emotional harm
- made to feel worthless, because of constant abuse or put-downs
- struggling to buy basic household essentials because a family member is withholding money
- feeling anxious and afraid about what a family member is going to do next – “It feels like we all have to walk around on egg shells to keep him happy”

Take this quick quiz to see if you are experiencing family violence: <http://www.dvrcv.org.au/HelpHub/WarningSigns.htm>

Examples of family violence

The following are just some examples of family violence:

Emotional abuse

- constantly making fun of you
- ridiculing you in front of his friends
- embarrassing you in front of your children or friends
- threatening to harm himself if you leave him

Social abuse

- not letting you see your friends
- preventing you from spending time with your family
- making you feel guilty about what time you get home
- constantly checking up on where you are

Sexual abuse

- forcing you to participate in sexual activity when you don’t want to eg:
 - have intercourse
 - watch pornography
 - take photos of you without your clothes

Physical abuse

- hitting, punching, choking, kicking
- throwing objects
- threatening to harm you
- threatening to harm your pets

Financial abuse

- controlling the family money
- preventing you from having access to money
- not giving you enough money for essential items such as food, petrol, travel, etc
- refusing to let you have money for recreational purposes eg. going out with friends

Stalking

- when a partner, ex-partner, or other family member follows you around or repeatedly tries to contact you, even if you've said you don't want this. This can include:
 - constant phone calls
 - sending numerous text messages
 - repeatedly waiting near your house or your workplace
- What if he never even touches me?

"He never hits me. But he swears and yells at me all the time. And he won't let me use the car. And he takes my money and won't let me have any money to go shopping."

Abuse can be physical or non-physical. Non-physical forms of abuse can be just as harmful as physical violence.

REMEMBER:

- **Everyone has the right to feel safe at home. No-one should have to put up with abuse or violence in any form**

The Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV) in Melbourne has lots of helpful information and advice for anyone who is experiencing family violence. Have a look at their website: <http://www.dvrcv.org.au/>

*The information in this publication is general information only. It is not legal advice. You must contact a lawyer for legal advice. The information is current at time of publishing in April 2017 but may change without notice.

Who can help?

There are a number of Family Violence support services that can assist people affected by family violence, including:

Police/Ambulance

Ph: 000

Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria

1800 105 303

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre

1800 015 188 (24 hr) or 9322 3555

Sexual Assault Crisis Line

1800 806 292 (24 hr)

Elizabeth Morgan House Aboriginal Women's Refuge

Indigenous Outreach Worker (9am – 5pm Monday – Friday)
Ph 0407 937 202 or 9482 5744

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

1800 064 865

Women's Information and Referral Exchange

1300 134 130 (9am – 5pm)

Victims of Crime Helpline

1800 819 817

Kids Help Line

1800 551 800



Aboriginal Family
Violence Prevention
& Legal Service Victoria
Standing Firm Against
Family Violence

1800 105 303
www.fvpls.org