

How to respond

If you recognise or suspect that you, or someone you know, are experiencing domestic violence:

Remember that safety for the victims and any children in the household is the number one priority

- Be aware of the range of ways in which domestic violence can be experienced: emotional, psychological, sexual, financial, physical etc.
- As a victim: speak to someone you trust and get help from those who specialise in dealing with family and domestic violence.
- For someone you know: listen to them and believe their story.
- Help the victim to feel safe: this may mean arranging accommodation away from the home.
- Find out where to get help from those experienced in working with family and domestic violence.
- Do not talk with the perpetrator if the victim feels unsafe or asks you not to.
- If you do speak with the perpetrator, expect them to minimise or deny that anything serious is happening.
- Invite the perpetrator to take responsibility for their behaviour: this may mean attending a group program, getting individual counselling, moving out of home etc.
- Arrange for individual counselling, for both parties if possible. Remember that if there is an established pattern of power and control, relationship counselling is not suitable.
- Do not suggest to the victim that they can improve the situation by changing their behaviour e.g. by loving their partner more or being less argumentative.
- Do not ask the victim to forgive or to reconcile the relationship prematurely.
- Be aware that in some situations, permanent separation or ending the marriage is the only safe option.
- Understand that this may be a crime and may need to be reported to the police and/or Family and Community Services.

Resources

- Anglicare Counselling has counsellors trained in family violence in 10 locations across the Sydney and Wollongong region.
- Domestic and Family Violence App: Aurora (available for Android and iOS devices)
- NSW Government help for
 - female victims: Domestic Violence: it can happen to anyone
 - male victims: Victims Services
 - perpetrators: Perpetrators Stop Using Violence
- C of E Archbishops Council, Responding to Domestic Abuse: Guidelines For Those With Pastoral Responsibilities (2006)

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