

Domestic and Family Violence Vulnerability

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Domestic and Family Violence

Description and Context

'Domestic and family violence' is commonly understood as an abuse of power perpetrated mainly (but not only) by men against women in an intimate relationship or after separation. For Indigenous people, the term 'family violence' is preferred as it encompasses all forms of violence in intimate relationships, family and other types of relationships of mutual obligation and support (for example, elders, siblings and extended family members). The [NSW Domestic Violence Interagency Guidelines](#) provide a range of descriptions, including legal definitions (defining the criminal nature of domestic and family violence) used in the NSW Court and justice system.

This practice resource uses the term 'domestic and family violence' to refer to abusive behaviour by one person to control and dominate another person within an intimate relationship, causing fear, emotional and/or physical harm across a broad spectrum of behaviours and contexts. The resource addresses the impact of domestic and family violence on children and asserts that children are always affected by domestic violence, whether they are physically hurt or not. It also acknowledges that where there is one form of violence there may be others.

A growing body of national and international research shows that domestic and family violence and child abuse frequently occur within the same families, and it is estimated that 30 to 60 per cent of children whose mothers are subjected to domestic violence are also being abused. During the 2004/05 year, [DoCS Domestic Violence Line](#) received more than 20,000 calls, the majority of which were about issues related to verbal, psychological and physical violence. More than 5,800 of these calls involved 11,820 children.

Research indicates that women are more likely to be victims and men more likely to be perpetrators of domestic violence (see, for example, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006). Men also perpetrate around 75% of Australian domestic homicides (Mouzos & Rushforth 2003).

Domestic and family violence involves a range of behaviours, from occasional instances of verbal abuse to serious threats, life threatening assaults, and homicide, and can include:

- *physical assault* (including punching, hitting, kicking, pushing, slapping, choking, or the use of weapons)
- *sexual assault* (forcing a woman to have sex or participate in sexual activities, either by watching or participating)

- *emotional abuse* (making a woman feel worthless, criticising her personality, looks, dress, constantly putting her down, threatening to hurt her children or pets)
- *verbal abuse* (including yelling, shouting, name-calling and swearing at a woman)
- *social abuse* (stopping a woman from seeing friends and family, isolating her socially or geographically)
- *damaging property* (such as furniture, the house or pets in order to threaten or intimidate a woman)
- *financial abuse* (taking control of the money, not giving a woman enough money to survive on, forcing her to hand over her money, not letting her have a say in how money is spent)
- *stalking* (a pattern of repeated and unwanted harassment and contact, such as following or waiting for a woman or making direct or indirect threats to harm her children, relatives, friends, or pets)
- *intimidation* (harassment, including, the making of repeated telephone calls).

This practice resource acknowledges that men may also be victims of domestic and family violence and women may also be perpetrators and that domestic and family violence can also occur in same-sex relationships. However, the language of this



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practice resource reflects the dominant pattern of domestic and family violence where generally, women are the victims and men are the perpetrators.

There is no easy way to draw a line between the different forms and degrees of domestic and family violence in relation to the appropriateness or otherwise of families to participate in Brighter Futures. As a Brighter Futures worker you will, wherever possible, work with all family members. However, you should never compromise your own safety or the safety of children or other family members. Also, where new or significant risk factors are identified during suitability assessment or while families are participating in the program, Brighter Futures workers should follow procedures outlined in Section 5 of the DoCS Brighter Futures Caseworker Manual, May 2008 and/or the DoCS Brighter Futures Service Provision Guidelines, May 2008 and other relevant agency procedures.

Key learnings from research

There are many unhelpful myths and inaccuracies surrounding domestic and family violence but there are also some evidence-based key findings that will assist Brighter Futures caseworkers to work effectively with families.

Domestic and family violence:

- often starts or escalates during pregnancy or soon after birth. Forty-two per cent (42%) of women who responded to the

Australian Women's Safety Survey reported that they had experienced violence during pregnancy

- can affect an infant's developing brain, which organises itself in response to events in early childhood. Stress responses associated with domestic and family violence can affect the development of the infant's brain resulting in long term maladaptive behaviours
- damages the well-being and future life chances of children and women
- occurs in all age, socio-economic, cultural and professional groups
- often remains a hidden problem, never discussed let alone reported to anyone (Mouzos and Makkai 2004)
- usually involves a sustained pattern of abusive behaviours and attitudes that may escalate over time
- is frequently associated with other risk factors, which can include: a past history of violence, alcohol/substance abuse, a diagnosis of a serious psychiatric disorder, poverty, child sexual assault, child physical abuse, child neglect, parental antisocial personality, maternal depression and harsh or punitive parenting styles.

