Information for workplaces about family violence

Self-care and safety

Sometimes talking and learning about family violence and its impacts on women and children can be confronting, distressing, and may cause a traumatic reaction. It is important that everyone who works or learns in this space, takes time for self-care.

Some ways to self-care include:-

- Be aware and recognise what is going on for you
- Have regular breaks from reading about family violence
- Seek social support and find someone to talk to in private
- Seek professional support – see supports on page 4
- Have realistic expectations
- Know and maintain your boundaries
- Be aware of triggers from your own experiences

What is family violence?

The term **'family violence'** is used throughout this document and used in all initiatives of the Community, Respect and Equality project. The following outlines why this term has been adopted.

Domestic violence, family and domestic violence and family violence are often used interchangeably by academics in research and usage also differs between federal and state government departments. Historically, **_domestic violence_** is a term used that refers to acts of violence that occur between people who have, or have had, an intimate relationship that takes place in domestic settings (Morgan & Chadwick, 2009). It involves an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling a partner through fear and can include physical and sexual violence, emotional and psychological abuse, social isolation and financial control (Morgan & Chadwick, 2009). However, it has been recognised that the impacts of violence and abuse

often extend beyond the couple's relationship to other members of the family, household or community.

Family violence is a broad term that refers to violence between family members as well as intimate partners that varies across cultures. It is the preferred term for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as it refers to kinship and extended family relationships in Aboriginal communities (Day, Jones, Nakata, & McDermott, 2012). The term family violence covers intimate partner violence, sexual abuse and assault, child sexual abuse, elder abuse and relational abuse that occurs to and between children, parents, elders, kinships and extended family members (Day et al., 2012). It is also important to recognise that men and same sex relationship partners also experience these varying forms of family violence (Phillips, Dunkley, Muller, & Lorimer, 2015).

Violence against women

Research reveals that family violence is a gendered issue. In Australia, family violence is prevalent across all cultures, ages and socio-economic groups, with the majority of those who experience violence being women (Phillips & Vandenbroek, 2015). Women typically experience violence within intimate relationships and the abuse is usually perpetrated by men against women (Our WATCh, 2016).

Categories of violence may include physical, sexual, emotional or psychological, financial, or cultural/spiritual abuse, and stalking and coercive behaviours (Phillips & Vandenbroek, 2014). Any behaviour that physically or emotionally hurts someone or makes them scared of being harmed is a form of violence (Our WATCh, 2016).

Key statistics

Data sources and surveys reveal that family violence in Australia is widespread and that the majority of those who experience these forms of violence are women.

- On average, one woman is killed every week by a current or former partner.
- 1 in 3 women have experienced physical violence since age 15.
- 1 in 4 women have experienced workplace sexual harassment.
- Nearly 1 in 5 women have experienced sexual violence.
- Nearly 1 in 6 women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner.
- Aboriginal women are 2 to 5 times more likely to experience violence than non-Indigenous women.
- Aboriginal women are 5 times more likely to be homicide victims than non-Indigenous women.

(Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2017; Australian Human Rights Commission [AHRC], 2014; Australian Institute of Criminology [AIS], 2017; Phillips & Vandenbroek, 2014).

Impacts of family violence

The impacts of family violence are varied and they can be short-term or intense and long lasting. Women and families may require support for many years after the violence has ended. Impacts to women include homicide, homelessness, physical health, emotional and mental health, children's exposure (social, behavioural, cognitive, emotional and physical reactions) and financial (Phillips & Vandenbroek, 2014).

If the situation is so bad, why does she stay?

There are many reasons why women stay in a violent relationship. It is important to understand the complexity of her situation and the risks involved. Reasons why she cannot leave include:-

- She is at a greater risk of being killed just after she leaves.
- Fear that the abuse will escalate for her and the children may be hurt.
- Lack of trust with support services. She is not confident that the police and crisis support services can protect her.
- She is financially dependent upon her partner.
- She has constant family pressure to stay.
- Her instinct is to protect the family and their reputation in the community.
- There is no support available or she has tried to leave before.

(Our WATCh, 2016)

Why aren't we talking about violence against men?

Recent research reveals that higher rates of family violence are those perpetrated by men against women. To gain an understanding of why we focus on violence against women as a significant issue, the following different patterns of violence between men and women are shown.

