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A Right to be Heard



A Right to be Heard
A domestic violence information booklet
for the Murray Mallee Region

1st Edition 2016

Acknowledgements

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The Rural City of
MURRAY
BRIDGE



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Introduction

Domestic violence does not discriminate, it occurs across all cultures, across all socio-economic backgrounds, in all types of intimate relationships and at any stage of relationships – marriage, defacto, dating or separated.

Gender inequality and violence are inextricably linked; in Australia approximately 95% of domestic violence is perpetrated by men against women. Domestic violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and ill-health in women aged 15-44 and is the most common factor contributing to homelessness among women and children.

In addition to the fatal consequences, there are long-term effects and trauma associated with domestic violence. Those impacted by domestic violence can experience the lasting effects of physical injuries as well as the emotional and psychological costs of abuse.

Domestic violence however remains under-reported and under-prosecuted. Men's choice and responsibility for abuse and violence in relationships is crucial for prevention and intervention particularly as there are many ways

in which gender-based violence is supported or excused. Attitudes to women, their unequal status and position in society, as well as beliefs in family privacy all contribute to preventing professionals, agencies and the community from recognising and responding appropriately to domestic violence.

Location has an impact in regards to both the incidence and impact of domestic violence. The rates of domestic violence and the increased risk to women in regional and rural Australia highlight the importance of services and advocacy for women outside metropolitan areas. ***A Right to be Heard*** has been developed to provide information on domestic violence and on services in the Murray Mallee region where women experiencing domestic violence can find help for themselves and their children.

Although not specifically addressed in this booklet, other forms of violence also occur in family relationships. These include child neglect and child sexual abuse by parents or caregivers; adolescent abuse to parents or siblings, elder abuse by adult children or grandchildren.

No matter what living arrangement domestic or family violence occurs in, everyone has a right to live in a safe and secure environment without the threat of violence

Are any of these things happening in your relationship?

Does your partner, husband or boyfriend make you feel scared of his behaviour?

Does he:

- Put you down or call you names?
- Yell at you, threaten or intimidate you?
- Frequently want to know what you are doing, where you are going and who you will be with? Constantly check on you?
- Question you or accuse you of being with other men?
- Shove you or push you around? Hit, punch or kick you?
- Degrade or dismiss your beliefs and opinions?
- Ridicule or humiliate you in front of the children, attempt to “turn” them against you?
- Make it difficult for your friends so that they don't contact or visit you anymore?
- Punch holes in walls or doors?
- Force or pressure you to have sex with him?
- Control all the income, not give you enough money to pay for everything you need, demand that you explain how it is all spent?
- Does he threaten you with things like
 - What he would do if you left him?
 - What he would do if you have a relationship with another man?

These are all forms of domestic violence and can lead to women feeling oppressed, silenced and isolated

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviour by a person within an intimate relationship who seeks to establish and maintain power and control over the other. Domestic violence has many forms, some invisible, others openly violent. Power, control and fear are always present. Regardless of the form violence takes, it is a pervasive, everyday event in many women's lives.

Domestic violence includes:

Physical Violence

Physical Abuse: Any use of physical force or threats of violence or death. It may involve the use of or threat of weapons. Holding, restraining, pushing, shoving, shaking, slapping, punching, strangling, biting, burning, twisting arm and legs. Holding her hostage, drugging her, locking her out of the home, abandoning her in an unsafe place, driving dangerously with her and/or the children in the car. Preventing her from meeting basic needs e.g. food, getting sleep or medical attention.

Sexual Abuse: Demanding, coercing or forcing her to do anything sexual when she doesn't want to, physically attacking or denigrating the sexual parts of her body, treating her as a sexual object, using bondage and/or objects without her consent.

Property Damage: Breaking furniture or household items, damaging doors, walls or windows, destroying her personal possessions.

Verbal/Emotional/Psychological Abuse

Threats & Intimidation: Using looks, actions, or speaking in ways which are threatening or frightening, yelling, swearing. Making threats of harm, punishment, suicide, death. Threatening to harm the children, family, friends, pets.

Put Downs & 'Mind Games': Mocking her, criticising her body shape, grooming, intelligence, parenting ability or the way the house looks; telling her she's "lazy", "stupid", or "useless" or other degrading comments to undermine her or make her feel bad about herself. Manipulating her, playing 'mind games' leading her to think she's going 'crazy'/is mentally unwell.

Social abuse

Isolation: Constantly criticising and being suspicious of her family and friends, being moody when they come around so they feel uncomfortable and stop coming; frequently accusing her of 'cheating' or being attracted to someone else; forcing her to remain in the home; taking away her access to a vehicle or transportation. Making hurtful or offensive remarks about her in company; verbally attacking her in public; posting abusive, threatening, or humiliating comments, photos on social media; moving the family to an isolated area away from family and friends.

Surveillance: Continually monitoring what she does, who she speaks to and where she goes. Insisting on doing everything together so that she has no life of her own; repeatedly phoning/texting her to see what she's up to; screening her mail, checking her mobile. Using GPS devices or tracking apps to ascertain her physical location and stalking her; installing spyware on her computer and tracking her internet use and emails; keeping her under surveillance using CCTV cameras; configuring wireless phones or scanners to overhear communication.

Economic Abuse

Controlling the money, making her ask for money, making her account for every cent spent, excluding her from financial decisions, not giving her enough money to pay for household expenses, forcing her, the children to live in poverty; opposing her getting or keeping a job; making her put all the bills in her name; putting pressure on her to take out loans and other credit.

Religious/Spiritual/Cultural Abuse

Using sacred texts, religion or his culture to justify his use of violence and abuse; ridiculing her religious/spiritual or cultural beliefs; not allowing her to practice her beliefs; forcing her to adopt his religious/spiritual beliefs or cultural traditions.

Legal Abuse

Threatening legal action or forcing legal involvement; denying charges, making false charges against her; calling her back to court over and over again; breaking legal agreements; urging her to abuse the system e.g. making false claims to Centrelink.

Male Privilege/Power Abuse

Acting on beliefs that the man is the boss, more entitled, what he says goes. Makes all the important decisions; dismisses or devalues her rights, beliefs and opinions. Acts like she is his 'possession' and he has the right to control or punish her. Using his position and power, attempts to influence people in authority e.g. police, child protection, mental health authorities, to have her credibility/stability questioned or have her charged/detained.

PETS

Pets are often abused to intimidate or control a woman and/or children in a domestic violent situation. This may include threatening to harm, mistreating or killing pets. Women can delay leaving an abusive relationship because they are fearful of what may happen to pets.

**IF YOU HAVE ANIMAL CRUELTY CONCERNS
PLEASE CALL THE RSPCA**

HOW it begins and WHY women stay...

Often domestic violence starts with a bit of a shove or a putdown and you explain it away thinking that is an isolated incident but the violence continues and you don't know what to do because:

- you love your partner, you just want the violence to stop
- he tells you that you are to blame for his abuse
- you feel too ashamed or embarrassed to tell anyone or think they won't believe you
- you feel depressed, anxious and unable to think clearly or objectively
- you think it's to do with him being under stress due to work or some other pressure
- he apologises and says he will never do it again
- you have hopes and dreams and don't want the family to split up
- you don't know how to leave or where to go
- he threatens to take the children from you if you leave or you fear you won't be there to protect them
- you fear losing your property and possessions or that you will not be able to manage financially if you leave
- your family or your religious or cultural beliefs support you remaining in the relationship
- you fear loneliness and think you can't cope on your own or you think he won't be able to manage on his own
- he threatens to harm you, your children, your family, if you leave



You may not recognise abuse at first, isolated incidents and tactics used by your partner do not fit your idea of domestic violence and it can be hard to believe that someone who says that they love you could be so deliberately hurtful and undermining of you. Women living with abuse often are making every effort to keep the family together, concerned about the best interests of their children, themselves and their partners.

**You have a right to feel safe in your own home
and a right to seek protection
If you need help there are services available
to support you**

Myths and Facts about domestic violence

There are a number of commonly held myths or beliefs that contribute to giving a false picture about domestic violence and lead to blaming women for the violence and abuse that is being inflicted upon them.

MYTH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DOESN'T HAPPEN VERY OFTEN

REALITY Domestic violence is more prevalent than many people realise. As many as one in four women in Australia will experience domestic violence during their lifetime, one in six women will be physically or sexually assaulted and between one to two women killed every week by a current or former partner.

MYTH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS ONLY PHYSICAL ABUSE

REALITY An abusive relationship does not have to involve physical violence. Psychological, emotional, verbal, social and financial abuse can be just as harmful and damaging, more difficult to identify and be taken seriously by others.

MYTH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS PRIVATE - OUTSIDERS SHOULD NOT GET INVOLVED

REALITY Violence against women is recognized as a human rights violation. Domestic violence is no longer a private issue, it is a community issue. Physical assault and threats to harm are crimes whether inside or outside the home.