In addition:

- Many barriers – practical and psychological - prevent women (especially those with children) from leaving their abusive partner, including the

threat of reprisals and/or further violence. Research indicates that women will leave up to six or seven times before they finally leave a violent relationship.

- Being drug or alcohol affected can make domestic and family violence worse, but does not cause and is not an excuse for domestic and family violence.
- All domestic violence is unacceptable and some forms are a crime.
- An Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) can be made which does not necessarily require the perpetrator to leave the family home. The Domestic Violence Interagency Guidelines provide comprehensive information about AVOs.

Impact of domestic and family violence on parenting capacity and child wellbeing and safety

Children's wellbeing and safety

For optimal development, children need to grow up in a secure and nurturing environment, and have positive relationships with parents/carers who provide comfort and emotional safety during times of stress and fear. Strong relationship foundations enable a child to predict their world, feel safe, seek and receive comfort, calm themselves, build other positive relationships, consider others' feelings, cope with stress and become confident adults.

Domestic and family violence generally creates difficulties in establishing these and/or nurturing these relationships, and children may not feel safe or secure. The following issues are important when thinking about how domestic and family violence impact on children.

➤ While every child experiences different rates of development, evidence tells us that domestic violence is strongly connected with adverse outcomes for children's development. Living with domestic and family violence can impact the physical, emotional, social and psychological health and wellbeing and growth of babies, toddlers and children by disrupting age-appropriate development. The impact of domestic and family violence on child development will depend on a variety of factors such as age, gender, cultural background, the nature and extent of the abuse witnessed, the amount of support the child has received and the child's developmental stage. Children are always affected by domestic and family violence, whether they are physically hurt or not. Further information regarding the effects on children can be found in [Domestic Violence and its Impact on Children's Development](#) and [Little Eyes, Little Ears: How violence against a mother shapes children as they grow](#).

➤ Evidence tells us women are at heightened risk for domestic and family violence during pregnancy. Domestic violence (physical) during pregnancy increases the risks of miscarriage, foetal injury and early labour.

➤ There are many [indicators of children's exposure to domestic violence](#) including, emotional, psychological, behavioural and physical (see Chapter 2, page 12). Children often experience a complex mix of emotions and feelings when exposed to domestic and family violence. This includes feelings of fear, mistrust, shame, anger, helplessness, low self-esteem, depression, guilt and self blame, worry, responsibility, difficulty understanding parenting and a sense of divided loyalty between their parents. Domestic and family violence can also result in serious physical harm and even death. A number of documents listed under Endorsed Research and Resources below discuss the impacts of domestic and family violence on children at different stages of development, including [Little Eyes, Little Ears: How violence against a mother shapes children as they grow](#).

➤ Children, including babies, who experience domestic violence may demonstrate signs of stress such as headaches, stomach aches,

sleep problems, nightmares and bedwetting. Babies may experience feeding and settling problems and interrupted sleep patterns. Children may also:

- o believe that violence in families is normal
- o learn that the only way to get what you want is by using violence
- o feel responsible for the violence and/or for protecting non-offending parent and/or siblings
- o attempt to intervene in domestic violence situation
- o miss school to stay near a parent who is hurt
- o run away from home
- o use drugs and alcohol
- o demonstrate aggressive language and behaviour in relationships with peers, siblings and other family members
- o demonstrate poor academic performance and problem solving skills
- o have no friends or withdraw from family activities
- o demonstrate hyper-vigilance, jittery behaviour, restlessness.

➤ Ongoing exposure to domestic violence may sometimes result in symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder, such as emotional numbing, hyper-vigilance, avoidance of any reminder of the violent event, or obsessive and repeated focus on the event.

↘ While many children are affected adversely by domestic and family violence it is also important to remember that many children who witness domestic and family violence will recover their competence and behaviour functioning once they are in a safer, more secure environment. Brighter Futures workers should be aware that the impacts may vary from child to child and should design their work with children around the child's particular needs.

