

Recognising and responding to Domestic and Family Violence

CRSA Resource November 2022

Domestic and family violence (DFV) is a serious issue that significantly impacts safety, health and wellbeing. It is not limited to any particular community, ethnicity or demographic. The vast majority of victim-survivors are women and children.

Person-centred

All decisions should be led by the people we are working with. It's important to recognise **the specific needs, rights and aspirations** of the people you're supporting.

Communication

Communication and how you establish your relationship will determine if and how someone discloses any violence or abuse. If someone does not feel safe or heard not only are they unlikely to tell you more, but they may not tell anyone. So make sure that you are **gentle, kind and prioritise them and their children's needs**.

Disclosures

Disclosures of abuse can come in a variety of ways, however, they are commonly **immediately after a crisis or violent incident**, or on the flip side of this, by **slowly revealing smaller bits of information** (e.g I'll have to ask my husband if I'm allowed to do that / I'll have to ask for money to buy this) that reveal a pattern of abuse.

Maintaining composure when disclosures are made is important - don't minimise them, or overreact, but ask questions like 'tell me more about that', or 'do you have a choice in what you do / how money is spent?' Understanding what **choices** people have in their homes and relationships is key to understanding how best to support them.

Responding

Safety is key, and it is likely that many victim-survivors of DFV are already doing many things to maintain safety for themselves and their children without realising it. **Acknowledge** their safety choices, and say that you are there to **support** them. Connect them with people, places and information they may need for support and may not know about.

Explain **confidentiality** and limits of this clearly - reasons for needing to break this if required.

Safety planning

Groups are encouraged to refer to a **professional Domestic and Family Violence specialist** should a disclosure be made, or there is suspicion of violence being perpetrated. Ensure the safety of the individual or family members by asking questions like 'what will make you feel unsafe/do you know what you will do if you need to leave?/do you know who to contact?'

Services to speak to include:

CRSA Hotline (Mon-Fri 9-5)

1800 RESPECT (1800 737 737) who can refer you to other services that are needed

Concerns about a child's safety or risk of significant harm should be reported to a Child Protection Authority in your state or territory.

Risk factors

Try to be aware of how **risk factors overlap** to increase the severity and frequency of DFV and barriers to accessing support. These can include **family and social pressures, language barriers, stigma**, changing expectations around **gender norms**, and **limited knowledge of available services** - which are all **heightened with refugee experience**.

Trauma-informed practice

Working with victim-survivors of DFV and people from refugee backgrounds it is important to use trauma-informed practices. This means **understanding and responding** to the specific needs of people who have experienced trauma. This approach is underpinned by core values of **safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration** and **empowerment**. We must be careful to not retraumatise victim-survivors.

Safety is important for both you and the people we work with, **emphasise its importance to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment!**



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