MYTH ALCOHOL AND DRUGS CAUSE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

REALITY This myth supports the shifting of responsibility away from men using violence. Violent behaviour is a choice. Many people use alcohol and drugs without becoming violent. Alcohol and drug use may be contributing factors but do not cause domestic violence.

MYTH IF A WOMAN GETS HIT SHE MUST HAVE DONE SOMETHING TO DESERVE IT

REALITY Underling this myth is an assumption that the man has the right to punish or abuse his partner and that the use of violence can be justified. The way a woman acts does not give a man permission to abuse her. Violence and abuse are unacceptable in any relationship.

MYTH IF HE IS SORRY IT MEANS HE HAS CHANGED

REALITY Violence in relationships is rarely an isolated incident and forms part of a recurring pattern of behaviour. Many men express remorse or make promises to change after hitting or abusing their partners. These apologies and promises become part of the tactics employed by the man to keep his partner in the relationship and do not mean that a change in his behaviour will occur.

MYTH THE RELATIONSHIP WILL GET BETTER, EVERYONE HAS TOUGH TIMES

REALITY This myth supports the minimising tactics used by a man using violence and helps keep a woman trapped in an abusive relationship. Ignoring the violence will not stop it recurring. Change will only happen if the man decides to change his abusive behaviour. The stories of many women indicate violence will get worse over time. Most women have already recognised this by the time they leave.

MYTH ABUSED WOMEN SHOULD JUST LEAVE

REALITY This myth supports victim blaming and shifts responsibility away from the man using violence. There are many factors which make it difficult for a woman to leave an abusive situation and often violence escalates when she does. Workers, police and the community must begin to ask "Why doesn't he stop using violence?"

MYTH WOMEN CAN BE JUST AS VIOLENT

REALITY Both men and women can be violent in relationships and men can be victims of domestic violence. However, as men are predominantly physically stronger than women they are most often able to overpower and maintain control in a relationship. A woman will more likely fear for her life, be sexually assaulted, be subjected to frequent, prolonged and extreme violence, to sustain injuries and experience greater long term emotional and psychological effects than a male partner. A woman who uses physical violence against her partner usually does so in self-protection and in the context of his violence to her.

Cycle of Violence

Many women recognise a recurring pattern to their partner's abusive behaviour. This pattern known as the Cycle of Abuse or Violence includes several distinct phases:

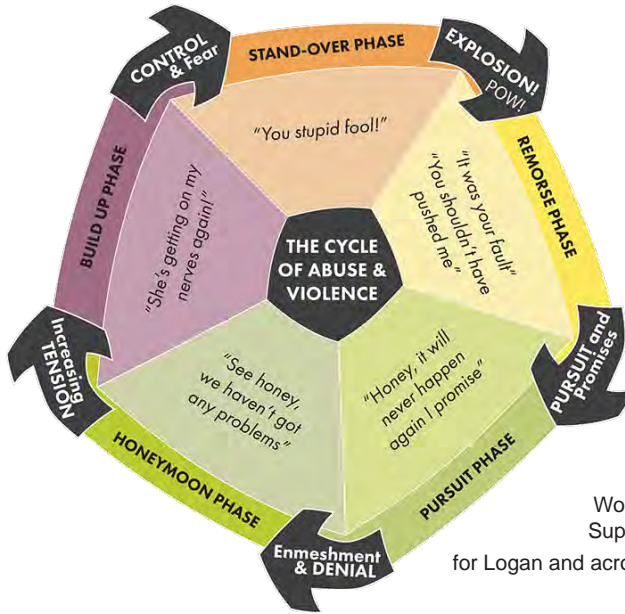


Image source:
Working Against Violence
Support Service (WAVSS)
for Logan and across the Redlands QLD

THE BUILD-UP / STAND-OVER PHASE

Before a violent incident a woman describes a phase where her partner's anger and frustration begin to build and his behaviour becomes increasingly controlling and threatening; this may be gradual or sudden, it might happen over minutes, days or months. Warning signs may include an escalation of verbal insults, 'stand over' tactics, threatening fists, slamming doors, abrupt mood change, tense silences or emotional distance.

The woman will feel constantly on edge, worried and fearful, never knowing what is going to finally 'set him off'. She often describes this phase as though she is "walking on eggshells". She will often feel forced to do everything she can to keep the peace; appease, comply, withdraw, remain silent, try to reason with him, keep the children quiet, stay away from family and friends. Sometimes the strain can become so intolerable or her partner's behaviour so hurtful, restrictive and/or unreasonable that she will openly resist his efforts to control her and will argue, 'stand up' for her rights or fight back. Over time she realises that regardless of what she does or doesn't do, her partner will find or contrive something to justify his explosive response which inevitably follows.

EXPLOSION

The man's anger having escalated into a high point explodes into aggression or violence. This may involve yelling and screaming, verbal, physical or sexual assaults, threats to life, increased penalties and restrictions, holding the woman hostage, damaging the home and destroying possessions. It may include the use of weapons. Some men will describe feelings of being out of control. This is the most dangerous and critical time for a woman. She will try to protect herself and the children, often do what her partner wants however unreasonable his demands. She may fight back, attempt to leave and/or call the police. She is likely to feel pain, fear, perhaps terror, humiliation, confusion and disillusionment and sometimes is resigned to and feels responsible, wrongly, for the violence.

REMORSE / DENIAL / BLAME PHASE

Although men behave in different ways after the explosion, three typical responses have been identified:

Remorse:

He expresses guilt and remorse, possibly fearing that she will leave and that he may be facing criminal charges. He may plead with her, say he's sorry, make promises to change and attempt to convince her that it will not happen again. He may try to 'make up' to her, become more affectionate and attentive, want to communicate, want to have sex. He may try to buy her back with flowers or other gifts, be more helpful around the house, repair things he has damaged and/or do other jobs that he has long promised to do. She may feel hurt, confused, relieved, loved, attracted to him, thinking that the relationship is still worth working on; hoping that this time he has changed.....

Denial:

He denies; ignores; or minimises the effect and severity of his violence, makes a joke about it, "it was no big deal, get over it"; "everyone has disagreements"; "you know it's not like I really hurt you".

Blame:

He makes excuses, shifts responsibility for his behaviour blaming his violence on his partner, or on alcohol or some other stress; "You made me do it", "You asked for it"; or "I was drunk, I can't remember".

PURSUIT PHASE

If the woman is considering leaving or has left after a violent incident, the man will intensify his efforts to get her back into the relationship; his tactics will often become more erratic, manipulative and coercive; switching from 'charming' one moment to abusive the next. He may promise to go to counselling with her, tell her that he can't live without her or attempt to make her feel guilty for leaving him, accuse her of breaking up the family, tell her that she can't manage without him or say that nobody else would want her. He may threaten financial hardship, threaten suicide, threaten to harm her and/or threaten to take or harm the children.

"I've changed!" Give me another chance. I miss you and the kids so much".

"You want the kids to grow up without a father?"

"I'll kill myself if you don't take me back".

"You'll never get rid of me". "I'll hunt you down and kill you!"

His promises to change can sound so genuine and convincing she wants to believe him or she may feel trapped, guilty, exhausted, sometimes so worn down by the long standing abuse she feels that she has no other choice and agrees to reconcile. Women experiencing domestic violence often return to their partners a number of times before they leave for the final time.

HONEYMOON ('FALSE CALM') PHASE

There may be a 'lull', a period where things appear calm and may seem better than they have for a long time. He becomes complacent thinking that things are behind him. She begins to feel that she can trust him again, wanting to believe that this time things are different. But nothing has been resolved. In most cases the man hasn't accepted responsibility for his violence or made a genuine commitment to change. He doesn't seek help or stops attending counselling after one or two sessions. The old power structure is re-asserted, he shifts the focus and blame onto his partner. Tension increases, she becomes wary and begins to modify her behaviour so as not to upset him; his anger and frustration build....the cycle of abuse continues.

Although each woman's experience of violence will be different, women report that over time as the cycle continues; violence escalates and occurs more frequently and the 'make-up', 'buy-back' and calm periods tend to disappear. For some women there isn't an identifiable cycle of violence; the abuse goes on all the time.

Ending the Cycle of Violence

The unequal position of power between men and women underlies men's violence against women in intimate relationships. Men often have more power than women due to their physical size and strength and greater social and economic power. Individuals have a choice how to use their power, responsibly and fairly, or abuse it. Men in violent relationships choose to misuse their power, most will hold beliefs of traditional masculinity, male privilege and rigid gender roles.