Parenting capacity and women

Domestic and family violence may impair the parenting capacity of both partners who may feel less able to cope with parenting or to parent well. You should consider the following when thinking about how domestic and family violence affects parenting:

↘ A woman's parenting capacity may be affected because often she is simply 'surviving' herself. She may feel powerless to change the violent environment and focus on her children's needs in order to parent in a way that keeps children safe and enhances wellbeing. For a woman, ongoing domestic and family violence may:

- o mean that her decisions are constantly undermined (by her partner)
- o limited access to finances for the care of family/self/children

- o make it difficult to access medical care (for bruises, fractures, cuts)
- o mean limited opportunity for normal social contact for her child and herself
- o make it difficult to protect her children from other forms of abuse
- o prevent her from providing her children with strong nurturing, positive and reliable relationships which are vital to help children manage the stress and trauma in their lives and to enable healthy child development
- o make it difficult to develop expectations of respectful behaviour from her children
- o cause trauma, lessening capacity to help her child make sense of what is happening during or after a violent incident, as she would do in other frightening situations. Sometimes there may be so much fear, worry and stress that the mother is not able to comfort and soothe her child/ren to help them feel safe again
- o mean that she experiences hyper-anxiety and alertness, depression, and a range of other mental health conditions.

↘ Working to enhance parenting capacity is important because a mother who is able to maintain her parenting abilities and is perceived by her children to be positively supportive can moderate the risks of harm

and negative experiences children may face in domestic and family violence environments.

↘ Helping a mother to overcome barriers (e.g. loss of housing, lack of income) and build a strong social network will help to build her capacity to make better decisions regarding her own safety and that of her children.

↘ When addressing a woman's parenting capacity Brighter Futures workers must remain mindful of how interventions can affect the woman, to ensure that the intervention does not replicate the dynamics of the domestic and family violence. For example, workers should not criticise and judge the woman, should allow the woman space to make decisions about herself and her children, and should focus on the woman's strengths.

Parenting capacity and perpetrators

Where possible, you should work with *both* parents/carers, keeping in mind the following:

- ↘ Working with men therapeutically to address their violence requires specialised experience and expertise. Where possible, Brighter Futures workers should engage with men around:
- o raising their awareness of the effects of the violence on their child/ren

- o taking responsibility for their violence (and where this succeeds making a referral to an appropriate service)
 - o identifying ways the man can better promote the safety and wellbeing of his child/ren. This can be addressed by focusing on the man's parenting responsibilities and developing a safety and responsibility plan.
- Engaging with the perpetrator of domestic or family violence separately and specifically around his responsibilities can provide an important message to him and to his family. In a best case scenario, the woman and children will be able to see the man demonstrating a commitment to acknowledging his responsibility and to addressing his abusive behaviour.
- Parenting styles of offending men can vary widely, with some having positive interactions with their children, for example, providing for physical and financial needs and not being directly physically abusive. Focus on and validate a man's parenting strengths to encourage positive interactions and strengthen the parent-child relationship. Refer the man to local parenting or other groups as appropriate to provide him with support, assist his parenting skill development and connection with the community.

Specific information on working with men around parenting is available at the [Family Action Centre website](#).

Evidence-based practice principles

The following practice principles are not a substitute for training or managerial advice. Their aim is to raise your awareness of strategies available to you to further develop casework practices that effectively promote the wellbeing of children experiencing domestic and family violence. For more information you should visit the 'Endorsed Research and Resources' and 'Specialised Services' section of this document and/or talk to your manager or supervisor.

➤ Be aware of your own safety.

Safety is the most important aspect of intervention in domestic violence matters, and worker safety is just as important as the safety of children and women. You must always consider your own personal safety and wellbeing. This includes:

- o knowing about and complying with DoCS or your agency's safety protocols
- o discussing safety issues with your manager when preparing to go out to visit the family and when debriefing following the visit. For DoCS Brighter Futures workers this will be occur as part of the Pre Assessment Consultation (PAC) and Assessment

Consultation (AC) Framework

- o always trusting your own instincts about your safety
 - o removing yourself from an environment if you feel unsafe
 - o meeting with clients in a safe place
 - o engaging in training opportunities to increase knowledge and skills
 - o offering support to colleagues when necessary and generally contributing to a workplace ethos of support and staff care.
- **There needs to be ongoing assessment of the safety and protection of children and women.** Where there is domestic violence things can change dramatically from one day to the next. Domestic and family violence has been shown to be cyclic. A typical cycle will involve an episode of physical violence (or other form of abuse) followed by a 'honeymoon' period where the perpetrator expresses sorrow and regret for the incident, love for his partner and children, and often makes promises not to let it happen again. During this period of the cycle the woman is protective of her relationship, feels a strong need to believe that her partner means what he is saying, and she is therefore not in touch with the reality of the potential risks to herself and her children. After the 'honeymoon' period

there is usually a further build up of tension, sometimes gradual, at other times not. At some stage this tension reaches a crisis point and there is another incident of violence or abuse.

