

GUIDE TO RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE IN THE ACT PUBLIC SERVICE

This guide aims to help staff and managers to respond to victim/survivors and perpetrators of domestic and family violence in ACT Public Service (ACTPS) workplaces.

RESPONDING TO VICTIM/ SURVIVORS

The ACTPS strives to create a safe and supportive environment for victim/survivors of domestic and family violence to disclose to an appropriate person, if they wish to. Disclosure means telling another person about an experience of domestic and family violence, including past or ongoing experiences. Disclosure is about seeking support. Someone who discloses to you is putting a lot of trust in you. The most important thing to know is how to respond effectively.

The following are ways to respond professionally and empathetically to an employee who discloses domestic and family violence.

- > Believing and validating the person's experience
- > Affirming that the person is blameless
- > Understanding that domestic and family violence is about control and ensuring that the person feels in control of any plans you put in place
- > Being non-judgemental, supportive and encouraging
- > Exploring with the person ACTPS supports available (see right)
- > Offering information about external supports available—see the *Domestic and Family Violence: Where to get Help Guide* for more information

Managers who have undertaken the relevant training should also consider undertaking safety planning with the victim/survivor, where necessary.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- > If someone discloses domestic and family violence to you, they are showing enormous trust and it is important to maintain this trust, where possible.
- > It is important that someone making a disclosure is not forced to act. You can talk about their options, but people who have experienced violence are best-placed to understand how to protect their safety. Taking action can sometimes be more dangerous.
- > If you believe that someone is at serious, imminent risk of being harmed, you must consider informing the police, provided you have talked this through with the person who has made a disclosure, first.

INTERNAL SUPPORTS

- > ACTPS employees can access paid leave for domestic and family violence purposes—for more information, see *Leave for Domestic Violence Purposes Advice* in this Toolkit.
- > There are a range of flexible work arrangements available to ACTPS employees—check the flexible work arrangements section of your relevant ACTPS enterprise agreement.
- > You can access the Employee Assistance Program—the contact number is available from your Corporate Human Resources area and you are not required to provide details when inquiring.

SAFETY PLANNING

Safety planning is thinking about things that a victim/survivor of domestic and family violence can do to be safer. It is best done with the help of a support service, but co-workers can also play an important role. When developing a workplace safety plan, consider the below.

- > Travel to and from work duties off-site—consider putting in place flexible workplace arrangements to increase safety, such as flexible hours .
- > Vulnerable areas within the workplace—consider the victim/survivor’s safety in areas that may be hidden from view or subject to breach, such as carparks.
- > Security of confidential information—ensure all staff members are aware that personal information should not be supplied by anyone other than the person to whom it relates, even to known parties (such as partners).
- > Protection from telephone and online harassment—consider measures such as agreeing not to give out the victim/survivors phone number, or screening their calls.

Remember, the person disclosing knows best how to ensure their safety.

RESPONDING TO PERPETRATORS

The ACTPS does not tolerate domestic and family violence, sexual assault or harassment. Such behaviour is a direct violation of the ACTPS Code of Conduct and Section 9 of the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*.

- > When an offence has occurred at the workplace, or when a criminal offence is believed to have occurred, a report should be made to police.
- > Allegations of sexual or physical assault within the bounds of the workplace should be immediately referred to the police, without internal investigation.
- > If it becomes known that an ACTPS employee is perpetrating domestic and family violence outside the workplace, consider making a referral to Everyman Australia (see right) for men’s behavior change services or other support, but only if you believe it is safe to do so.

YOUR SAFETY AND WELLBEING

If you are responding to domestic or family violence, make sure you look after your own safety and wellbeing. Supporting someone experiencing domestic and family violence can be distressing.

Remember, you can access the Employee Assistance Program.

IMPORTANT CANBERRA NUMBERS

In an emergency or If not an emergency	Police 000 131 444
Domestic Violence Crisis Services (24 Hours) www.dvcs.org.au	02 6280 0900
Canberra Rape Crisis Centre (24 Hours) www.crcc.org.au	02 6247 2525
Victim Support ACT www.victimsupport.act.gov.au	1800 822 272
Everyman Australia www.everyman.org.au	02 6230 6999
Employee Assistance Program (EAP) www.convergeinternational.com.au	1300 687 327

NATIONAL NUMBERS

National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service (24 Hours) www.1800respect.org.au	1800RESPECT (1800 737 732)
Lifeline (24 Hours) www.lifeline.org.au	13 11 14
Kidshelpline (24 hours) www.kidshelpline.com.au	1800 55 1800
MensLine (24 Hours) www.mensline.org.au	1300 789 978
Translating and Interpreting Service www.tisnational.gov.au	131 450

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Information in this guide was significantly sourced from the [White Ribbon Campaign Fact Sheet What to do when someone tells you they have experienced violence or abuse](#).