Women often question themselves how they got into the relationship and why they continue to remain in the relationship. Men's behaviour throughout the cycle of violence draws women in, keeps them invested in the relationship and instils fear, confusion and uncertainty. Women are often told by their partners that they need to change their behaviour to end the violence. However, no matter what they do or don't do women will often find that they can never get it right. Men who abuse are constantly changing the rules to maintain control and this tactic often keeps women feeling like they are going "crazy". The chaos and fear of living in an abusive relationship will often result in women developing anxiety, depression and other stress related conditions and lead to an increased use of substances as coping strategies.

It is possible for violence to stop if the man takes responsibility for his actions and decides to change his behaviour. Sometimes it takes a crisis such as his partner leaving for the man to realise this. As violence continues and escalates a woman often reaches a point where she realises that she is not to blame for

his violence and that he is not going to change. A growing acceptance of her own self-worth, a realisation that living with domestic violence is affecting the children or reaching a stage where she holds serious fears for her and the children's safety can be the catalyst that assists a woman to leave the relationship.

Mothering and Domestic Violence

The caring and wellbeing of children historically and traditionally has been viewed as the responsibility of women. To women, mothering usually represents a source of positive identity and social affirmation. A man will often attack or undermine a woman's parenting and her relationship with the children as part of his violence or as a deliberate strategy of abuse to gain greater control.

He may do this by:

- incapacitating the mother physically, emotionally or mentally so that she is unavailable for the children
- demanding all of the mother's attention, depriving her of sleep, so that she is prevented from attending to the children
- criticising, insulting or humiliating her in front of the children
- setting up conflict between the mother and children by undermining the mother's authority, overruling her decisions
- blaming the mother for his abuse, giving the children the impression that she is 'bad' or 'stupid' for not preventing the abuse
- involving the children in his violence towards the mother e.g. by making the children witness or assist in the assaults
- threatening to take or harm the children if the mother does not do what he wants
- portraying himself as 'a good father' – takes an interest in his children when it is convenient for him; when an opportunity arises for public recognition for his fathering
- ridiculing or punishing the children if they show allegiance to the mother
- blaming the mother for the children being exposed to the violence

“He would hit me, the children would cry and he would yell at me: ‘Now look at what you have done!’”

Parenting can be highly stressful for a woman experiencing domestic violence. A considerable amount of a mother's energy can go into protecting or defending herself and/or her children from her partner's violence which can affect her capacity to provide consistent care of her children. Some children may blame their mother for 'allowing' the abuse and turn against her. The mother may have to deal with the destabilising behaviours of the children 'siding' with the father and with the children sometimes directly physically and/or emotionally abusing her. Although many women can show great resilience, continuing to mother their children well in such adverse circumstances, it can have some mothers feeling incompetent, mentally exhausted, disconnected from their children, and/or highly reactive to their behaviours.

The effects of the mother-blaming tactics used by men can be exacerbated by community and system responses which tend to hold a mother almost solely accountable for the effects of domestic violence on her children or their exposure to it. Often underlying these responses are beliefs that "a good mother" knows what is occurring in the family and/or has some power to stop anything harmful. The consequence of these expectations about mothering in family relationships is that a father who abuses the mother of his children - escapes attention, he is often neither challenged nor held accountable for the damaging effects of his abusive behaviour on the children or on their relationship with the mother.



Effects of Domestic Violence on Children

Children can be impacted by domestic violence by being directly abused, witnessing the abuse, hearing the abuse from another room or by getting hurt such as when struck by a thrown object or when attempting to protect their mother.

It is a myth that children do not know or understand what is happening or that they will forget what they see and will get over it quickly. Children will often hear the arguing, see the emotional and physical evidence of abuse, their mother anxious, upset, or injured, their father angry or silent, the damaged home, the destroyed possessions. Children too will be often aware of and impacted by the disruptions to the family's routines (e.g. sleep, mealtimes), finances, housing stability, connections with extended family members.

Children, even when not directly abused, are at risk of suffering psychological and emotional abuse and stress related health issues when living in an environment where there is domestic violence. Children learn from their family life and may grow up believing that violence is normal and acceptable and that it is the way to treat people you care about.

Domestic violence can damage and delay a child's learning and development. Prolonged stress responses and exposure to trauma causes the child's "fight or flight" response to be heightened or in a constant state of alert. This can cause physiological changes to the structure of the brain, particularly in the early years, and lead to memory, learning and behavioural difficulties. Some of the issues for children can include:

Becoming fearful and withdrawn

Domestic violence takes away a child's sense of trust and personal safety. The child can feel powerless, insecure, anxious and become withdrawn. The child may learn not to feel emotions and "switch off" as a way of protecting themselves.

Reduced capacity to manage emotional states

The child may struggle to regulate their emotions (e.g. fear, frustration, sadness) and this can cause irritability, reactivity, 'acting out', outbursts of rage.

Anger, aggressive language and behaviour

The child may feel anger at the father for the violence; anger at the mother for being unable to prevent the violence. Aggression, bullying, cruelty to animals can result; the child may think that these behaviours are acceptable or are ways of getting what they want.

Self-blaming

The child may feel that they have to stop the violence and protect their mother/siblings. They may blame themselves for causing the argument or feel guilty for not intervening or preventing an attack.

Loss of concentration and memory

Children can have difficulty concentrating, be inattentive, easily distracted or “switch off”. Violence in the home can affect children’s sleep, their ability to complete homework and lead to disruptive behaviours or missed days at school. When away from home children can be worried and anxious about what is happening there. All will impact upon their ability to participate at school.

Difficulty forming friendships

Loss of self-esteem and confidence, feelings of shame, inability to empathise with others, pressure on children to keep the domestic violence a secret from people outside the family home can impact upon children’s ability to form and maintain friendships, e.g. children won’t be able or will be unwilling to invite friends ‘over’.

Self-harming and risk taking behaviours

May involve suicide ideation, harming themselves physically, using alcohol or drugs, sniffing glue, running away from home, truancy, engaging in criminal activity.

Health Issues

Physical reactions such as stomach cramps, headaches, eating and sleeping disorders, lowered immune system, frequent illnesses, stress related conditions e.g. hypervigilance, hyperactivity, phobias, anxiety, depression; regression to earlier developmental stages.

Children, even when not directly abused, are at risk of suffering psychological and emotional abuse where there is domestic violence

Supporting Children in Domestic Violence

The ways that you can help a child who has experienced domestic and family violence include:

- listening to your child about their experiences and concerns
- teaching them that abuse is unacceptable and they are not to blame
- letting them know that you will try to keep them safe, helping them learn ways to keep themselves safe and making a plan for what to do when there is violence
- providing predictability and consistency in parenting – maintain consistent rules and discipline; maintain or establish routines e.g. regular attendance at school, meal times, bedtimes, homework when able
- always acting in a way that is non-threatening and non-violent with them
- modelling and regulating own emotional responses
- attuning to the child, sitting quietly with them, focusing on breathing, relaxation
- providing physical comfort and reassurance
- setting limits when they are at risk of acting violently
- providing them with age appropriate information about changes that may affect their lives
- encouraging them to engage in sports, rhythmic activities e.g. music, dance, drumbeat programmes or other activities nurturing to their wellbeing
- developing and maintaining support networks such as grandparents, teachers

Specialist counselling services are available to children who are exposed to domestic violence. Children and young people need support and reassurance that the violence is not their fault. Young people can ring the Kids Helpline and talk to someone about what is happening at home. School counsellors are also available for children to talk to and can be a good source of support.

Domestic Violence and Pregnancy

During pregnancy, women are generally more vulnerable to violence from their partner or ex-partner than at any other time. For some women, pregnancy may lead to a cessation of violence as the man does not want to harm the unborn child, but for many women, pregnancy will see either the onset of violence or the frequency and severity of violence will increase.

Many men who are violent act as if pregnancy gives them an increased right to control or “own” their partner; perceiving that she is dependent or unwilling to leave the relationship now that she is pregnant, or that her ability to attract another partner is diminished.

Women experiencing domestic violence will often feel pressure from their partner to decide whether to have a baby or not. This pressure can include threats, intimidation, manipulation and assault:

*“If you loved me
you would have this baby”.*

*“It’s not mine.
Who have you been sleeping with?”*

*“I don’t want a kid.
You need to get rid of it.”*



Women with unwanted pregnancies are at an increased risk of experiencing physical violence than women with planned pregnancies and sometimes the man's violence can cause a woman to have a miscarriage.

Domestic violence can increase a woman's chances of becoming pregnant and the number of children she has; the man may coerce or force her into having sex or prevent her from using birth control. Many men in abusive relationships will use "reproductive coercion" tactics interfering with their partner's birth control methods; younger women are particularly vulnerable to these tactics. In some cases a woman will end her pregnancy as she does not wish to bring a child into an abusive environment or recognises that having a baby makes it harder for her to leave an abusive relationship.

Men who abuse will often blame the woman for the stresses the pregnancy has upon the couple's relationship and target their abuse at her body changes and her increased defencelessness. Some men will become abusive, jealous and angry over the mother's attention to the baby or for the attention she receives from others due to her pregnancy.