Brighter Futures workers need to be aware of the different parts of the violence cycle so that they can appropriately assess the levels of risk to the woman and children during the different phases. One indicator of risk is a high level of fear felt by the woman and children.

Some strategies to facilitate the assessment of safety of children and women include:

- o talk to the woman and the man separately to discuss issues about risk and safety
- o provide an opportunity for children to express their fears and tell their stories. This may mean talking to children without their parent/s present
- o consider risk and safety issues in the context of the history of violence in the family to identify patterns of violent behaviour, any escalation in seriousness and frequency, and how risks have been dealt with in the past. For example: Have the Police needed to be involved before? Is/has there been an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order in place? Was the order breached?
- o consider the level of the woman's knowledge about safe options and also access to these for the woman and her children
- o look at specific barriers to safety for women and children with disabilities, CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children
- o when there is a crisis, meet with the woman and children in a safe location, which may be the family home or some other place
- o [Child Protection and Family Violence Guidance for Child Protection Practitioners, 2005](#) outlines some considerations for child protection workers that may also assist Brighter Futures workers to assess risk and safety (page 4).

➤ **If you witness a serious domestic and/or family violence incident** you need to immediately assess the potential safety issues for yourself, the victim and any child/ren that are present. Depending on the seriousness of the situation, you may need to remove yourself from the situation, contact Police, and/or make a risk of harm report. If the child is 'at immediate risk of serious harm' you (if you are a DoCS EI Caseworker) or the Police have the authority to remove them under s.43 of the *Children and Young Person (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.

It may be necessary to remove the child and yourself from the danger prior to Police arriving. However, it is important that you always consider your own safety first. When the situation is contained, you should report the incident to your manager or supervisor and make a risk of harm report to DoCS. Brighter Futures workers should refer to risk of harm procedures outlined in Section 5 of the DoCS Brighter Futures Caseworker Manual, May 2008 and/or the DoCS Brighter Futures Service Provision Guidelines, May 2008 and other relevant agency reporting procedures.

➤ **Don't expect immediate disclosure of domestic and family violence.** Family members often don't disclose domestic violence for a range of reasons. For women, this can involve the fear of children being removed from their care and an increase in violence. Children may find it extremely difficult to tell a "family secret" and they may want to be loyal and protect both parents. Particular family groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, migrant, ethnic minority, women or children with disabilities, and people in same-sex relationships are likely to face additional barriers to disclosure. (For DoCS Brighter Futures workers, the DoCS CDC Domestic Violence Participant Handbook pp. 37-40 provides some more information about these barriers).

Safe practice where there has been no disclosure involves:

- o determining if presenting 'problems' indicate domestic violence (see indicators in chapter 2, page 12)
- o providing support through practical suggestions to increase the safety and wellbeing of children and enhance parenting capacity
- o reiterating general concerns for the children's safety
- o informing the woman about options and services.

➤ **Believe children and women's disclosures of domestic violence.** Your belief validates an often difficult and traumatic decision to disclose and should assist the family in beginning to have trust and confidence in working with you. It is particularly crucial to take seriously any allegations of abuse by those who are most vulnerable and most likely to be disbelieved.

➤ **Consider each family situation and child on a case by case basis.** Domestic and family violence is not just physical violence. Domestic and family violence is perpetrated and experienced differently within different families. It is important to take account of the varying needs of families and family members as there are no certainties about the way in

which an individual child will react to living with domestic and family violence.

➤ **Work with families in a non-judgemental and non-blaming way.** Sometimes a woman chooses to remain in or return to a violent relationship. It is crucial to offer and talk through options in a non-judgemental way while advising that domestic and family violence impacts children and reinforcing the importance of children's safety and well-being. A woman is not responsible for the violence and you must be sensitive to ensure that you provide support rather than blame.

