



# Family Violence



INFORMATION  
BOOKLET

**1300 134 130**

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

WIRE Information & Referral

This information booklet has been produced with funding generously donated by Australian Unity.

We acknowledge the First Nations people as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters throughout Australia.

WIRE is a service for women, nonbinary and gender-diverse people.

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# Introduction

You've probably picked up this booklet on family violence because you, or someone you know, is experiencing behaviours in a relationship or family that are distressing. We hope that the information in the following pages supports you as you make decisions about how to respond to these events in your life.

## Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is designed to support women, nonbinary and gender-diverse people experiencing family violence and the network of people supporting them.

## You are resilient and strong

We know that women, nonbinary and gender-diverse people in circumstances like yours are already doing many things every day to keep themselves safe. We know it can be exhausting.

There is a lot of information in this booklet, but you don't need to read it all at once. It can take weeks or months and sometimes years to work out what you need to do to create a life where you are free from family violence.

## Using this booklet

The booklet is divided into sections, covering the definition of family violence, its impacts and then ways you might choose to respond. In each section there are contact details for relevant services, but there is also a list at the back of the booklet for easy reference.

Here are some other issues you might like to consider:

1. Is it safe for you to have this book at home with you? If not, consider leaving it at a friend's place. That could also be a good opportunity to have a discussion with your friend.
2. Are there circumstances in your life that mean some of the advice in the booklet wouldn't be as simple for you as it sounds on paper?

This might be the case, for example, if you have a criminal record or if you're experiencing housing instability. In the end, you are the expert in your life and only you can make the decisions about what is right for you.

## About WIRE

WIRE is a Victorian organisation with a vision of a just society where all people can thrive. We provide information, resources, support and referrals for women, nonbinary and gender-diverse Victorians on a variety of issues.

We provide support through a Telephone Support Line, by email and online, as well as face-to-face at our Walk-in Centre located in inner Melbourne. We also deliver a range of programs and services including job coaching, employment workshops, financial and legal clinic, lunch-time clubs and activities for those experiencing isolation and homelessness.

We undertake projects and provide education and resources to

individuals, organisations and the community to build capacity and capability to counter gender bias, discrimination and family violence. This includes training and programs focused on increasing women's financial capability, addressing family violence, dealing with difficult calls and working more effectively with women.

We are a small organisation but our impact ripples throughout Victoria. With more than 60 active volunteers and 22 staff we provide services to Victorians that changes lives. We are proud of who we are, the service we provide and what we have achieved.

## Acknowledgements

WIRE would like to extend our deep gratitude to the people at InTouch and the Women's Leadership Group of Women Transforming Justice for their extensive feedback and input, much of which is included here. Thanks also to all the staff and volunteers of WIRE who have contributed to the creation of this resource.

# 1 What is family violence?



Abuse of any kind within a relationship is family violence. Under Victorian Law, family violence is defined as harmful behaviour that occurs when someone hurts or threatens a family member or a person they are in a relationship with, or controls them through fear.

Victim-survivors of family violence are entitled to the same rights as anyone else, irrespective of their age, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, ability or disabilities, sexuality, gender expression or occupation.

Family violence is when one person uses power and control over another and can take many forms.

Sometimes it includes physical abuse and sometimes the person uses other ways of maintaining power and control over the victim-survivor.

We use the term **'victim-survivor'** when we talk about people with lived experience of violence. We use this term to acknowledge that although people are victims of violence, they are also actively engaged in managing their safety by the use of various coping mechanisms and strategies.

We talk about a **'person using violence'** when we are referring to the person who uses their power and control to inflict the violence, whether it be emotional, physical, sexual or financial violence or a combination of these.

Family violence includes any behaviour that is threatening and controlling that can cause you to fear for your own safety.

**People from all kinds of backgrounds, cultures and circumstances experience violence and abuse at home. You don't ask for it; you don't deserve it. Family violence is not your fault. You are not responsible for the violent behaviour of others — not ever.**

Living with family violence can be emotionally exhausting and physically isolating. It can also affect your relationships with other family members, friends and colleagues.

Family violence may include:

- » Emotional abuse e.g. manipulation, isolation, put-downs, mind games
- » Financial abuse e.g. forcing you to hand over control of income or assets, coercing you to take on debt or sign a contract, or preventing you from earning an income
- » Sexual abuse i.e. any unwanted sexual activity
- » Social abuse e.g. insulting you in public, deciding when and where you socialise
- » Threats of physical violence and revenge
- » Any kind of abuse that makes you live in fear
- » Property damage e.g. smashing belongings
- » Harming or threatening to harm your pets

Family violence happens when one person exerts power and control over another in a relationship or family. It can occur when your relationship with someone is just beginning or when you have been in it for a long time.

Family violence can occur between parents and children, as well as between relatives and in any family-like relationships, such as with carers or housemates.

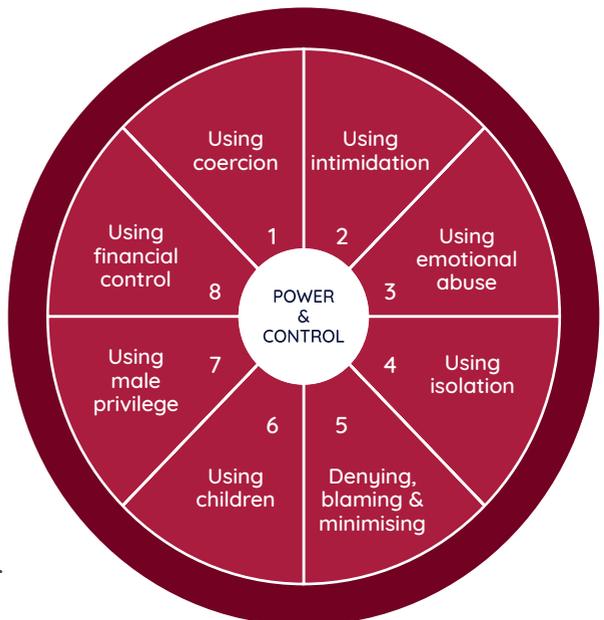
Although men may experience family violence, it is far more likely in Australia that women, nonbinary and gender diverse people will be in a relationship with someone who is or has been violent, controlling and/or abusive towards them (ABS).