Violence during pregnancy is harmful not only to the pregnant woman being abused, but also to her unborn baby. Physical injuries, pain, psychological stress, increase in symptoms of pre-existing chronic illnesses, mental health issues, substance abuse, eating and sleeping disorders and the mother's ability to access adequate antenatal care will all affect her capacity to manage her and the baby's health during her pregnancy. Miscarriages, stillbirths, premature births or foetal injury (e.g. bruising, broken and fractured bones), low birth weight and other complications for the newborn baby can result. Evidence shows that a baby's development in utero can become affected by prolonged maternal stress.

Some women are excited by their pregnancy and hope that a baby may stabilise her relationship with her partner and that fatherhood will change him. Sometimes a woman will leave her partner during her pregnancy due to his violence, but will often initiate or allow contact after the birth to foster the father's relationship with the child. After childbirth, the abusive situation can become more intense and stressful for a woman. Her ability to care and develop an attachment with the baby will often be compromised with meeting the demands and expectations of her partner and protecting the baby from his violence. When babies don't regularly find comfort, safety and security, their relationship with their parents becomes fragmented and can lead to long term emotional problems for the child.

BABIES ARE NEVER TOO YOUNG TO BE AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Babies can show clear disturbances in response to domestic violence in their environment. The effects of domestic violence on babies and young children can be:

- irritable – unable to settle
- sleep and feeding difficulties
- 'clingy', separation anxiety
- withdrawn or unusually quiet
- indiscriminate attachment behaviour
- scared to explore and play
- delays in speech and toilet training

There are things you can do to lessen the impact on your baby being exposed to violence even if you are unable to remove them from the situation. Finding times where you can be emotionally available can help your baby. Babies need lots of affection and positive attention - prompt meeting of needs for food and changing, adequate sleep, frequent bodily contact, cuddles and face-to-face interaction, sensitive responses to their fears and regular routines of meal times, sleep times, bath times and quiet times; this makes your child's daily life predictable and helps the child feel secure.



Counselling and Crisis Support Services

There are specialised domestic violence services available to support you if you are in a domestic violence relationship, are considering leaving the relationship or have separated



Murray Mallee and Adelaide Hills Domestic Violence Service
Provides:

- Domestic violence counselling, information and support
- Crisis support
- Assistance to access emergency and supported accommodation
- Information, advocacy and referrals to other services
- Case management
- Outreach support and services

Domestic Violence and Aboriginal Family Violence Gateway Service
(After hours the number is diverted to the *Homelessness Gateway Service*)

The D.V. Gateway provides domestic violence counselling, information and support and access to emergency accommodation. The D.V. Gateway will link you into domestic violence services throughout metropolitan and regional South Australia for longer term accommodation and counselling and support.

Safety Planning

It is really important to have a good safety plan when you and your children are in danger. To do this, an assessment of your risk is essential.

Strategies to consider when at home:

- Ascertain which rooms present higher risks i.e. the kitchen, shed or garage where your partner may have access to weapons, or rooms without access to an outside door
- Develop a safe room
- Teach children their names and addresses and how to call the police
- Use a code word for your children/and or friends as a signal that they need to call for help
- Have a neighbour whom you trust and being aware of your situation will call the police; provide a safe place where your children can go; keep watch over your home etc.
- Develop a plan of how to get out safely i.e. what doors, windows, lifts, stairs etc. to use, teach the children how to get out of the house and where to go for help



Survival Kit

It is helpful to be prepared if you and your children have to leave your home. The following is a checklist of items to take with you as it may be hard to get them once you have left the house. If you have the opportunity have as many items listed as possible packed together so that they can be easy to access. You may wish to have originals or copies of documents and other items stored with a trusted friend or relative.

Some of these items include:

- Money
- Bank account numbers, cash and credit cards, cheque books
- Keys - house, car, office, safety deposit box, post office box
- Identification for you and the children - drivers licence, birth certificates, marriage certificates, Medicare cards
- Immigration papers, citizenship papers, work permit or other permits
- Medications & prescriptions, visual or other aids, toiletries
- Property deeds, or lease/rental agreement
- Car registration documents
- Tax file number, last tax assessment
- Insurance papers
- Mobile phone & charger
- Laptop/IPAD etc.
- Address book & phone numbers
- Residency orders, paternity documents
- School and vaccination records
- Receipts of furniture and contents
- Photos, jewellery and items of sentimental value
- Clothing
- Children's favourite toys or books, school uniform, school books
- Any evidence that may help the police in investigating your case, including photos of injuries, letters or phone message tapes, etc.

It can be useful to also consider arranging a separate bank account in a different bank or financial institution and look at options for arrangements for pets and for removal and storage of furniture and household contents.

Resources

**POLICE, FIRE, AMBULANCE
EMERGENCY** 000
POLICE ASSISTANCE 131444

Domestic Violence Counselling and Crisis Support

*Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
Statewide Domestic Violence Service*
83469417
*Domestic Violence and Aboriginal Family
Violence Gateway*
1800800098
*Murray Mallee & Adelaide Hills Domestic
Violence Service*
85318888
*1800Respect. National Sexual Assault,
Domestic Family Violence Counselling
Service (24 hrs)*
1800737732
Victim Support Service
1800 VICTIM (1800 842 846)
*Yarrow Place. Rape and Sexual Assault
Service (24 hrs)*
1800817421

Crisis Accommodation (24 hrs)

*Domestic Violence and Aboriginal Family
Violence Gateway*
1800800098
Homelessness Gateway Service
1800003308
Youth Gateway: Trace-A-Place (12-25 yrs)
1800807364

Crisis & Information Helplines

Alcohol and Drug Information Service
1300131340
*Assessment and Crisis Intervention Service
(Mental Health)*
131465
Beyondblue
1300224636
Child Abuse Report Line
131478
Health Direct Australia
1800022222

Kids Helpline
1800551800
Lifeline
131114
National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline
1800880052
Parent Helpline
1300364100
Pregnancy Birth and Baby Helpline
1800882436
Women's Information Service
1800188158

Aged

Aged Rights Advocacy Service
1800700600
Seniors Information Service
1800636368

Community Emergency Relief Agencies

AC Care
11-21 Kennett Rd Murray Bridge 85326303
St Vincent de Paul Store
7/8 Gawler St Mt Barker 83983455
St Vincent de Paul Store
11 Second St Murray Bridge 85326699
St Vincent de Paul Store
Cnr Station Drive & Karoonda Rd
Tailem Bend 85723544
Salvation Army
1-4 Fourth St Murray Bridge 85311133
Salvation Army Thrift Shop
Cnr Fourth St Murray Bridge 85312179
Salvation Army Store
Adelaide Rd Murry Bridge 85311144
Salvation Army
17a Fletcher Rd Mt Barker 83982686
Salvation Army Store
6/4 Dutton Rd Mt Barker 83910239
Teen Challenge
5 Marchand St Murray Bridge 85312851
Teen Challenge
13 Mann St Mt Barker 83910210

Disabilities Services

Disability Rights Advocacy Service	
SA	83519500
Disability SA	
Cnr Seventh St/South Tce	
Murray Bridge	85356160
Disability SA	
23 Mann St Mt Barker	74247888
Women with Disabilities Australia	
wwda@wwda.org.au	0438535123

Family Support and Counselling Services

AC Care	
11-21 Kennett Rd Murray Bridge	85326303
Centacare	
55 Adelaide Rd Murray Bridge	85318888
Families SA	
1-5 Seventh St Murray Bridge	85356200
Families SA	
23 Mann St Mt Barker	74247888
Lutheran Community Care	
Cnr Florence St/Charles St	
Murray Bridge	85313644
Uniting Communities Murray Bridge	
(appts contact MMCHS)	85356800
Victim Support Service	
2/1 First St Murray Bridge	85313987

Financial Support

Centrelink (www.centrelink.gov.au)	
8-12 Bridge St Murray Bridge	
Centrelink	
30 Stephen St Mt Barker	
<i>Aged 132300, Carers 132717, Disability 132717, Employment 132850, Families 136150, Indigenous 1800136380, Multilingual 131202, Youth 132490, Child Support Agency 131272</i>	
Medicare	
132011	
S.A. Concessions Hotline	
1800307758	

Health Centres & Hospitals

Coonalpyn Health Centre	
52 Peake Tce Coonalpyn	85711126
Gumeracha Hospital	
2 Albert St Gumeracha	82099200
Karoonda Hospital	
13 Stokes Rd Karoonda	85791111
Lameroo Hospital	
1a Vardin Tce Lameroo	85764600
Mannum Hospital	
Parker St Mannum	85690200
Meningie Hospital	
2 South Tce, Meningie	85752777
Mt Barker Hospital	
87 Wellington Rd Mt Barker	83931777
Mt Pleasant Hospital	
28 Hospital Rd, Mt Pleasant	85680000
Murray Bridge Hospital	
Swanport Rd Murray Bridge	85356777
Pinnaroo Hospital	
Bundey Tce Pinnaroo	85779222
Strathalbyn Hospital	
14 Alfred Place Strathalbyn	85365333
Tailem Bend Hospital	
74 Princes Highway Tailem Bend	85725800
Tintinara Community Health Centre	
2 Helling Tce Tintinara	87572280