- Location – violence against men typically occurs in public. For women it occurs in private (usually in an intimate relationship).
- Assaulter – violence against men occurs typically by a stranger. For women it occurs by partner or ex-partner.
- Frequency – violence against men usually occurs once. Violence against women occurs multiple times.
- Impacts on children – violence against men rarely impacts on children. Violence against women commonly impacts the children in the family.
- Effects – violence against men is usually short term. Violence against women is more likely to be long-term.

 (Our WATCh, 2016)

How to respond to disclosures safely?

In the workplace, there may be occasions when people come to you and disclose that they have experienced family violence. This may be current (happened recently) or historical (in the past or childhood experience).   A basic understanding of how to manage disclosures and refer to appropriate support services is important to help those in need.

When someone comes to you and discloses that they have experienced family violence follow these basic guidelines of brief intervention:-

- Listen and believe what they tell you.
- Help them understand that the violence is not their fault.
- Take it seriously and talk to the person about safety.
- Provide support and ask them what they would like assistance with.
- Respect their right to make their own decisions.
- Talk to them about services available and assist if asked.

What services are available for those who experience family violence and those who perpetrate violence?

There are many support services available in Geraldton for people experiencing family violence.

If there is immediate and high risk safety concerns always recommend the person to call 000 or the Geraldton Police 08 9923 4555.   000 can be accessed on mobiles even without credit. *Please note that you cannot call the police without their consent, but urge the person to do so and support them.*

Other supports you can recommend for work colleagues or their families:-

- Desert Blue Connect manages 'Chrysalis House Women's Refuge' which can accommodate women and their children up to 18 years of age. The Refuge operates 24 hours a day and also provides support and advocacy for women. Phone 9964 2173.
- Desert Blue Connect offer other family violence services which include counselling for family violence, sexual assault and child sexual assault, support and intervention, advocacy and women's health clinics. Phone 9964 2742.
- The Geraldton Regional Hospital is available for those experiencing family violence who may have sustained an injury and require immediate medical treatment, available 24 hours. Phone 9956 2222.
- Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service (GRAMS) is a health service available during weekdays who have a specialist family violence team. Phone 9956 6555.
- Department of Communities – Child Protection and Family Support are an important contact if children are involved. They provide family support for women and their children. Phone 9965 9500.

- Legal services are also important to those who are experiencing family violence, particularly if children are involved. Local legal services include Aboriginal Family Law Services (AFLS), Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS), Legal Aid and Regional Alliance West (RAW).
- Other 24 hour phone services include:
  - 1800 RESPECT 1800 737 732
  - Women's DV Help Line (WA) 1800 007 339
  - Men's DV Help Line (WA) 1800 000 599

A comprehensive list of local services is available in the Midwest Family Violence Alliance Referral Guide, which can be found online at www.midwestfamilyviolencealliance.org

Primary prevention of family violence

There is a three level approach to framing the concept of prevention of family violence that includes primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. Our WATCh (2015) offer the following definitions:-

Tertiary prevention focuses on longer term support for women and children, or aims for longer term reduction of violence by changing perpetrator behaviour. It involves strategies that are implemented after violence occurs and includes ongoing support and treatment to women and children who are affected by violence or to men who use violence. They aim to deal with the violence, prevent its consequences and ensure it does not occur again or escalate further. Tertiary responses include ongoing social support and advocacy for women, criminal justice and behaviour change programs for men.

Secondary prevention usually focus on the immediate responses of violence, such as provision of crisis accommodation to women and children or removing the person who is perpetrating the violence from the home.