- » Complex forms of violence such as forced marriage, dowry abuse or trafficking/slavery

## Threatening or controlling behaviours

Family violence can be subtle and take place over a long period of time. It may not be obvious to others. Common methods used to coerce, control and dominate people living with family violence include:

- » Telling you what to wear and where you can or cannot go
- » Forcing you into sexual behaviours that are unwelcome, painful, humiliating or not your choice
- » Putting you down, criticising you or insulting you in public
- » Preventing you from seeing your friends and family
- » Saying you are crazy, causing you to feel like you are crazy, claiming you are imagining the abuse
- » Threatening to tell your friends, family or workplace of your sexuality or gender transition or gender affirmation
- » Misleading people about your mental health and/or your capacity to parent
- » Preventing you from accessing medical services or medications e.g. treatments for anxiety or depression, hormone therapy or birth control
- » Stalking (physically or by the use of technology and social media)
- » Using technology to harass, stalk and perpetuate violence
- » Excluding you from family financial decision-making
- » Preventing you from practicing your religion or connecting with your cultural practices



The Control and Power Wheel on the previous page is a helpful tool in understanding the overall pattern of abusive and violent behaviours. Often a combination of these behaviours make up a larger system of abuse. Here are some ways that a person using family violence may behave:

<p><b>1. Using coercion</b></p> <p>Making and/or threats to do something to hurt you. Threatening to leave you, to commit suicide, to report you to Centrelink.</p> <p>Making you drop charges. Making you do illegal things.</p>	<p><b>2. Using intimidation</b></p> <p>Threatening physical or sexual violence if you don't comply with their demands.</p> <p>Destroying things or threatening to destroy things. The clear message is that if you don't obey, there will be consequences.</p>
<p><b>3. Using emotional abuse</b></p> <p>Humiliating you. Putting you down. Making you feel bad about yourself. Calling you names.</p> <p>Making you think you're crazy. Playing mind games. Making you feel guilty.</p>	<p><b>4. Using isolation</b></p> <p>Controlling what you do and who you see. Preventing work or education. Interfering with your family obligations. Mediating your involvement with the outside world e.g. accompanying you to meetings. Making decisions without you.</p>
<p><b>5. Denying, blaming &amp; minimising</b></p> <p>Denying that anything is happening. Blaming their abusive and violent behaviour on a bad childhood, a bad day, and even on you.</p> <p>Minimising the abuse and not taking your concerns about it seriously.</p>	<p><b>6. Using children</b></p> <p>Using children to keep you dependent. Forcing you to have a(nother) baby.</p> <p>Denying money for maintaining the children &amp; making you solely responsible for the child related spending. Destroying or stealing the children's belongings.</p> <p>Threatening to hurt or kill your children, or report you to child services.</p>
<p><b>7. Using male privilege</b></p> <p>Asserting that they are 'head of the household'. Defining your role. Treating you like a servant. Controlling the household spending decisions.</p>	<p><b>8. Using financial control</b></p> <p>Controlling your earning potential. Controlling the money. Controlling everything about what they own and owe. Controlling knowledge of financial matters.</p>

\* Power and control wheel adapted from the Duluth model: [www.theduluthmodel.org/wheels/](http://www.theduluthmodel.org/wheels/)



## Who experiences family violence?

**Family violence doesn't discriminate.** It can occur no matter your age, where you live, your occupation, your abilities or disabilities, your sexuality, your gender, your religion, your ethnicity, your skin colour, your residential status, your education, your social class, whether you live with your partner, whether you have children or whether you are in a monogamous relationship or have more than one partner.

### It can happen at different stages of our lives.

Victim-survivors may experience family violence differently throughout their lives. It may start when your socio-economic status changes, when your health changes or when big life events impact you or your family members.

You might experience family violence for the first time when you become pregnant, when you become unemployed or if you are suffering from a physical or mental illness.

Older people may experience family violence but, for many reasons, have not recognised it for what it was.

We know that when life circumstances change, behaviour can also change.

Some victim-survivors continue to live with the violence because of the consequences of leaving or discontinuing the relationship. Others might need to act because of the escalation of violence committed by their partner, children, grandchildren or even their carers.

**Women, nonbinary and gender-diverse people from all kinds of circumstances and backgrounds experience violence and abuse at home.**

## PEOPLE FROM SOME COMMUNITIES ARE MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE FAMILY VIOLENCE THAN OTHERS

There are a variety of **intersecting issues that mean people from some communities have a higher risk of experiencing family violence**

— it is more likely that women will experience family violence than men, for example and then more likely again if you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, a person with disabilities or a transgender, nonbinary or gender-diverse person. This is because patriarchy, racism, ableism and transphobia compound your experience of marginalisation, not because of anything you have done.

### The LGBTIQ community

Family violence is about one person using power and control over another. This means family violence can happen in same-sex relationships and in gender-diverse relationships.

If you are part of the LGBTIQ community, your experience of family violence can often be exacerbated by the discrimination and harassment that you experience in the broader community.

It can also be hard for you to know where to go to seek help from services that will be appropriate and sensitive to your circumstances. Use the 'List of Services' to find out what kinds of services might be useful for you.