Health Services

Adelaide Hills Community Health Service	
87 Wellington Rd Mt Barker	83931833
Child and Family Health	
52 Peake Tce Coonalpyn	1300733606
Child and Family Health	
13 Stokes Rd Karoonda	1300733606
Child and Family Health	
St Johns Centre Chandos Tce	
Lameroo	1300733606
Child and Family Health	
Parker St Mannum	1300733606
Child and Family Health	
2 South Tce Meningie	1300733606
Child and Family Health	
4 Mann St Mt Barker	83986600
Child and Family Health	
11a West Tce Murray Bridge	85393400
Child and Family Health	
St Johns Centre Railway Tce South	
Pinnaroo	1300733606
Child and Family Health	
19 Sunter St Strathalbyn	83986600
Child and Family Health	
2 Helling Tce Tintinara	1300733606

Drug and Alcohol Services SA
 102 Swanport Rd Murray Bridge 85356800
Drug and Alcohol Services SA
 87 Wellington Rd Mt Barker 83931833
Murray Mallee Community Health Service
 102 Swanport Rd Murray Bridge 85356800

Housing

Housing SA Mobilong House
 Cnr Seventh St/South Tce
 Murray Bridge 131299
Housing SA
 23 Mann St Mt Barker 131299
Junction Housing
 82107000
**Murray Bridge/Adelaide Hills Generic
 Homelessness Service:**
A.C Care 85326303
**Murray Mallee and Adelaide Hills Domestic
 Violence Service:**
Centacare 85318888

Indigenous Services

**Aboriginal Advocacy Project / Aged Rights
 Advocacy Service**
 SA 82325377
Aboriginal Family Support Services SA
 27 Beatty Tce
 Murray Bridge 0418499649
**Ninko Kurtangga Patpangga
 (Women's Accommodation via DV Gateway)**
 SA 1800800098
**Nunga Mi: Minar
 (Women's Accommodation via DV Gateway)**
 SA 1800800098
Nunkuwarrin Yunti of SA (Health Service)
 Adelaide 84061600

Legal Services

Legal Services Commission
 SA 1300366424
Legal Services Commission
 18 Walker St Mt Barker 81115320
Women's Legal Services SA
 SA 1800816349 / 1800555850
Dept of Correctional Services
 10 First St Murray Bridge 85310433
Dept of Correctional Services
 22 Druids Av St
 Mt Barker (outreach) 83985287

Family Law Courts SA
 3 Angas St Adelaide 1300352000
Magistrate Court
 7 Bridge St Murray Bridge 85356060
Magistrate Court
 37 Hutchinson St Mt Barker 83910255
**Children's and Youth Legal Service. Central
 Community Legal Service**
 SA 1300886220
Family Dispute Service. Centacare
 55 Adelaide Rd Murray Bridge 85318888
Family Relationship Advice Line
 SA 1800050321
**Womens Domestic Violence Court
 Assistance Service - Victim Support
 Service**
 SA 1800 VICTIM (1800 842 846)

Men's Counselling Services

**Kornar Winmil Yunti. Indigenous Men's
 Family Violence Intervention**
 Adelaide 82116770
Lutheran Community Care
 Cnr Florence St/Charles St
 Murray Bridge 85313644
Mensline Australia
 Phone support 1300789978
Spirited Men's Group
 34 Rocky Gully Rd
 Murray Bridge 0459040156
Uniting Communities
 Pitt St Adelaide
 (Men's Groups) 82025190
Uniting Communities
 Murray Bridge
 (contact through MMCHS) 85356800

Mental Health

**Adelaide Hills Community Mental Health
 Service**
 87 Wellington Rd Mt Barker 83931833
Assessment and Crisis Intervention Service
 SA 131465
Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service
 78 Swanport Rd Murray Bridge 85313901
Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service
 23 Victoria Cres Mt Barker 83913922
Headspace (Youth)
 3-5 Railway Tce Murray Bridge 85312122
Mental Illness Fellowship SA.
 Murray Bridge 0466994549

Murray Mallee Community Health Service
102 Swanport Rd Murray Bridge 85356800
Personal Helpers & Mental Support.
Centacare
55 Adelaide St Murray Bridge 85318888

Stirling Police
46 Mt Barker Rd Stirling 83392422
Strathalbyn Police
13 Commercial Rd Strathalbyn 85362044
Tailem Bend Police
49 Railway Tce Tailem Bend 85724210
Woodside Police
7 Nairne Rd Woodside 83897277

Migrant Services

Australian Refugee Association
Adelaide 83542951
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
Statewide Domestic Violence Service
SA 83469417
Interpreting and Translating Centre
SA 1800280203
Translating and Interpreting Service
SA 131450
Migrant Health Service
Adelaide 1800635566
Murraylands Migrant Resource Centre
5 Second St Murray Bridge 85323922

Same Sex Services

Gay and Lesbian Community Services SA
81930800

Transport Services

Link SA
85322633
Murray Bridge Dial-a-Ride. Link SA
(2 hrs notice 9am-5pm)
1800227576
Murray Mallee Community Transport Scheme
85724288

Pets

Animal Welfare League
SA 83481300
Hahndorf Interim Animal Shelter
60 Martin Rd Hahndorf 83887514
RSPCA
SA 1300477722
Pet Foster Care
Adelaide 83797223

Police Stations

Coonalpyn Police
Southern Rd, Coonalpyn 85711092
Gumeracha Police
16 Albert St Gumeracha 83891007
Lameroo Police
34 Railway Tce Lameroo 85763010
Mannum Police
70 Adelaide Rd Mannum 85692211
Meningie Police
Princes Highway Meningie 85751202
Mt Barker Police
64 Gawler St Mt Barker 83981700
Mt Pleasant Police
Melrose St Mt Pleasant 85682023
Murray Bridge Police
58 Swanport Rd Murray Bridge 85356020
Pinnaroo Police
1 Railway Tce Pinnaroo 85778077

What to do when your partner is violent



Police

The police aim to protect the victim and children living with domestic violence. If your partner/ex-partner has assaulted or is threatening you or your children, or is damaging your property you can request police assistance.

When the police attend at an incident they will ask you to provide them with a statement explaining what has happened. They will assess the risk to you and if there are sufficient grounds for it, they will write out an Interim Intervention Order and issue it to your partner/ex-partner. The police may then remove him or assist you to leave. Arresting an offender and prosecuting him does not mean he will go to jail.

If an incident has occurred and you are not being threatened right now, you can attend at the police station and make a Report about the incident. This may take several hours so be prepared as much as you can. As with metropolitan police units, a number of regional areas have a Family Violence Investigation Section staffed by police officers trained to assist victims of domestic and family violence. The officer will undertake a risk assessment of your safety and discuss safety strategies and options with you. You will be provided with a police report number; keep this for your records.

You can request that no action be taken, however the Police may lay charges themselves if there is evidence of an obvious assault. They may rely upon your complaint and statement. If the offender opposes the charges, the police and court will require you to go to court and give evidence. If you choose to take no action you can still use the incident as grounds for an application for an Intervention Order.

Intervention Orders

Intervention Orders are orders issued by the police or the Court that aim to provide protection to you from your partner/ex-partner if he is being threatening or abusive. There must be grounds for issuing an Order.

The Order will prohibit your partner/ex-partner from behaving in ways that will generally include the following:

- not to harass, threaten or abuse you
- not to contact you directly or indirectly
- not to come to your home or place of work, or to follow you
- not post anything on the internet or social media about you
- have him move out of the home or allow you to return to gain access of belongings
- surrender any firearms and any firearms licence

The Order can be made to fit you and your particular circumstances.

How do I get an Intervention Order?

Police Issued Orders

If there are grounds for an Intervention Order, the police will issue an Order directly to your partner/ex-partner. The Order is effective as soon as he is given a copy of the Order. The Order is also a summons for him to appear in court and will state the date and time and place of the court hearing. This generally occurs within eight days of being issued. You do not have to attend this first hearing. There may be more than one hearing if your partner/expartner contests. At the court hearing the magistrate will review the order and either confirm it, vary it or revoke it. The Police will tell you when the Intervention Order has been served. If you are concerned about the Order you can ask at your nearest police station.