➤ **Recognise and validate a woman's strength and right to choose.** Validate the experience of the woman, acknowledge survival skills and identify good parenting practices that support children's safety and wellbeing and that she can build on.

➤ **Ensure your practice is always culturally sensitive.** Be aware of any additional barriers in accessing services for Aboriginal people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds that may exist. Use your agency policies and practice tools to support your work with families where culture is a factor. The DoCS practice resource Engaging with Aboriginal Children and Families provides Brighter Futures workers with pointers

to culturally sensitive practice with Aboriginal families. The DoCS Good Practice Guide: Working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people and communities is available to support the practice of DoCS Brighter Futures staff.

➤ **Work with families in a supportive, solution focused and non-directive way to strengthen women and children.** Wherever possible, your practices should support women to take back some control over their own lives and enable them to protect and care for their children. The stronger a woman feels, the more likely it is that she will be able to effectively support her children.

➤ **Provide women with suggestions about how to support their children, and model this behaviour.** Suggestions include:

- o reassure the child that the violence is not their fault
- o give the child an opportunity to talk about the violence and their feelings and worries
- o help the child to identify people that they can trust
- o let the child know that others have had similar experiences
- o let the child know that it is not their role to protect a parent or other family member
- o let the child know that you want to know how they feel.

- **Provide women with ways to look after themselves.** This includes accessing social supports and taking time out for themselves. Nurturing activities will help with stress, have a positive effect on mental and physical health and help counter the effects of isolation that often characterise domestic and family violence.
- **Discuss with the woman the range of options available to her (including legal options) and how she can access emergency support.** This could include:

 - o assisting the woman to develop an emergency safety plan for the family – this is an individual plan that provides an escape avenue for the woman and children and ensures that all essential items are available when needed eg items such as identification, medical documents and bank details. These items could be left with a friend or a neighbour in case the woman has to leave the home suddenly with the children
 - o providing the woman with emergency contact numbers including the DoCS Domestic Violence Line and the Police Domestic Violence Liaison Officer
 - o where needed, and especially where requested by the woman, providing assistance in obtaining AVOs or other [legal support](#) to enhance safety.
- **Encourage fathers to take responsibility for the violent and/or other abusive behaviours.** Engage with the father separately and specifically around his responsibility for the violence, the impact of the violence on his child/ren and helping him to identify ways he can better promote the safety and wellbeing of his child/ren. Requiring perpetrators of domestic and family violence to be accountable and take responsibility for the violence means exercising caution where the perpetrator requests information, advice or other help, to ensure these requests are not contributing to minimising or redefining the perpetrator's responsibilities. Perpetrators of violence should not be referred to services such as marriage or relationship counselling, as such services reflect assumptions of shared responsibility and solutions for relationship or family issues. If referring the man to services that address perpetrator violence, caseworkers should ensure these services:

 - o are administered by skilled, supervised practitioners
 - o employ strategies for external monitoring of perpetrators behaviour
 - o prioritise and maximise victim safety.
- **Facilitate an increased awareness in fathers of the impact of their violence on the child/ren.** Where possible, it is important to let men know about the impact of violence on children's safety and wellbeing. This could mean providing information to the man directly about the impact of violent behaviour on his children. The [Choosing Positive Paths Parenting kit](#) provides some information brochures about the impact of domestic violence on children of different ages that could be provided to fathers.
- **Skill development around engaging with fathers who use violence.** If you are unsure how to engage with men who use violence, you should discuss this in supervision with your manager or supervisor. It is also important for you to explore options with your manager or supervisor for accessing training to enhance your skills and expertise in this area, such as the DoCS Brighter Futures 'Safe Homes, Safer Futures' training.

Refer to the 'Endorsed Research and Resources' and 'Specialised Services' sections for information about supports and resources for men. It may also be helpful to talk to your manager or supervisor to identify other locally-based appropriate services.

Endorsed research and resources

General Domestic and Family Violence resources

NSW Government sites

NSW Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention 2006 – See chapter 2.3.6 (pp. 11-13) '[Indicators of Domestic Violence](#)'

[Domestic Violence Interagency Guidelines](#) (NSW) – online tool written for workers in the field working in or dealing with the legal system and/or working with women dealing with the legal system. They also look at resources and services available to workers and to support women experiencing domestic violence.