### People from migrant and refugee backgrounds

Australia is one of the most multicultural countries in the world with 49 per cent of our population either born overseas or with one or both parents born overseas. If you are a victim-survivor from a migrant and/or refugee background it can be hard to find and access services that are culturally sensitive and appropriate for you.

Additional barriers you might face include language or social isolation, or you might feel fearful or uncertain about the impact that disclosing your experience of violence could have on your place in the community or your residency status. The good news is that inTouch is a Multicultural Centre that can help. Call them on 1800 755 988.

**Regardless of the type of relationship you are in, you have the right to be safe and respected. Nobody has the right to abuse or control another person.**



## 3 The impact of family violence

Family violence has a big impact on the lives of victim-survivors. Often, victim-survivors are left feeling stressed, anxious or depressed. Many victim-survivors experience a worsening of a chronic illness due to the stress they are living under.

### Financial abuse

Financial abuse is also often a significant part of a person's experience of family violence but it can be overlooked because of the other (more visible) forms of abuse taking place. Many people think of family violence as either physical injury or emotional abuse. However, **withholding money, controlling all the household spending or refusing to include you in financial decisions can be defined as family violence.**

Typically, victim-survivors will not have much, if any, control over the household finances. There are many ways that people using violence can cause financial abuse. Some of the most common ways are by hiding money, controlling how much access you have to the money, using you to take out loans and debts in your name,

preventing you from working or studying, making you work whilst the person using violence stays at home, or by forcing you to falsify claims for Centrelink payments.

Many victim-survivors of family violence find themselves struggling to regain control of their finances when they leave a relationship. Read WIRE's *Money Problems* information booklet and WIRE's *My Money* conversation kit to find out more about the services that are available to assist your financial recovery.

## WHAT ABOUT THE KIDS?

Children often feel responsible for family violence and they can respond in various ways. For example, a child may try to make things easier for their victim-survivor parent by withholding how they feel or they may side with the person using violence because they believe this may be the safest option for themselves, the parent they are trying to protect, or even their pets. Children living with family violence often feel stressed by this environment. This can make them nervous, withdrawn, depressed and/or aggressive. They may have difficulty relating to their peers and performing at school. In the long term, children are at risk in their later relationships of becoming abusive themselves or being abused by their own partners.

**It is important that you talk to your children. Explain that the violence is not their fault, and seek support.**

## WILL THE VIOLENCE AND ABUSE STOP?

It can be difficult to take action to protect yourself. There are many reasons victim-survivors stay in violent and abusive relationships, not least because they love their partner or other family member.

Often people stay because they fear the violence will get worse if they leave. Often people stay because they do not have the support and resources they need to leave. Victim-survivors often leave their relationship and return a number of times. It is common for the person using violence to tell the people they are abusing that they love them and need them and to promise that 'this time' they will really change. We all want to believe the people we love. Unfortunately, this 'honeymoon' period is usually followed by a return to abusive behaviours.

**Once the abuse starts, statistics show that the situation usually continues to get worse instead of better. Violence and abuse only stops when the person using violence takes responsibility for their behaviour – and seeks help.**

**Men can call the Men's Referral Service on 1300 766 491.**

# 4 Responding to family violence

Once you've realised that what you are experiencing is family violence, you have decisions to make about how you will respond. You are already doing things to keep yourself as safe as you can in the family violence situation you are in. You may feel overwhelmed but now is the time to plan your next steps.

## Make a safety plan

Whether you decide to stay or leave, **it is a good idea to speak to a family violence support worker to discuss a comprehensive safety plan and to discuss how you might be able to regain some control.**

Some services you could contact:

- » Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre: 1800 015 188 for support or visit their website for safety plans

[www.safesteps.org.au/your-safety/#SafetyPlanning](http://www.safesteps.org.au/your-safety/#SafetyPlanning)

- » Orange Door: Victorian Government Family Violence Centres. To find your nearest Orange Door go to the website: [www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/what-is-the-orange-door](http://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/what-is-the-orange-door)
- » Emerge Women & Children's Support Network. This organisation delivers 24/7 housing and support services. Visit: [emergesupport.org.au](http://emergesupport.org.au)



## NEED TO TALK THE OPTIONS THROUGH?

For support to identify your options and the way forward that is best for you contact:

- » WIRE — 1300 134 130
- » Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre — 1800 015 188

## WHAT A SAFETY PLAN MIGHT LOOK LIKE

Here are some suggestions of what your safety plan might include:

- » Identify the actions you already take to protect yourself, for instance, when your partner is more likely to be abusive
- » Ensure you always have petrol in your car and a spare set of keys handy, or a public transport plan, in case you need to leave quickly
- » Plan where you can go that will be safe in an emergency and know who you can call: family, friends, neighbours, police. Keep a mobile phone and a list of emergency phone numbers handy
- » Speak to a service such as WIRE Women's Information or a family violence service about your options
- » Make sure your children know what to do in an emergency
- » If you can, start putting aside a small amount of cash each week, ready if you need to leave at short notice; ensure you have access to money after you leave, e.g. a separate credit card or bank account
- » Take photos of bruises or injuries and give them to a trusted friend or doctor to keep
- » Find out whether an intervention order is right for you
- » Consider using a code language that the person using violence against you will not know
- » Talk to people and gather information about your options and the support available
- » Keep yourself technologically safe, so that you can't be tracked or monitored through online, mobile or location-enabled devices
- » For a comprehensive list of important documents, see [WIRE's \*Leaving a Relationship\* information booklet](#)

### Where you will store your safety plan?

Think about who you can leave your safety plan with and how you will let them know that it needs to be activated.

Make sure they understand that it's important the plan is stored carefully. Do not discuss the plan with mobile phones turned on in case the phones are being monitored (see the next page for more information).

## SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I LEAVE?

Leaving a violent relationship can be an incredibly difficult decision. You may not want to leave your home or you may fear your future well-being if you move your family to a new life. You may also fear for your physical safety or your children's safety. There are resources available to help you make the best possible decision to protect you and your family.

It may take you weeks or even years to decide whether you should stay or leave. Take time to plan, using the list on the previous page.

This is a good time to read stories of how other women, nonbinary and gender-diverse people have made decisions, what they did, how they did it and what helped for them.

### If you stay in the relationship...

For a whole range of reasons, you may decide that staying is the best or safest option for you. **This does not mean that you have to remain silent and alone.** It is important that you seek support to increase your safety at home, although some services may only be able to provide a limited response if you choose to stay with your violent partner.

### If you leave the relationship...

The most dangerous time in a violent relationship is when a victim-survivor decides to leave the person using violence. Often, the person

using violence becomes more violent when they find out the person they are abusing is seeking help. It is easier to leave a violent partner if you have a clear plan.

You have the right to stay in your own home and **laws in Victoria now make it easier for the person using violence to be removed from the family home through the issuing of an Intervention Order.**

If you have to leave your home, make sure you take your personal documents with you – particularly, three forms of identification. Have them ready in a safe space, along with a spare set of keys, money, medication and a change of clothes, along with anything your children will need, including a favourite toy if possible.

- » For a comprehensive list of important documents, see [WIRE's \*Leaving a Relationship\* information booklet](#)

## TECHNOLOGY AND SAFETY

Throughout this booklet, there are suggestions to view websites. Internet, email and location features on your computer and mobile devices help connect you to support services.

However, **this technology can also be used by your partner or ex-partner to monitor you, control you and threaten your safety.** The following are some ways to improve your safety on your personal phone and computer:

- » Create new email, Facebook and social media accounts using an anonymous username and new passwords
- » Turn off the location feature on your mobile phone and your Facebook profile or other social media
- » Avoid using cordless phones or baby monitors to prevent eavesdropping
- » If you have moved, make sure that your private contact details are not available online (check by Googling your full name)
- » Check settings on children's phones/computers and electronic games
- » Use public access computers. These can be found at libraries, WIRE's Walk-in Centre, community centres and internet cafes
- » Get someone to check your phone for tracking software
- » Learn how to delete your search history and web browser history.



### USEFUL LINKS

- » eSafety for women: [www.esafety.gov.au/women](http://www.esafety.gov.au/women)
- » Wesnet: [www.wesnet.org.au/safety-planning](http://www.wesnet.org.au/safety-planning)
- » Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria: Technology safety [www.dvrcv.org.au/knowledge-centre/technology-safety](http://www.dvrcv.org.au/knowledge-centre/technology-safety)
- » Facebook: Safety [www.facebook.com/safety/tools/](http://www.facebook.com/safety/tools/)

# 5 What might the police do?



It's common — but not always the case — that people will call the police when they hear sounds that make them think someone is being hurt.

**If your life — or someone else's life — is at risk, call 000. WIRE can assist with exploring alternative ways to support your safety if you would prefer to not involve the police.**

Police might attend a property to perform a 'welfare check'. During a welfare check, the police check that you are unharmed and might ask questions about what has been happening recently. This can provide some safety for you and some accountability for the person using violence.

## Responding to an incident

The police have the power to search for and remove weapons, arrest and charge an offender, issue a Family Violence Safety Notice, and apply for an intervention order on your behalf.

A **Family Violence Safety Notice (FVSN)** can be issued by Victoria Police to protect you at any time. This temporary notice protects you from being contacted by the person using violence. The FVSN lasts five business days from the time it is issued. This

means that if a FVSN is served on a person using violence, any people that have experienced the family violence may be protected under this legislation while waiting for the first mention date to be heard in court for an Intervention Order.

Importantly, the Family Violence Protection Act states that a FVSN starts when the notice or a safety notice form is served on a respondent.

With FVSNs, the police have the power to add children as Affected Family Members (AFMs) if they suspect the child has been at risk of experiencing family violence by the person using violence.

## Everyone deserves protection

Victoria Police now has a family violence Code of Practice. This means officers are obliged to take reports of

family violence seriously and to act to ensure your safety.

**All victim-survivors of family violence are entitled to the same protection under the law, irrespective of their age, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, gender or occupation.**

There are **LGBTIQ Liaison Police** officers who are located in many police stations across Victoria and actively liaise with their local LGBTIQ groups. You can speak to an officer by contacting the GLLO program on (03) 9247 6944. If you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, you can request the support of a **Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer (PALO)** at your local police station.

Although everyone is entitled to this protection, research suggests police have treated some groups of people differently, for example, people who use drugs and alcohol, who are sex workers or have a previous criminal record. In some cases, the victim-survivor has been misidentified by the police as the person using violence. Police in some local government areas may also respond differently from other local government areas.

However, since this Code of Practice was implemented, the way police

have responded to family violence is improving.

## What happens next?

Victoria Police are required to complete a Family Violence Report, also called an L17 report, after they attend a family incident. It includes information on the incident itself, the affected family member and other party, hazards/risk factors present at the time of the incident and any actions taken by Victoria Police following the incident.

The report requires police to identify the 'primary aggressor' and it is at this point that misidentification may occur in a small number of cases, especially if you were using resistive violence to respond to the controlling behaviour or violence you were experiencing, or if the person who was hurting you takes control of telling the story to police and you are either unable to speak or afraid to speak about what was happening.

The police will also share the information on the Family Violence Report with services, so you may be contacted by organisations you weren't aware of before the incident, including services assessing the safety of any children in the home.



## 6 What can the legal system do?

The legal system can be used to get a Family Violence Intervention Order, a Magistrate's Court order designed to protect you and your children from another person's threatening behaviour.

Not all lawyers understand family violence. **Before engaging a lawyer or law firm, check that they are familiar with family violence and the impact it has on your life and those of your children.** It is important you feel your lawyer has your best interests at heart.

The best way to get legal advice and use the law to protect yourself is to contact a **community legal service** such as the Legal Aid, or a lawyer who has a good understanding of family violence. You can also visit free online Victorian legal resources and websites.

### Intervention orders

You can apply to take out a Family Violence Intervention Order any time you feel threatened or unsafe. Children or other family members are not automatically included in an

Intervention Order. To include a child as an affected family member (AFM) in an Intervention Order (IO) the applicant needs to specifically apply for this to happen.

If your child is protected by an Intervention Order, their school is enabled to call the police if they are aware of a breach of the order.



### USEFUL LINKS

- » Family Violence Intervention Orders: [www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/find-legal-answers/family-violence-intervention-orders](http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/find-legal-answers/family-violence-intervention-orders)
- » Magistrates' Court: [www.mcv.vic.gov.au/intervention-orders](http://www.mcv.vic.gov.au/intervention-orders)

You can apply for an order even if you are still living with your partner.

Be aware that the intervention order can take time to put in place.

### At the Magistrates' Court

The Magistrates' Court has a specialised Family Violence Court Division established to improve court responses to family violence. This service offers specialist support workers, as well as additional security and outreach services.

It's a good idea to get support as you move through this process by inviting a friend, family violence worker or someone from the Court Network to accompany you to the Magistrates' Court.

### **The Law now makes it easier for an applicant to give evidence against the person who uses violence** —

for example, people using violence are restricted from cross-examining the people they are/were abusing.

If the person using violence is self-represented, arrangements will be made for [Victoria Legal Aid](#) to represent the accused for the purpose of cross-examining the victim-survivor.

These laws also assist victim-survivors to stay in their own home if they wish,

by requiring the person using violence to leave the home in appropriate circumstances and making it easier for you to change tenancy arrangements.

By remaining safely in the family home, victim-survivors can avoid the disruption, dislocation and uncertainty of trying to find new accommodation.

See the section on 'A safe place to stay' on page 25 for more information.



### USEFUL LINKS

- » Women's Legal Service  
Victoria: **1800 133 302** or **(03) 8633 0600** (open 6:30pm–8:30pm, Tuesday and Thursday evenings), [www.womenslegal.org.au](http://www.womenslegal.org.au)
- » Court Network (for non-legal support whilst in Court): **1800 681 614**, [www.courtnetwork.com.au](http://www.courtnetwork.com.au)
- » Federation of Community Legal Centres (to find a community legal service in your local area) (Victoria-based): **(03) 9652 1500**, [www.communitylaw.org.au](http://www.communitylaw.org.au)
- » The Law Handbook: [www.lawhandbook.org.au](http://www.lawhandbook.org.au)



# 7 Who can support me?

Victim-survivors who have had their self-confidence shattered by family violence often underestimate their resourcefulness and resilience. The reality is that if you are a victim-survivor of family violence, you are already taking action to keep yourself and others safe, and you have been highly successful so far. **Now it's time to reach out to others for help.**

## “I’m finding it hard to ask friends and family for help”

We often hear victim-survivors tell us that it is hard to ask friends, family and neighbours for help. Victim-survivors’ relationships with the people they would otherwise be close to might have been damaged by the manipulation and behaviour of the person using violence. It can be difficult to reconnect with people. It is not uncommon to feel embarrassed to ask for help. **And yet, often the people that have been closest to you in the past are waiting for you to reach out to them.** Often, these friends and family members prove to be your greatest allies and sources of support.

Not only is it important to let trusted friends and family know what is happening, but you could also **talk to others in your community such**

**as your doctor and the schools your children attend.** Increasingly, organisations and institutions in our communities are recognising the role they have in supporting people who are experiencing family violence.

## Phone support services

A good place to start exploring options for creating a safe environment for you and your family are phone support services, such as WIRE (Victoria-wide) or 1800 RESPECT (Australia-wide 24/7). These services offer a **free, anonymous and safe place to talk things through**, develop a safety plan, explore possibilities and put you in touch with further support.

## FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES

Another step might be contacting a family violence service to get assistance and support to keep you and other members of your family safe. With experienced guidance, you will be able to make a plan for your future that includes general legal advice, so you are informed about the range of options that are available.

### Orange Door

Orange Door hubs are a free service that you can access directly, designed to **respond to the multiplicity of needs of victim-survivors** as you move on from the family violence you are experiencing.

Family violence workers from your local Family Violence Outreach Service are available to speak to you on the phone or meet you in a safe place. They provide ongoing support and assistance with your safety planning, legal information, finding accommodation, court support, counselling for you and your children and links to support groups.

### Safe Steps Response Centre

This is a 24/7 family violence crisis line that victim-survivors can call for

### **immediate support and assistance.**

The Centre provides short-term crisis accommodation for people leaving violent relationships, and can help you access a refuge (about six weeks' stay). It also connects you to your local family violence outreach service for longer term and ongoing support.

### Support groups

Support groups enable you to meet with others who have experienced family violence and connect with their strength, knowledge and experiences.

Call Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria on (03) 9486 9866 for a list of family violence support groups in your local area. For more information on support groups visit the website: [www.dvrcv.org.au/talk-someone/support-groups](http://www.dvrcv.org.au/talk-someone/support-groups)

**Consider using a support worker to think through a conversation with a person or organisation you want to connect with.**

- » WIRE Women's Information: 1300 134 130
- » 1800 RESPECT: 1800 737 732

## FAMILY VIOLENCE COUNSELLING

Counselling, also known as therapy, talking therapy or psychotherapy, gives people the chance to talk to a trained professional in a safe and totally confidential environment, to explore feelings, thoughts, and behaviour.

### **Counselling can offer a supportive place to explore what's happening at home.**

Talking through problems is often very helpful, but sometimes, the people close to you can be too involved in the situation to be objective. Friends and relatives may also feel obliged to try to help fix challenges, by offering unwanted advice or blanket reassurance.

Counsellors exist to provide an independent, trained listening ear, able to view your situation without involvement, and able to help guide you to the approaches to your problems that suit you best. Many clients also report that having an appointment at a set time and place can be very helpful in working through issues.

### **Finding the right counsellor**

Check that your counsellor has a sound understanding of family violence and knows how to work with people that have experienced it.

Relationship and anger management counsellors are not appropriate for family violence support unless they are also trained and experienced in this area.

Before you commit to a particular counsellor, make sure you're comfortable with them. **A referral service such as WIRE will help you to find a suitable counsellor in your area.** For more information on how to choose a counsellor, see WIRE's counselling information page: [www.wire.org.au/counselling/](http://www.wire.org.au/counselling/).



### **Worried about your own behaviour?**

- » Men's Referral Service: 1300 766 491 or [mrs.org.au](http://mrs.org.au)
- » with respect: 1800 LGBTIQ or [withrespect.org.au](http://withrespect.org.au)



## 8

## A safe place to stay

It is important to have a safe place to live when ending an abusive relationship. If the person using violence has been removed from the home, many victim-survivors are able to remain living there with some extra security such as changed locks. For other victim-survivors finding a safe place to live might be with the family and friends, even if it is only for a short period of time. For others, the only safe option might be a refuge. **Talk to a family violence service to work out what your accommodation needs are and how you might be able to maximise your safety.**

### Staying in your own home

You have the right to stay in your own home and ask for the person using harm to leave. The person can be made to leave the home using an Intervention Order or the police might order them to leave and list you as a protected person on a Family Violence Safety Notice.

You can then change the locks — you have the right to change the locks if you are a protected person listed on an Intervention Order or Family Violence Safety Notice, even if you are living in a rental property. You do not need to be named on the lease, but you do need to live at the property. You can also stay in your current rental property

on a new tenancy agreement and you are entitled to reduce the term of your fixed term tenancy agreement.

The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) has a family violence support worker who can give you non-legal information and support with residential tenancy matters, especially if you are experiencing family violence and you believe your safety is at risk.

### CONTACT

For legal assistance or advice  
contact **Tenants Union of Victoria**

[www.tuv.org.au/advice/family-violence-and-your-tenancy/](http://www.tuv.org.au/advice/family-violence-and-your-tenancy/)

## Crisis accommodation

It is an unfortunate reality that crisis housing services are overwhelmed by demand. You can usually stay for a week or two in crisis accommodation, depending on service availability and your needs.

To access crisis accommodation, contact Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre.

» 1800 015 188  
(open 24/7)

» [www.safesteps.org.au](http://www.safesteps.org.au)

## Friends and family

If you are planning to leave, it might be worth identifying someone you know who might be willing to help you out. **Trusted friends and**

## family are often the best option for temporary accommodation.

It is not uncommon for victim-survivors to feel a range of emotions (guilt, shame, embarrassment) at having to ask friends and family for help. Yet, we also know that these people can become our greatest support. **For support to work out how to have a conversation with others, call WIRE on 1300 134 130.**

## Housing refuges

After you leave crisis accommodation, or if you're unable to stay with family and friends, Safe Steps may be able to support you to access refuges.

Refuges are safe places in secret locations that offer short-term accommodation (approximately six weeks) for victim-survivors and their children in urgent need of

## WHAT ABOUT MY PET(S)?

It can be hard to move on from an abusive relationship if you have to leave your pets behind. Unfortunately, very few crisis accommodation services take pets. Some animal refuges and hospitals also offer shelter for pets of victim-survivors and their children who are fleeing family violence. Contact your local Family Violence Outreach Service for further information. Also see: [petsofthehomeless.org.au](http://petsofthehomeless.org.au).

Alternatively, contact Lort Smith Animal Hospital on (03) 9287 6426.

somewhere to stay after they have fled family violence.

As demand exceeds supply, refugees often have long waiting lists.

For more information on crisis and short-term housing, download or order the WIRE information booklet *Dealing With a Housing Crisis – Needing Help Right Now*: [www.wire.org.au/resources/dealing-with-a-housing-crisis/](http://www.wire.org.au/resources/dealing-with-a-housing-crisis/)

### Transitional and long-term accommodation options

Your regional Family Violence Outreach Service can provide information about transitional and long-term accommodation options.

For **long-term housing** you can apply for priority public housing, however the wait is likely to be many years.

**Private rental** is another option and rental support is available by requesting assistance through your regional Family Violence Outreach Service. To find your local family violence service visit The Lookout website ([www.thelookout.org.au/service-directory](http://www.thelookout.org.au/service-directory)).

For more information about long-term housing, download or order the WIRE information booklet *Finding your next home – looking past a housing crisis*: [www.wire.org.au/resources/finding-your-next-home/](http://www.wire.org.au/resources/finding-your-next-home/)



## 9 Where can I get help with money?

Financial abuse is often a hidden aspect of family violence and can affect you long after you have left the abusive relationship.

See WIRE's information booklet *Money Problems With Your Partner? Dealing with Financial Abuse* ([www.wire.org.au/resources/money-problems/](http://www.wire.org.au/resources/money-problems/)) on ways you can keep your money safe from the person who uses violence.

You can also use WIRE's *Money and You* conversation kit to store your financial information safely and prepare for conversations about money. See [www.wire.org.au/my-money-conversation-kit/](http://www.wire.org.au/my-money-conversation-kit/)

The MoneySmart web site is also useful: [moneysmart.gov.au/financial-abuse](https://moneysmart.gov.au/financial-abuse)

## Centrelink

If you are planning to leave a violent or abusive relationship, or the person using violence leaves, you may be eligible for a crisis payment from Centrelink. **To be eligible, you must contact the department within seven days of separation.** A family violence worker can inform you in greater detail about Centrelink eligibility criteria and crisis payments.

You can also call a Centrelink social worker to discuss the payments you are entitled to in a crisis.

- » If you are on a Newstart Allowance call 132 850 Monday – Friday from 8am–5pm
- » If you are on a Parenting Payment or Family Tax Benefit Payment call 136 150 Monday – Friday from 8am–5pm

## Flexible Support Packages

Flexible support packages are available to assist you in meeting the financial costs of leaving a violent or abusive relationship. These packages are available from many of the services responding to family violence in your area. Read more about flexible

support packages for family violence here: [providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/family-violence-flexible-support-packages-program-requirements-word](https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/family-violence-flexible-support-packages-program-requirements-word)

## Victims Support Agency (VSA)

If you have reported family violence to the police, the Victims Support Agency may be able to provide financial assistance to help with your immediate safety and medical expenses, as well as support and counselling. A person who has been a victim of a crime in Victoria within the past two years, has suffered either a physical injury and/or a psychological injury and has reported the incident to the police may be eligible for compensation. See [victimsofcrime.vic.gov.au/victims-support-agency](https://victimsofcrime.vic.gov.au/victims-support-agency)

## Financial Counselling

You can also access free financial counselling to help you untangle your finances from your partner and to manage your own finances in the longer term. To find a financial counsellor in your area contact Financial Counselling Australia.

See [financialcounsellingaustralia.org.au](https://financialcounsellingaustralia.org.au) or contact the National Debt Helpline on 1800 007 007.

# 10 Employment

All employees are now entitled to **family violence leave**, which can help during a crisis. You may also find yourself looking for work for the first time if you have left your relationship. There are services that can help you find your way.

## Telling your employer

Although it might be confronting, it's a good idea to tell your workplace what is going on. All workplaces should now provide at least five days of family violence leave each year, so you can take time off to deal with moving house or with court appointments without using up personal or annual leave.

It might also be important for your workplace to know if there is an Intervention Order in place in case the person using violence tries to contact you at work or tries to ask your workplace about your whereabouts after you have moved house.

## Finding work

It's not uncommon for a person leaving a violent relationship to find themselves unemployed or under-

employed and looking to support themselves for the first time in a long while.

Recovering your financial and professional confidence can take time. Centrelink and other employment services may also make it seem more complicated to access support – although there are family violence guidelines these services should follow.

Organisations like WIRE run employment workshops and there may be other programs that run from time to time that you can be referred to that will help with resume writing, interview skills and more. Call 1300 134 130 to discuss what programs might suit you.



# How to respond to a disclosure

If you are a friend, family member, neighbour or work colleague of a person that you are concerned is experiencing family violence, you can contact WIRE or 1800 RESPECT. There, you can talk to a support worker about how you might have a conversation with the person or what the best way to support them might be.

Some useful tips for responding to a disclosure:

» **Take the disclosure seriously.**

People who use family violence can be very skilled at making other people think of them as 'good' and even 'kind' people. When a person trusts you and discloses what is happening, your job is to believe what the victim-survivor tells you about their experience.

- » **Be an active listener.** By listening to their story, you are giving the person experiencing violence the space to work through their options and what they can do. Active listening means you avoid passing judgment, minimising the person's experience, blaming them or not believing them.

- » **Refrain from telling a person what to do** – they are the best person to judge their own safety.
- » **Consider the reasons why the person may not have talked about the violence to you before.** What are the possible consequences they fear might happen if they talk to someone about what is happening?



For more information about supporting a person experiencing family violence you can visit the Domestic Violence Resource Centre (DVRCV) website:

[www.dvrcv.org.au/help-advice/guide-for-families-friends-and-neighbours](http://www.dvrcv.org.au/help-advice/guide-for-families-friends-and-neighbours)

or contact WIRE — 1300 134 130

# 12 List of services

<p><b>WIRE</b> An information and referral service for women, nonbinary and gender diverse people in Victoria</p>	<p>1300 134 130 Monday to Friday, 9.30am–4.30pm support@wire.org.au <a href="http://www.wire.org.au">www.wire.org.au</a></p>
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## FAMILY VIOLENCE SUPPORT SERVICES, RESOURCES AND SUPPORT GROUPS

<p><b>Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre</b> (formerly Women’s Domestic Violence Crisis Service of Victoria)  A state-wide crisis line that can connect you with local services or provide temporary accommodation and support</p>	<p>1800 015 188 <a href="http://www.safesteps.org.au">www.safesteps.org.au</a></p>
<p><b>1800RESPECT</b> A 24/7 counselling service for people experiencing family violence and/or sexual assault</p>	<p>1800 737 732 <a href="http://www.1800respect.org.au">www.1800respect.org.au</a></p>
<p><b>Victims of Crime Helpline</b></p>	<p>1800 819 817 / 0427 767 891 (for text messages) vsa@justice.vic.gov.au <a href="http://www.victimsofcrime.vic.gov.au">www.victimsofcrime.vic.gov.au</a></p>

Victoria Sexual Assault Crisis Line	1800 806 292 ahcasa@thewomens.org.au <a href="http://www.casa.org.au">www.casa.org.au</a>
Domestic Violence Outreach Services	Call WIRE (1300 134 130) for contact details in your area
Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria	<a href="http://www.dvrcv.org.au/talk-someone/victorian-services">www.dvrcv.org.au/talk-someone/victorian-services</a>
The Lookout Lists family violence and support services in your area	<a href="http://www.thelookout.org.au/service-directory">www.thelookout.org.au/service-directory</a>
Men's Referral Service	1300 766 491 <a href="http://mrs.org.au">mrs.org.au</a>

## LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND COURT SERVICES

Women's Legal Service Victoria	1800 133 302 / (03) 8622 0600 (open 6:30-8:30pm Tues & Thurs) <a href="http://www.womenslegal.org.au">www.womenslegal.org.au</a>
Court Network Can provide non-legal support whilst in Court	1800 681 614 <a href="http://www.courtnetwork.com.au">www.courtnetwork.com.au</a> admin@courtnetwork.com.au
Everyday Law	<a href="http://www.everyday-law.org.au">www.everyday-law.org.au</a>
Federation of Community Legal Centres To find a community legal service in your area (Victoria)	(03) 9652 1500 <a href="http://www.communitylaw.org.au">www.communitylaw.org.au</a>
The Law Handbook	<a href="http://www.lawhandbook.org.au">www.lawhandbook.org.au</a>
Victoria Legal Aid	1300 792 387 / (03) 9269 0120 <a href="http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au">www.legalaid.vic.gov.au</a>

## HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

Transitional Housing Services	Call WIRE (1300 134 130) for contact details in your area
Tenants Union of Victoria	(03) 9416 2577 <a href="http://www.tuv.org.au">www.tuv.org.au</a>
Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)	For residential tenancies: 1300 018 228 / 03 8685 1462 <a href="mailto:vcat@vcat.vic.gov.au">vcat@vcat.vic.gov.au</a>
Women's Homelessness Prevention Project at Justice Connect	(03) 8636 4400; <a href="http://justiceconnect.org.au/our-services/homeless-law/womens-homelessness-prevention-project/">justiceconnect.org.au/our-services/homeless-law/womens-homelessness-prevention-project/</a>
Ask Izzy A gateway to services relating to housing, meals, healthcare and more	<a href="http://askizzy.org.au">askizzy.org.au</a>

## GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Police, ambulance	Call 000 for immediate assistance
Centrelink Crisis Payment	132 850 (Newstart Allowances) 136 150 (Family & Parenting Payments) <a href="http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/crisis-payment">www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/crisis-payment</a>
Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)	To speak to a Disability Family Violence Liaison Officer: (03) 9843 6304 / 0437 741 920 <a href="mailto:disabilityfv@dhhs.vic.gov.au">disabilityfv@dhhs.vic.gov.au</a>

Child Support Information Service	131 107
<b>Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre</b> To get confidential support and information if you are living with family violence	<a href="https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/family-violence">services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/family-violence</a>
<b>Telephone Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)</b> Provides an interpreter to help you contact family violence services	131 450 <a href="http://www.tisnational.gov.au">www.tisnational.gov.au</a>

## SPECIALIST SUPPORT SERVICES

There are many factors that contribute to a victim-survivor's experience of family violence and their capacity to seek help. These factors include, but are not limited to, cultural practices and expectations, mental and physical health, sexuality, gender identification and age. You may have physical, cultural, language, geographical and social barriers to seeking support and assistance. Past experience may

also significantly impact on a person being able to seek help.

For these reasons, **specialist services are available for victim-survivors depending on your individual requirements.** If you are unsure whether a mainstream family violence service will be able to support you, you can always contact a service specific to your circumstance for support and advocacy.

<p><b>Djirra</b> Provides culturally safe and holistic support, and specialist family violence legal assistance and representation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by family violence and sexual assault.</p>	<p>1800 105 303 <a href="http://www.djirra.org.au">www.djirra.org.au</a></p>
<p><b>Switchboard Victoria</b> Provides peer-driven support services for LGBTIQ+ people</p>	<p>1800 184 527 <a href="http://www.switchboard.org.au">www.switchboard.org.au</a></p>
<p><b>With Respect</b> Specialist LGBTIQ+ service that supports people affected by family violence</p>	<p>1800 LGBTIQ (that's 1800 542 847) <a href="http://www.withrespect.org.au/contact">www.withrespect.org.au/contact</a></p>
<p><b>inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence</b> Provides integrated, culturally tailored services to migrant and refugee communities experiencing family violence</p>	<p>1800 755 988 / (03) 9413 6500 <a href="http://www.intouch.org.au">www.intouch.org.au</a></p>
<p><b>Seniors Rights Victoria</b> Provides support to help prevent elder abuse and protect rights and independence of older people</p>	<p>1300 368 821 info@seniorsrights.org.au <a href="http://www.seniorsrights.org.au">www.seniorsrights.org.au</a></p>
<p><b>Seniors Law Program at Justice Connect</b></p>	<p>(03) 8636 4400 <a href="http://www.justiceconnect.org.au/our-programs/seniors-law">www.justiceconnect.org.au/our-programs/seniors-law</a></p>

Call us:



**1300 134 130**

Weekdays 9am to 5pm  
(mobile costs may vary)



Visit us:

372 Spencer Street,  
West Melbourne 3003  
Weekdays 9.30am to 4.30pm



Contact us:

[support@wire.org.au](mailto:support@wire.org.au)



Chat online, download resources  
and book into events:

[wire.org.au](http://wire.org.au)

(Chat weekdays only)



Stay up to date:

[facebook.com/wirewomensinformation](https://facebook.com/wirewomensinformation)  
[twitter.com/wirewomensinfo](https://twitter.com/wirewomensinfo)

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