Court Issued Orders

In other situations which are less urgent, or your partner/ex-partner was not there at the time to be served an Order, the police can assist you to make an application to the court. The most common way is to attend at a police station and provide a statement. Once your statement is completed the police prosecutor will check out if there are sufficient grounds to ask the court to make an Order for you, if so the police will appear in court for you. If the police do not feel there is enough evidence and are not willing to act, you can make your own application to court by yourself, or with the help of a lawyer. The Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Service (WDVCAS) at Victim Support Service can also assist you with this.

What happens if there is a Parenting Order in place?

If you have a Parenting Order in place you need to make the court aware when an application for an Intervention Order is made. The court may then take into account any contact arrangement made regarding the children when making the Order. The Court may change the Parenting Order so that it reflects the conditions of the Intervention Order.

Changing an Intervention Order

If your circumstances change and you wish to change any of the conditions of the Order, you will need to contact the police and tell them the reasons why you want the Order changed. Another court hearing will need to be scheduled. Sometimes the police will not agree to appear in court for you if they believe that it will increase your risk of further violence.

What happens if the Intervention Order is breached?

If your partner/ex-partner breaks any of the conditions of the Order he may be arrested and charged with a criminal offence. This is called a **Breach of the Order**. If you act contrary to the Order you are not guilty of an offence, as long as your behaviour does not affect any other person protected by the Order. It is important that you report any breaches of the Order to the police, and keep your own records of any breach.

What happens to the family home?

Your partner/ex-partner may be ordered to stay away from the home if they own the property. You can change locks and if you live in a rented home, a key must be given to the landlord and the landlord may not give your partner/ex-partner a key to help him in. If you live in rented premises the court can make an order that transfers interest in the tenancy agreement to you or a nominee.

Legal Help

You may need to get some legal help for:

- parenting - residency of your children or contact with them
- divorce applications
- child support
- property settlements and spousal maintenance
- location and recovery - an order for information about a child/children's location or the return of a child/children to a party
- injunctions against a party for e.g. selling or damaging your home or property
- paternity
- breaches of a court order



Legal Services Commission

Provides free legal information and advice on family, criminal and civil matters. They can assist you apply for Legal Aid if you need a private lawyer to represent you. Phone the Commission to make an office appointment or a phone appointment.

Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Service

Victim Support Service (VSS) directly assists women to navigate legal matters regarding Intervention Orders. This free, confidential service can provide a greater level of support within the court system. Lawyers provide support and advocate on behalf of women who need help to apply for an Intervention Order, vary an existing Order or raise safety concerns.

Women's Legal Service

Provides a free and confidential legal information, advice, assistance, referrals and representation. You can get information about domestic violence situations and what action you can take. Phone the service to make an office appointment or you can talk to someone over the phone.

The Family Law Courts

The majority of all family law matters are now heard in the **Federal Circuit Court**. The **Family Court of Australia** manages all appeals and deals with the most lengthy and complex family law cases. There is a **Duty Lawyer** at the court that can give you advice and information that is free with no appointment needed.

Family Dispute Resolution

Parenting Orders

The family law system requires families who have a dispute about children to make a genuine effort to try to sort it out through Family Dispute Resolution (Mediation) before filing an application for parenting orders in court. You will need to have a certificate from an accredited FDR practitioner unless an exemption applies.

Some of the main exemptions include:

- a person is applying for procedural orders, interim orders or consent orders
- there is a risk of family or domestic violence or child abuse
- the matter is urgent
- a party is unable to participate effectively due to incapacity or geographical location
- a person has contravened and shown serious disregard for a court date in the last 12 months

Parenting Plan

If you reach agreement on arrangements for your children, this is recorded as a parenting plan. A parenting plan must be in writing, dated and signed by both parties and can be re-negotiated over time, if necessary. If you want to make your final plan legally binding, you can apply to the court to have your agreement made into a **Consent Order**. You can do this yourself or ask your lawyer to do it for you. If you have an Intervention Order in place you must inform the Family Court when applying for any parenting orders.

Equal shared parenting responsibility

In family law there is a presumption of equal shared parenting responsibility unless there are reasonable and sufficient grounds of family or domestic violence or child abuse. This means that the law wants both parents to have an equal role in making decisions about the important issues that affect their children. This is not a presumption that children should spend equal time with each parent. However, where parenting orders provide parents with equal shared parental responsibility, the Court must consider making an order for children to spend equal time with each parent – if it is in the best interests of the children and if it is appropriate and practical.

Family Support Services

Families SA

Families SA has a responsibility to assess the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who witness or experience domestic violence and to take appropriate action. Families SA through its' legislative mandate may intervene to protect children and young people when a family cannot, or when they are unlikely to provide safety for children or young people. Families SA will work together with families and other agencies to improve the safety of women, children and young people.

Children's Contact Services:

Anglicare Mt Barker provides services for parents to enable contact with their children. The **Changeover Service** enables children to move from one parent to another without the parents having to deal directly with one another. The **Supervised Contact Service** allows children to spend time with the visiting parent at the Anglicare venue. Anyone can use the Changeover Service. For Supervised sessions (up to two hours) parents must have either a contact order from the Family Court or a formal agreement. Fees apply.

Financial help

Centrelink

You may be able to get income support from Centrelink if you leave your abusive partner. There is a Crisis Payment for people who are leaving home because of domestic violence. This is a one off payment to help you settle into a new home. You will need to state to Centrelink that you are leaving because of domestic violence.

You may also be able to receive other payments such as a Parenting Payment and Family Tax Benefits payment.

Community Emergency Relief Support Services:

Throughout the community there are services which can help you with financial assistance, food vouchers, clothes and furniture. These services may be through a local church or community agency. Phone numbers are in the resource section.



Housing

Housing SA

Housing SA can provide housing support by offering bond assistance or lower cost housing to families or individuals who meet the criteria. You need to contact Housing SA and talk to someone about your situation. Ensure you tell them you are leaving home because of domestic violence. If you are already in a Housing SA property you may be able to get a transfer to another Housing SA property in another region or obtain increased security if there is an Intervention Order in place. You need to get supporting documentation and to talk to a Housing SA worker to arrange this. Housing SA also assist individuals with obtaining private rental through liaising with real estate agents and landlords.

Junction Housing

Junction Housing is a community organisation providing transitional housing and medium to longer term housing for women and children who have left domestic violence. Availability of housing is variable and there are sometimes long waiting lists depending on your preferred area. You can contact them directly or speak to your local domestic violence service.

Staying Safe after Separation

When you decide to leave your partner, it is important for your safety that you have as much support around you as possible. Keep your decision to leave and new address a secret.

Post-separation is a particularly dangerous time for women with research indicating that there is a significant increase of violence by former partners who fail to recognise or accept the separation. After separation, physical violence, threats to violence, harassment and stalking type behaviours may continue, over many months, or years.

Stalking behaviours may include him repeatedly sending abusive or threatening messages, leaving or sending unwanted items or gifts, following you, using GPS or other devices to track you, or waiting for you at your home, work, or the children's school. If he is not able to harass you directly he may enlist the help of friends or family to do it on his behalf, or by threatening and harassing your family, friends or work colleagues.

Stalking can cause intense feelings of fear or anxiety and undermine your sense of security

STALKING IS A CRIME

If you are being stalked, collect evidence and provide this to the police when seeking assistance.

Some men set out to destroy the woman's credibility and isolate her by denying charges, attempting to have her criminalised, spreading malicious rumours about her, posting abusive or humiliating comments about her on social media or by attempting to "win over" her family and friends. Other men attempt to limit a woman's autonomy and independence by blocking her ability to establish a new life or enter another relationship; depleting her of financial resources by refusing to give her any entitlement to property and/or involving her in lengthy court battles over property or other matters.

Women are often at risk of increased post-separation abuse if they have children to the man who abuses. If the women and children remain in the family home many men believe they still have the right to access the home and their children whenever they want. A man may seek to gain residency or contact with the children simply to gain access to the mother or just to remove the children from her care, not out of any genuine desire to care for the children. He may use intimidation and bullying tactics by being inflexible over child sharing arrangements, changing agreed arrangements for contact by showing up unexpectedly at school, at relatives etc. Child support is often a contentious issue, many men refuse to pay child support or pay irregularly to maintain control.

As the man perceives a loss of control over the mother, he may target the children as a vehicle for ongoing abuse. He may coerce or manipulate them to take his side against the mother; interrogate them for information about her; undermine her rules and routines – shower them with gifts, allow them to eat ‘junk’ food, stay up to all hours etc. Children thus can return from contact with their father displaying a range of behavioural issues and often take out their distress and frustration upon the mother feeling it is safe to do so. The mother may feel so threatened or pressured by the man that she will surrender her rights to the children believing or hoping that it will ensure increased safety for her and the children.