Early intervention strategies aim to change behaviours or build skills of those who are at risk of perpetrating or experiencing family violence.   Early intervention is also sometimes referred to as secondary prevention and targets individuals and groups who exhibit early signs of perpetrating violent behaviour or of being subject to violence.
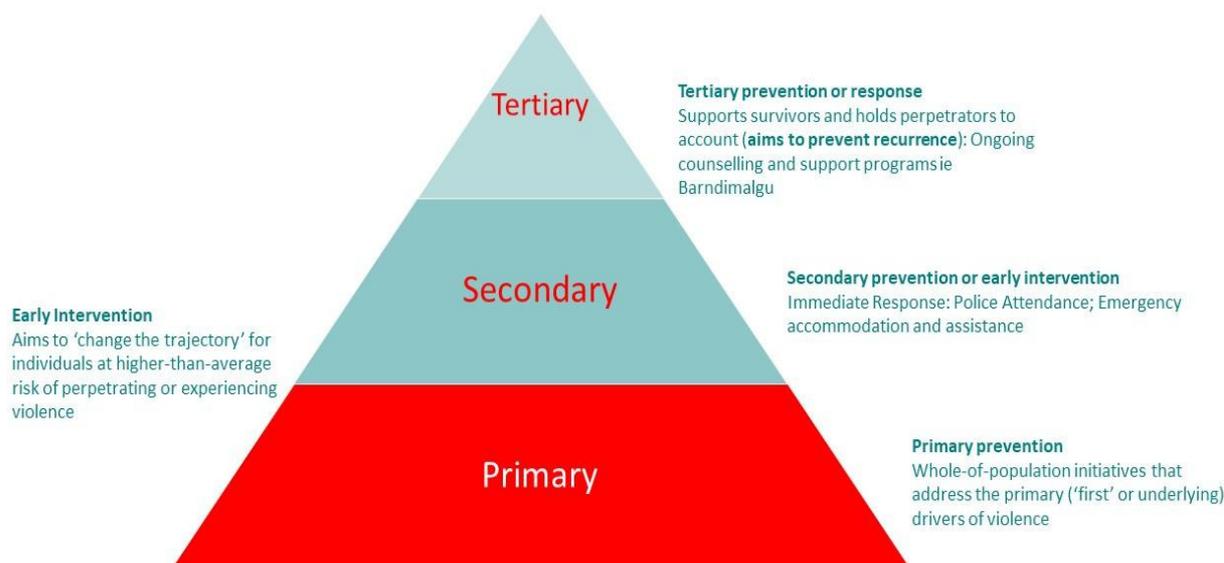
Primary prevention is stopping violence from occurring in the first place. It addresses underlying causes and aims to prevent or reduce new instances of family violence across whole populations before they occur. Some primary prevention strategies focus on changing behaviour and/or building the knowledge and skills of individuals. However, the structural, cultural and societal contexts in which violence occurs are also very important targets for primary prevention. Strategies that do not have a particular focus on violence against women but address its underlying causes (such as gender inequality, oppression, poverty) are also primary prevention strategies.

According to the Our WATCh Framework (Our WATCh, 2015):

"Primary prevention requires changing the social conditions such as gender inequality, that excuse, justify or even promote violence against women and their children. Individual

behavioural change may be the intended result of prevention activity, but such change cannot be achieved prior to, or in isolation from, a broader change in the underlying drivers of such violence across communities, organisations and society as a whole. A primary prevention approach works across the whole population to address the attitudes, practices and power differentials that drive violence against women and their children."

Prevention spectrum

Reference from: Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth (2015) Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch,

There is a strong network of local providers in Geraldton who recognise and refer women to appropriate secondary and tertiary response services. The region has a proactive family violence response team located at the Geraldton police station. Desert Blue Connect offers tailored counselling, advocacy, outreach and support to women experiencing family violence and operates Chrysalis House, a refuge for women and children at risk of homelessness due to family violence.

It is evident through recent research that to focus only on the provision of support programs for women experiencing family violence, does not reduce rates of violence against women in a community (Ellsberg at al., 2015). There is a need to work towards the prevention of family violence to make substantial change and it is suggested that primary prevention initiatives which change community attitudes and behaviours that enable violence are required.

Our WATCh has developed a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia called "Change the Story". The Community, Respect & Equality project has been developed using the Our WATCh primary prevention framework.

Phase 1 actions within the Plan continue to be informed by the gendered drivers, reinforcing factors and supporting actions in this framework.

Change the Story:
A national framework for primary prevention

The CRE Agreement and its associated values and codes of behaviour also focus on community awareness using a primary prevention approach.   The CRE initiative has two project primary prevention messages - '#respect rules' and '#violence is NEVER ok' that can be used within the workplace.

Further information on the "Change the Story" framework and primary prevention of family violence can be accessed at https://www.ourwatch.org.au/what-we-do/national-primary-prevention-framework

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