Australian government sites

[Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse](#) – a central point for the collection and dissemination of Australian domestic and family violence policy, practice and research including [Domestic Violence Legislation in NSW](#)

[Domestic Violence in Australia – an Overview of the Issues](#) (Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library) a comprehensive overview of domestic violence including information on risk groups and the costs of domestic violence.

Office for Women (Commonwealth) [Domestic Violence Help](#) includes information about current Australian Government initiatives and a comprehensive list of [resources/publications](#).

[Raising Children Network – The Australian Parenting Website](#) an excellent website providing information on parenting and children through their developmental stages, including: [More than arguments: domestic violence](#)

Other relevant information

[Better Health](#) – a Victorian Government website providing health and medical information for consumers, including [Domestic Violence – Why men abuse women](#)

[Domestic violence...it bruises every aspect of a woman's life fact sheet](#)

[Intimate Partner Violence and Alcohol fact sheet, WHO](#)

[Women with Disabilities Australia](#)

[Violence against women with disabilities](#)

[Promoting Women's Mental Health: The challenges of intimate/domestic violence against women](#)

[A review of literature relating to family and domestic violence in culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia](#)

Impacts of domestic and family violence on child wellbeing and safety

[Better Health](#), a Victorian Government website providing health and medical information for consumers, including:

[Domestic Violence and Children fact sheet](#) and [Domestic Violence – tips for children fact sheet](#)

[Department of Community Services, NSW](#). The site contains:

- o two domestic violence brochures: [Domestic Violence: you can live without it](#) and [Supporting someone who experiences domestic violence](#) that can be printed and given to clients and that are available in community languages.
- o a discussion paper on [Domestic Violence and its impact on Children's Development](#).

[Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre](#) – a Victorian statewide service providing support, information and referral to people who have experienced domestic and family violence, training to workers, publications, information, and comment and advocacy, including [Bursting the Bubble](#) (for children).

[National Child Protection Clearinghouse](#) – information, advisory and research unit focused on the prevention of child abuse and neglect and associated family violence.

[Little Eyes, Little Ears: How violence against a mother shapes children as they grow](#)

[Choosing Positive Paths Parenting kit](#) is made up of ten brochures, each of which contains information and tips.

Men and domestic and family violence

[Domestic Violence: Dangerousness, Parenting and the Perpetrator](#) (USA)

[Freedom from Fear](#) – a Western Australian campaign against domestic and family violence focusing primarily on perpetrators of domestic violence and men at risk of perpetrating domestic violence. Contains excellent resources directed towards encouraging men to accept responsibility for their behaviour and take action to end the abuse.

[Mensline Australia](#) – a national service to empower Australian men to actively participate in building and sustaining healthy personal relationships that support healthy families, workplaces and communities, including online forums, self-help tips and a document library.

[The Men's Project: exploring responses to men who are victims or perpetrators of family and domestic violence](#) – a West Australian initiative in engaging men in the reduction of family and domestic violence.

No to Violence (Victoria) – a peak organisation of individuals and agencies working for the prevention of male family violence. The specific focus is work with men to assist them to change and end their violent behaviour.

Fathers Direct: The National Information Centre on Fatherhood (UK)

Specialised services

Women

DoCS Domestic Violence Line – a 24 hours, 7 days a week telephone support and referral line for people experiencing family violence. The DV Line is a free, statewide 24 hours telephone crisis counselling and referral service. The line is staffed by trained female counsellors. They are also trained to help women who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Includes a broad range of support and counselling contacts, www.community.nsw.gov.au/DOCS/STANDARD/PC_101007.htm, 1800 656 463 (24 hours, 7 days a week), TTY 1800 671 442

NSW Police Force – Domestic and Family Violence, www.police.nsw.gov.au/community_issues/domestic_and_family_violence

NSW Rape Crisis Centre – a statewide 24 hours telephone and online crisis, support and referral service for women who have experienced sexual violence. www.nswrapecrisis.com.au/, 1800 424 017 or 02 9819 6565 (24 hours)

NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre – the central contact for the New South Wales Women's Refuge Movement (WRM). A network of 57 women's refuges situated across New South Wales providing support and accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence, www.wrrc.org.au/, 02 9518 8379

NSW Department of Housing – provides information about housing for people who are affected by domestic violence, www.housing.nsw.gov.au/, 1800 629 212