Useful Strategies to Maintain Safety

If you are not able to take anything with you when you leave you can arrange for the police to go to the house and provide protection for you while you collect your belongings. You can organise this by contacting 131444 and requesting a police Stand By. Other strategies to consider are:

- seek legal advice; be informed of your rights
- change your routines and avoid places where your ex-partner might expect to see you (e.g. shopping centre); plan what you would do if you were followed in your car, on the street or on public transport
- inform the police immediately if your ex-partner breaches an Intervention Order

- save messages left via text or answering machines that are evidence of stalking or abuse; keep a record of all suspicious incidents, abuse, violence, threats
- increase home security (e.g. change locks, install security screens, sensor lights, video cameras, duress alarms), purchase a personal alarm
- inform neighbours whom you trust about your situation and ask for help with your safety plan
- inform your children's school, day-care the names of people who are allowed contact with the children and their collection arrangements; provide copies of any Intervention Orders to schools, day-care
- organise access handovers for children in a public place, at a police station, through an Access Centre
- organise a separate bank account in a different bank or financial institution
- request restrictions be set up on your personal details with government agencies such as Centrelink
- organise a private mailbox; inform others (e.g. work, doctors, lawyers) about the importance of maintaining your privacy, don't give out your home address to businesses and others - provide your postal address or use a safer alternative address
- change phone numbers; use prepaid phone cards; change to a silent number on your landline; get to know and understand the privacy and security settings and apps on your phone, have your mobile without GPS installed, or turn your GPS locating functions to "off" (on your Smart phone)
- if you suspect someone is tracking your movements and communication through your computer or phone- install anti-spyware
- create a new profile on social media with non-identifiable information; if you have a Facebook, twitter, Myspace... account, be very vague in what you post; set up a new email account using a new password; change all your passwords
- consider registering as a silent voter on the electoral roll
- request restrictions on names, personal details on land titles searches on property owned by you

Support Services for Women

It can take time to recover and to rebuild from an abusive relationship. It may be helpful for you to talk to someone about your situation whether you are living with domestic violence or have left domestic violence.

In an abusive relationship a woman often learns to gauge and maintain her safety by predicting her partner's mood and adjusting her behaviour. Having no contact can be very unsettling and fear provoking and you may feel like you have lost control.

When you leave the relationship you may experience a real sense of loss of your identity. Your role as a wife/partner and/or mother may be the way you see yourself. Being on your own can be very liberating but also overwhelming, it may be the first time you have experienced this freedom, and it may require you to learn new skills. There may be feelings of regret and thoughts of reconciling, your thoughts may go back to the beginning of the relationship when things were better, or you recall some good things about the relationship that you miss. These feelings are a natural part of the grieving process of a loss of a relationship. Combating self-doubt, fear, uncertainty... questioning who you are, who you used to be or when and if you will feel whole again.

Counselling with someone experienced in domestic violence can provide you with the opportunity to talk about what has happened to you and assist you to understand and process your experience. It can help you cope with the changes in your life and the new challenges in your relationship.

Women who have been in abusive relationships will often need to re-establish connections with their family, their friends, their community. Even though you may want to isolate yourself, reaching out to supportive friends and family can be important at this time. Participating in a domestic violence support group where you can share your experiences with other women in a safe and supportive environment can be a powerful way to strengthen you and help you heal.

The effects on women who have experienced domestic violence may be ongoing throughout their lives. Some women will require counselling to address a range of post-traumatic reactions. These can include anxiety, depression, nightmares, flashbacks, insomnia, inability to make decisions and loss of interest in activities. Women can find that once out of their abusive situations that their mental health issues begin to lessen, as one woman expressed it, she had been "oppressed rather than depressed". To find out about mental health practitioners you can contact your local GP or some of the services listed in the Resource Section.

Women in Regional & Rural Areas

Some groups of women are at higher risk of experiencing domestic violence, including Indigenous women, immigrant or refugee women and women with a disability

Women who experience domestic violence in regional and, even more so in rural locations meet further challenges not limited to physical and social isolation

Physical and Social Isolation

Isolation and physical distance in rural and regional communities put pressure on women to remain in violent relationships. A woman will often have to travel long distances to seek support or escape violence and if she does not have access or is prevented from using a private vehicle she has limited choices to leave with few or no public transport options. A woman living on a rural property faces additional challenges as she will not only be isolated but generally lives and works in close proximity to her partner who can keep her under constant surveillance and control.

Community Attitudes

In regional and rural communities the prevalent conservative attitudes and beliefs about the roles of men and women in relationships and of keeping the family together can make women reluctant to disclose violence. There is often a significant culture of mateship and masculinity in communities which tolerates and reinforces the use of violence. This, with the need to protect the family name and a strong ethic of self-sufficiency, can add further pressure on women to remain silent about their abusive situations.

Confidentiality

In rural and regional communities where everyone is often known to each other, ensuring confidentiality and impartiality by police, medical professionals and other services is challenging. Sometimes women are reluctant to use local services because they know the staff personally and may feel uncomfortable disclosing their experiences. If a woman remains in her community she is much more visible and can be easily located by her ex-partner. Police familiarity with both parties in the relationship sometimes leads a relaxed response to calls about domestic violence and reluctance to charge the offender. In rural areas there are a limited number of officers to police a vast geographical area which can affect police response time to incidents.

Services and Support

There is often a lack of services and infrastructure in regional and rural areas. There are also fewer employment opportunities which can affect the financial status and security of women. Women, in particular those who reside on rural properties, also encounter the complications of family run businesses - most money may be tied up in assets or debts on the property making it difficult for her to access housing or legal support. A woman can also be reluctant to leave a relationship and a rural property if she feels that doing so might threaten the survival of the family business or because she has to leave assets that have been developed together over many years.

Gun Ownership

The presence of firearms is much greater in rural areas. Rural isolation and acceptance of guns for hunting and self-protection increases the potential for men to use guns to intimidate or harm women. Firearms are also particularly prevalent in domestic homicides.

You and your children have a right to be safe

**If you require domestic violence support you can contact the
Murray Mallee and Adelaide Hills Domestic Violence Service**

Contact details are listed in the Resource Section

Indigenous Women



Domestic violence for Indigenous women is disproportionately higher than for other women in Australian society. In some rural and in remote regions indigenous women are 45 times more likely to experience domestic violence than non-indigenous women.

The high rates of domestic and family violence in Indigenous communities are believed to stem from and be worsened by poverty and the impact of past and present government policies and practices - the loss of land and traditional culture, oppression and marginalisation, the effects of institutionalisation and child removal policies. All have resulted in a legacy of grief and loss, health issues and violence across generations.

**Domestic or family violence is not a part
of Indigenous culture**

Many indigenous women have identified difficulties in trying to obtain information, advice or support as victims of domestic violence; at the same time, many indigenous women are reluctant to report violence and abuse. Key barriers that Indigenous women have identified include:

- a deep distrust of police and/or fear of their partners being incarcerated
- history of poor experiences with the legal system
- anxiety related to approaching services
- fear of their children being taken away
- lack of access to services, or lack of appropriate services
- lack of cultural competence of professionals
- institutional racism
- kinships systems

Aboriginal culture has very strong kinship ties and extended family networks. A woman is often connected to many members of her community which can also include her partner's family. If she is experiencing domestic violence she may conceal abuse or she can face pressure from her family and/or her community to not disclose; many women fear retaliation and breaking ties with the family following disclosure. For indigenous women the term family violence rather than domestic violence is most often used because it better reflects their experiences.

You have a right to be safe and free of violence

If you wish to speak with an Indigenous domestic violence service there are services available in Adelaide; otherwise you can contact **Murray Mallee and Adelaide Hills Domestic Violence Service** or other mainstream services for support. These numbers are listed in the Resource Section.



Women from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds & Migrants

Women from different cultures and backgrounds face different problems when living with domestic violence. They are often trapped in abusive relationships because of language and cultural differences and isolation. They may not seek assistance because they are unaware of their social, legal and financial rights, their immigration status, the laws around domestic violence in Australia or what services are available to support them.

Sometimes a woman is hesitant to seek help from members of her own community due to cultural restrictions, shame and privacy issues. Within her culture there may be beliefs that domestic violence is ok and that women should live with it; some cultures do not believe a woman has a right to leave a marriage and she may remain in an abusive relationship because of the stigma of divorce or she fears becoming ostracised from her cultural community if she does leave.

Those women who come to Australia on marriage visas are in a particularly vulnerable position as they are dependent on their partners to meet immigration policy requirements for visas. They may stay in abusive relationships for fear of having their application for permanent residence rejected if they leave the relationship. Often the Australian partner is aware of the woman's fear and will use the permanent residence application as a weapon against her, threatening to inform authorities if she does not do what the partner wants. If a woman leaves her partner she faces the possibility that her partner will revoke his support and she would then have to apply for a temporary or residence visa in her own right. During this process, the woman may be left with little or no financial support. She will not be entitled to social security until she obtains permanent residence and will likely have limited opportunities to secure employment.

Often if there are children involved, the resident father will make threats to the woman that, should she leave, he will not allow her to take the children with her. If the father does not consent to a child being issued with a passport, then the mother will not be able to obtain a passport for the child.

Women from refugee backgrounds, where there are often cultures of few women's rights, and pre-migration experiences that can include torture and trauma, will face additional barriers. Refugee women can be reluctant 'to trust in the system' particularly in regards to the police and court processes.

**No matter what culture or background you come from,
domestic violence is not acceptable**

There are domestic violence provisions in immigration law

If there has been domestic violence, you may be able to leave your relationship and still obtain permanent residency

If you have lodged an application to remain permanently in Australia on marriage or defacto grounds and the relationship has ended as a result of domestic violence you will need to contact the Department of Immigration. You will need to provide proof that the domestic violence has occurred. Violence may have been directed against you or any of the children.

There are services available that can support you and assist you talk to someone in your own language. **Culturally and Linguistically Different (CALD) Statewide Domestic Violence Service** provides a specialised service for CALD women; otherwise you can contact mainstream services for support.



Women with Disabilities



Women with disabilities make up about 20% of the population of women in Australia and will tend to experience domestic violence at a higher rate and over longer periods of time than women without a disability

Women with disabilities are especially vulnerable to repeated victimisation by their partners. A woman with a disability will often be dependent upon her partner for her care, have limited skills to protect herself and often be very isolated. Women with disabilities will often perceive that they have no option but to stay in an abusive relationship.

Some of society's negative images and myths regarding women with disabilities increase a woman's risk of being abused by her partner

These myths include:

Myth: Women with a disability are not able to give or participate equally. The woman's disability gets used as a basis for inequity in the relationship.

Myth: Women with a disability are perceived as being dependent, childlike and in need of protection. As a result of these stereotypes the woman's experiences are devalued, ignored and made invisible; her partner's control can often be disguised as "caring support".

Myth: Women with disabilities are a burden to their partners and family - the woman's partner is a martyr or hero for being in a relationship with her.

When reporting acts of domestic violence or seeking protection, a woman with a disability can have her credibility questioned; the focus will often be on her disability rather than the abuse. In many instances it can be difficult to have her account of abuse validated. Women with a psychiatric disability (often an “invisible” disability) can be reluctant to report violence to the police because of their often negative past experiences with police. Psychiatric disability is still highly stigmatised and is frequently used against a woman by her partner if she reports allegations of abuse to police or in child residency decisions by legal and child welfare systems.

Whilst there are no disability specific services for women in domestic violence in South Australia, women with disability can access support from mainstream services.

Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA) is the peak organisation for women with all types of disabilities in Australia. It is a not-for-profit organisation constituted and driven by women with disabilities.

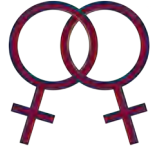


You have a right to be safe

You do not have to remain in an abusive relationship

Same Sex Relationships

The dynamics of violence and abuse occur in same sex relationships and are very similar to those in heterosexual relationships; power and control are the issues.



However there other barriers that are faced by women in same sex relationships.

- Women can have less support around them when they experience domestic violence as they will often have a long experience of discrimination and be isolated from their families and mainstream society.
- If women are not “out” and open about being gay or a lesbian, they may not wish to talk about the domestic violent situation as people will find out about their sexuality. They may also not want to send a negative message to mainstream society that domestic violence occurs in same sex relationships.
- Women who are in same sex relationships might not want to say they are in a domestic violent situation for the same reason as women in heterosexual relationships. However there are other concerns which prevent them from admitting they are living with domestic violence. They can feel discriminated against or not believed in mainstream society.

Myths relating to abuse in same sex relationships include:

Myth: Same sex violence is not as severe as when a woman is abused by a man

Myth: As partners are of the same gender, it is mutual abuse with each partner perpetrating and experiencing equally

Women in same sex relationships experiencing domestic violence can access mainstream domestic violence services. There are also specialised telephone counselling services available for women in same sex relationships. Contact numbers are in the Resources Section.

Just because you are the same sex as the person abusing you does not mean that you should be able to stop the abuse yourself

Older Women and domestic violence

Domestic violence occurs in relationships between older couples and may involve a partner and also other members of the family. Most older women in domestic violent situations will have experienced abuse for many years and will have carried the pain and trauma without disclosing to anyone. Some older women will, however, experience domestic violence for the first time when they enter a new relationship after a separation or death of a partner.

The barriers that older women face in leaving an abusive situation often include:

- feeling embarrassment or shame to disclose details of her abusive situation
- sees the violence as acceptable as she grew up in an era when gender roles and behaviour expectations were quite different
- lack of awareness of her rights
- does not identify what is happening to her as domestic violence
- fears the consequences of leaving her home, of losing property and possessions, of being separated from friends, family and community networks
- is financially dependent upon her partner, and/or dependent upon him for her care
- lack of an awareness of the services available to support women in her situation or how to access them
- pressure from her family to stay in the relationship and being blamed by them for the abuse

As well as accessing mainstream services there are services specifically for older people.

Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS)

ARAS offers a free, confidential, independent, state-wide advocacy service for older people and carers. Older people who are being, or are at risk of being, abused by family and/or friends can get help and support from ARAS. ARAS can help by: offering information about rights, entitlements and responsibilities; providing support offering strategies to protect themselves or reducing the abuse or advocating on the older person's behalf. ARAS also offers a service to older Aboriginal people through the **Aboriginal Advocacy Project**.

It's never too late to seek help and support for violence and abuse

Information for Men

Is there violence in your relationship?

- are you aggressive when you're feeling angry?
- do you get aggressive when you can't get your own way?
- do you blame others for your problems?
- are your children fearful of you?
- does your partner feel hurt, fearful, humiliated by the way you have treated you?
- has your violence led to police intervention?

If you have answered "yes" to any of these questions then violence is destroying your life and the lives of those closest to you.

Domestic violence occurs when:

- Men seek power and control over their partner
- Men don't take responsibility for their behaviour
- Men don't act respectfully to their partner
- Men have attitudes that objectify women
- Men blame others for their problems and challenges

**Men's use of violent and controlling behaviour
is about their choices**

It is up to you to change your behaviour and make your home safe for your partner and children. Choosing to be non-violent and then really making it happen generally requires specialised support. It can take time to change entrenched attitudes and habits that support violence and abuse. Men who have stopped the violence say that realising there is a problem is the first step to solving it. There are services available that you can contact to help you change your abusive and violent behaviour:

- Individual Counselling
- Groups for Men

Getting help can give you the opportunity to:

- Know and recognise how you build up your anger
- Stop the violence and abuse towards your partner
- Learn new ways to deal with power and control
- Understand the impact of violence and abuse on your partner and children
- Improve self-awareness
- Learn to communicate more respectfully with others

You say you're a man, you understand,
but you don't. You should lend her a
helping hand, but you won't. Cause I'm a
man, I don't understand, but I try.

She always does what I command, while
she cries. And why should we do what we
do and sleep at night.

The crazy things we put her through, it
isn't right.

So my brother don't hurt her anymore.
She's got her law, you've got yours. And
she's sick and tired of walking into doors.

Her gentle spirit her sacred way and her
smile may not be here she may disappear
in a little while.

So my brother don't hurt her anymore.
She's got her law, you've got yours. And
she's sick and tired of walking into doors.

'Walking into Doors' excerpts printed with kind permission
Aboriginal songwriter and singer Archie Roach.

Emergency Phone Numbers

**POLICE, FIRE, AMBULANCE EMERGENCY
000**

**POLICE ASSISTANCE
131444**

**CHILD ABUSE REPORT LINE (24 hrs)
13 14 78**

**CHILD AND YOUTH HEALTH
1300 364 100 Parent Helpline (24 hrs)
1300 131 719 Youth Helpline (24 hrs)**

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABORIGINAL FAMILY VIOLENCE GATEWAY
1800 800 098**

**KIDS HELPLINE (24 hrs)
1800 551 800**

**LIFELINE (24 hours)
13 1144**

**1800RESPECT: National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling
Service (24 hours) counselling hotline
1800 737 732**

**YARROW PLACE. RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICE
1800 817 421**

USEFUL WEBSITES

WOMEN'S SERVICES NETWORK - WESNET.ORG.AU. National women's peak
advocacy body for domestic violence

DAISY APP - 1800RESPECT.ORG.AU - domestic violence resources

Smartsafe.Org.Au - technology and safety



The Murray Bridge Regional Collaboration on Violence against Women and Children provides a public forum and community voice for domestic and family violence in the Murray Bridge region. It lobbies for appropriate services for domestic and family violence and encourages all people to take a stand against violence.

Meetings are held monthly to exchange information and to plan projects.

Contact:

The Rural City of Murray Bridge PO Box 421 Murray Bridge 5253

Phone: 8539 1100

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