

# Recognising Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

**Women and their children can experience many different forms of violent and abusive behaviour. Statistics show that this behaviour is predominantly carried out by men.**

**To help you effectively identify, support and respond to individuals and families who may be experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) it is important to know what it is and what you can do to help.**

## **What is Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence?**

Domestic and family violence is abusive behaviour by a partner, ex-partner, someone the victim is in an intimate relationship with, or from a member of her family including across generations, which is used to control or scare the victim.

### **It's not just physical**

Domestic violence can include:

- physical violence causing injury – hitting, biting, pushing, kicking, strangulation
- sexual violence – forcing someone to have sex. It can include rape and sexual assault, incest and child sexual abuse
- emotional or psychological abuse – name calling or publicly embarrassing a partner
- verbal abuse – yelling, swearing or constantly criticising a partner
- social abuse – isolating and preventing someone from seeing friends and family
- spiritual abuse – denying or using spiritual or religious beliefs and practices to control and dominate someone
- damage to property – to control, intimidate, threaten or demean
- financial abuse – controlling finances or denying essential money
- threats of harm – including to pets and children
- stalking – pursuing someone against their will, in person or online
- sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in public
- female genital mutilation
- forced and child marriages
- so called 'honour' crimes – involving violence and fear to control a woman, based on perceptions that she has acted in a way that brings dishonour to the family
- dowry-related abuse – where a gifted dowry is considered unsatisfactory by the groom and/or his family. It can result in harassment of the bride before, during and after the wedding and abuse and violence to extort an increased dowry. In extreme cases it can lead to death.

## Under the Law

Everyone has the right to live in safety and be treated with respect. The law in Australia treats men and women equally. DFSV is not accepted and are crimes against the law.

In South Australia, under the law, DFSV perpetrators can be charged with assault or, if injury is inflicted, with causing harm.

## How can I tell if someone is experiencing DFSV?

DFSV is damaging to victims, their children, family and friends. It can happen to anyone, regardless of age, class, sexual orientation, ability, race, gender or religion.

Some of the signs that a woman is experiencing DFSV include:

- Suddenly stopping going out with no reason
- Worrying a lot about making a particular person angry
- Making a lot of excuses for someone's negative behaviour
- Having marks or injuries on her body that can't be explained
- Stopping spending time with friends and family
- Seeming scared or wary around a particular person
- Seeming worried that they are being watched, followed or controlled in some way.

## What are the signs of violent or abusive behaviour?

A perpetrator of violence and abuse may:

- Act in ways that make their wife/girlfriend/partner scared
- Put their wife/girlfriend/partner down all the time
- Make threats to hurt their wife/girlfriend/partner
- Control their wife/girlfriend/partner including:
  - Where they go
  - Who they see and who they speak to
  - What happens to their money
  - How and when they can use their phone, car, or computer
  - How they are allowed to behave by having a lot of rules
  - Getting angry if she doesn't follow their rules.

## Taking the next step

DFSV is not acceptable in any community or culture. You can play a key role in preventing and addressing DFSV and keeping women and children safe.

To find out if someone is experiencing DFSV take the time to listen and support them.

Further information is available at 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732) or [www.1800RESPECT.org.au](http://www.1800RESPECT.org.au)

**In an emergency or if someone is in danger call 000 immediately.**

This is one of 4 Fact Sheets on DFSV. Further information on what you can do to help someone experiencing DFSV is available in Fact Sheet 2. To find out about promoting gender equality and respect see Fact Sheets 3 and 4.



Government  
of South Australia



**MCCSA**  
Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia



Women's Safety Services SA

**BREAK  
THE  
CYCLE**  
OF DOMESTIC ABUSE