Women's Information and Referral Service – a free and confidential telephone service with information and contact details on hundreds of organisations and services for women, 1800 817 227

Women's safety after separation, www.ncsmc.org.au/wsas/welcome.htm

Women with disabilities

Women with Disabilities Australia – Women with Disabilities Australia Information and Referral Directory, www.wwda.org.au/

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal and Advocacy Service, 1800 639 784

Aboriginal Medical Service – a list of Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS) in NSW, including links to individual service websites. www.vibe.com.au/drugs/ams/archive.asp?state=NSW

People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities

Immigrant Women's Speak Out – the peak advocacy, information/referral and research body representing the ideas and issues of immigrant and refugee women in NSW. www.speakout.org.au/, www.speakout.org.au/dv.html (the domestic violence project), 02 9635 8022

Telephone Interpreter Service, 131 450

Lesbian and Gay people

Another Closet – Domestic Violence in Gay and Lesbian Relationships – provides links and contact phone numbers for information, help and support, www.ssdv.acon.org.au/

Children

Kids Help Line – a free, confidential and anonymous 24 hours national telephone and online counselling service specifically for young people aged between five and 18. www.kidshelp.com.au/home_KHL.aspx?s=6, 1800 551 800 (24 hours)

Bursting the Bubble – a Victorian website for young people living with domestic violence. www.burstingthebubble.com/

Men

Mensline Australia – supports men who are dealing with family and relationship difficulties. Includes a Men's Services Database to locate services in NSW. www.menslineaus.org.au/Default.aspx, 1300 789 978 (24 hours)

NSW Relationships Australia – for referral to programs that address men's violence issues. www.relationships.com.au/, 1300 364 277

Legal Services

Women's Legal Services NSW – a community legal centre providing women with a range of free community legal services, including legal advice and information, education, training and resources across metropolitan and regional areas of New South Wales, www.womenslegalsnw.asn.au/, 02 9749 5533

Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (DVAS) – a specialised legal service for women experiencing domestic violence. Informs women of their legal rights and their right to access the services that are available and provides a range of free and confidential legal services, www.womenslegalsnw.asn.au/domestic-violence-advocacy-service-dvas.htm, 1800 810 784 or 02 9637 3741, TTY 1800 626 267

Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme – can help women get an AVO. Support Workers from the Scheme will explain the how and why of AVOs and stopping domestic violence; tell you what will happen in court; go with you to court to support you and tell you about other organisations that can help you. There are 33 Schemes located across rural and metropolitan NSW, www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/asp/index.asp?pgid=728, See the website for the contact phone numbers for the 33 schemes located across rural and metropolitan NSW.

Family Law Helpline, 1800 050 321

Legal Aid NSW, www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/asp/index.asp, 1300 888 529

LawAccess NSW – provides free telephone legal information, advice, referral and assistance to people in NSW, www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au/, 1300 888 529

Local Courts NSW, www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/local_courts/ll_localcourts.nsf/pages/lc_index

General Services

NSW Police Force, 000

DoCS Helpline – for DoCS to make an assessment of a report to determine the level of response required, www.community.nsw.gov.au/DOCS/STANDARD/PC_101002.htm, 132 111 (24 hours, 7 days a week), TTY 02 6337 689

Lifeline, www.lifeline.org.au/, 131 114 (24 hours)

Homeless Persons Information Centre, www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/Community/Homelessness/Services/HomelessPersonsInformationCentre.asp, 1800 234 566

NSW Relationships Australia, www.relationships.com.au, 1300 364 277

Support and Expertise

Training and Development

Your agency's professional development program. For DoCS staff this is found in the [Learning and Development Course Calendar](#)

External Training opportunities such as the [Education Centre Against Violence \(ECAV\)](#) and [Centre for Community Welfare Training \(CCWT\)](#).

DoCS Resources

Research to Practice – access to some excellent DoCS research papers and literature reviews.

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996, *Women's Safety Australia*, cat no. 4128, ABS, Canberra.

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, *Personal Safety Survey, Australia*, 2005, cat no 4906.0, ABS, Canberra

Mouzos, J. and Makkai, T. 2004, *Women's experiences of male violence: Findings from the Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS)*, Research and Public Policy Series No. 56, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.

Mouzos, J. and Rushforth, C. 2003, *Family homicide in Australia*, Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice, no 225, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra