

Identifying Domestic & Family Violence

A Resource Kit

Domestic Violence is:

- *the leading cause of injury among women of reproductive age*
- *the single most common trigger for female suicide*

At its most extreme:

- *up to 60% of women who are murdered, die as a result of a domestic dispute.¹*

Produced by the Women's Health Strategy Unit 2003

Adapted from 'Identifying Family Violence 1999 Resource Kit for General Practitioners', □
Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre Inc., Victoria © 1999

¹ Webster, 1995, cited in Stratigos *Screening for Domestic Violence in Pregnancy*



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What is Family Violence?

The behaviour that is adopted by a person to control their victim that results in physical, sexual and/or psychological damage, forced social isolation or economic deprivation, or behaviour that leaves a person living in fear. These behaviours are perpetrated by someone who is known to the victim².

Whether the violence is physical, sexual or emotional, it has long term health effects. This kit is therefore provided to health care professionals to assist them to identify and respond to the women and children who are most likely to be the victims of family violence.

Family Violence and Domestic Violence are used interchangeably. Although both men and women are victims of Domestic/Family Violence the female gender is used in the terminology in this kit.

The ABS conducted a national survey in 1996 to collect information on the nature and extent of violence against women in Australia. The study, Women's Safety Australia, indicated that, of 6300 women interviewed, 7.1% had experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the last 12 months, most frequently in the home. The study also found that 23% of women who have ever been married or in a de facto relationship had experienced physical violence from a male partner³.

The AMA states: "The medical profession has key roles to play in early detection, intervention and provision of specialised treatment of those who suffer the consequences of domestic violence, whether it be physical, sexual or emotional⁴."

A recent study found that, after family and friends, victims are most likely to tell health professionals about violence⁵.

Responding effectively to family violence in a medical setting requires a knowledge of the physical and emotional consequences of the violence, an understanding of appropriate and inappropriate responses, and on having good networks with local family violence services.

Assessing your patient

Some signs or physical injuries may include:

- injuries during pregnancy
- bruising in chest and abdomen
- multiple injuries
- minor laceration
- ruptured eardrums
- delay in seeking medical attention
- patterns of repeated injury

² Office of Women's Policy, 2001 *Domestic Violence Let's Stop It ... Now* campaign, Northern Territory Government

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (1996) *Women's Safety Survey*, Canberra

⁴ Australian Medical Association, 1998

⁵ Keys Young, 1998, *Against the Odds: How Women Survive Domestic Violence – The Needs of Women Experiencing Domestic Violence who do not use Domestic Violence and Related Crisis Services*, Office of Status of Women, Barton, ACT

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However it is rare for physical injury to be the presenting complaint to General Practitioners⁷. Women are often reluctant to disclose abuse because of fear or shame, or because they think that they won't be believed. More commonly, victims of family violence present with a broad range of symptoms such as:

- stress related illness
- anxiety, panic attacks, stress and/or depression
- drug abuse, including of tranquillisers and alcohol
- chronic headaches, asthma, vague aches and pains
- abdominal pain, chronic diarrhoea
- complaints of sexual dysfunction, vaginal discharge
- joint pain, muscle pain
- sleeping and eating disorders
- suicide attempts, psychiatric illness
- gynaecological problems, miscarriages, chronic pelvic pain

'A lot of women don't know who to talk to. It makes it easier if someone else brings it up!'

Other indicators

The woman:

- appears nervous, ashamed or evasive
- describes her partner as controlling or prone to anger
- seems uncomfortable or anxious in the presence of her partner
- is accompanied by her partner, who does most of the talking
- gives an unconvincing explanation of the injuries
- has recently been separated or divorced
- presents with children, though little seems to be wrong with them
- is reluctant to follow your advice

Indicators in children may include

- aggressive behaviour and language
- anxiety, appearing nervous and withdrawn
- difficulty adjusting to change
- psychosomatic illness
- restlessness
- bedwetting
- 'acting out', such as cruelty to animals
- delayed speech/unusually non-verbal behaviour

Consider the use of an interpreting service...

In the past decade, domestic violence has been recognised as a major public health problem. It affects all people, irrespective of economic, educational, social, geographic or racial background, resulting in significant morbidity and mortality⁸.

⁶ Queensland Domestic Violence Initiative Stage 1, 1999, Queensland Health

⁷ Koss, M. and Heslet, L. (1992), 'Somatic consequences of violence against women', *Archives of Family Medicine*, 1992, September, 1 (1): 53-9

⁸ Hegarty K., Hindmarsh E.D., and Gilles M.T., (2000), Domestic Violence in Australia: Definition, Prevalence and Nature of Presentation in Clinical Practice. *Medical Journal of Australia*, Vol 173 2 October: 363-364.

Asking about violence

Direct questioning is supported by women in the health care setting. 98% of women being screened for domestic violence are comfortable with being asked⁶.

"In this hospital / practice / clinic, we are concerned about your health and safety, so we ask ALL women a few questions. Whatever you reply will remain strictly confidential."

- 'Do you have problems with anyone at home who makes you afraid for your safety?' (refer to assessing safety)
- 'In the last year, has anyone at home hit, kicked, punched or otherwise hurt you?'
- 'In the last year, has anyone at home often put you down, humiliated you or tried to control what you can do?'
- 'In the last year, has anyone at home threatened to hurt you or your children?'
- 'In the last year, has anyone forced you to have sex when you didn't want to?'
- 'Would you like to talk about it?'
- 'Would you like help with any of this now?'

Responding to disclosures of violence

Listen

Being listened to can be an empowering experience for a woman who has been abused.

Communicate belief

'That must have been very frightening for you.'

Validate the decision to disclose

'It must have been difficult for you to talk about this.'
'I am glad you were able to tell me about this today.'

Emphasise the unacceptability of violence

'You do not deserve to be treated this way.'

What not to say

'Why do you stay with a person like that?'
'What could you have done to avoid the situation?'
'Why did he hit you?'

Queensland's Initiative to Combat Domestic Violence introduced screening for domestic violence during pregnancy in 1998 at five hospitals. Approximately 8.9% of the women screened in these hospitals over the two years to March 2000 disclosed domestic violence⁶.

25% of adult patients screened during the 3 month Northern Territory DV Screening Pilot (at RDH Emergency Department) disclosed violence¹⁰.

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Refer to violent behaviour *not* the person

'Your partner's behaviour is not acceptable.'

Explain what you can do

'I can refer you to some one who can help.'

'I can give you some information.'

'I can make you an appointment by phone.'

'I can arrange for a service to come here and help you.'

Assisting the woman to assess her and her children's safety

- Speak to the woman alone.
- Does she feel safe going home after the appointment?
- Are her children safe?
- Does she need an immediate place of safety?
- Does she need to consider an alternative exit from your building?
- If immediate safety is not an issue, what about her future safety? Does she have a future plan of action if she is at risk?
- Does she have emergency telephone numbers? (police, women's refuges).
- Help make an emergency plan. (Where would she go if she had to leave? How would she get there? What would she take with her? Who are the people she could contact for support?) Document these plans for future reference.
- If it is unsafe to take DV cards, write on her appointment card or a pamphlet.

Quicker than you can put on a Band-Aid, you can acknowledge the violence the battered woman has experienced. You can assert that it is illegal, not her fault, and that a lot of women are in the same situation. You can educate her about the community-based resources available to her, and ask: "Are you safe?"

"... cases of domestic violence can produce severe cases of child abuse if left unchecked " "

Documentation

- Describe physical injuries. This includes the type, extent, age and location of any physical injuries sustained. If you suspect violence is a cause, but your patient has not confirmed this, it may be relevant to include in your comments whether her explanation accurately explains the injury.
- Consider taking photographs of injuries and/or drawing a diagram.

⁹ Stark, E., Flitcraft, A. and Frazier, W., (1979), 'Medicine and patriarchal violence: the social constructions of a private event', *International Journal of Health Services*, 9 (3).461-493

- Record what the patient has said (using quotation marks) and any behaviour you have observed.
- This information may be required as evidence, should charges be laid against the perpetrator.

Guidelines for continuing care

- Consider your patient's safety as a paramount issue.
- Empower her to take control of decision making; ask what she needs and present her with choices.
- Respect the knowledge and coping skills she has developed. You can build on her emotional strengths, for example by asking: 'How have you dealt with this situation before?'
- Provide emotional support.
- Ensure confidentiality -the woman may suffer additional abuse if her partner suspects that she has disclosed the abuse.
- Be aware of appropriate referral services and assist the woman in contacting them if required.

" I wasn't aware of any places like refuges or different places¹²."

To indicate your awareness of family violence and willingness to assist

- Display posters in the waiting area.
- Have pamphlets available (where women can take them without being seen by other patients ie toilets).
- Put a folder of health articles, including some on family violence, in the waiting room.
- Have your appointment cards printed with the phone numbers of domestic violence and sexual assault services on the reverse side.

Whilst all reasonable care has been taken in the preparation of this publication, no liability is assumed for any errors or omissions.

⁹ Stark, E., Flitcraft, A. and Frazier, W., (1979), 'Medicine and patriarchal violence: the social constructions of a private event', *International Journal of Health Services*, 9 (3).461-493

¹⁰ Northern Territory Domestic Violence Screening Pilot, Stage 1, 2002, DHCS

¹¹ Fogarty 1993; O'Hara, 1995.

¹² Head, C. and Taft, A., (unpublished, 1995), *Improving General Practitioner Management of Women Experiencing Domestic Violence: A Study of the Beliefs and Experiences of Women Victim/Survivors and of GPs*

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Contact Numbers for Male and Female Referrals - One phone call CAN make a difference

For information call Crisis Line 1800 019 116

(they have a data base of service providers)¹⁴

^w – If for Women Only

Domestic Violence Counselling

Domestic Violence Counsellor – Alice Springs	8952 6048
Domestic Violence Counsellor – Darwin	8945 6200
Domestic Violence Counsellor – Jabiru	8979 3764
Domestic Violence Counsellor – Katherine	8972 1733
Domestic Violence Counsellor – Nhulunbuy	8987 0403
Domestic Violence Counsellor – Tennant Creek	8962 1011

Sexual Assault Counselling

Sexual Assault Counsellor – Alice Springs	8951 5880
^w Ruby Gaea House - Darwin	8945 0155
Sexual Assault Referral Centre - Darwin	8922 7156
Sexual Assault Counsellor – Katherine	8971 0777
Sexual Assault Counsellor – Tennant Creek	8962 4364

Darwin

Family & Children's Services - 24 hours 89227111

Hospital Social Workers (page through Switch) 89228229

Outreach and Support (may visit/provide transport)

^w Dawn House Women's Shelter – with child/24 hours	8945 1388
^w Catherine Booth House – 24 hours/single women	89815928
Palmerston FCAS, Palmerston Resid. Only – 24 hours	89329155
^w Top End Women's Legal Service – can visit RDH b/h	1800041998
Victims of Crime - 24 hours	1800672242
Victim Support Unit – b/h	89997533/1800 659 499
Aboriginal Support Co-ordinator – b/h	89997533
Centrelink Social Workers – b/h	89363769
Mission Australia, transport 6am-10pm Mon-Fri	89480042
Night Patrol, transport 4pm-11pm	89480523

Police

NT Police Darwin/Palm/Rural – 24 hours	8927 8888
NT Police DV Unit	8948 0110

Counselling

Domestic Violence Counsellor	8945 6200
Centacare NT, inc. Children and Anger Management	8941 0022
Crisis Line Psychologists	8981 9227
Relationships Australia NT	8981 6676
Resolve/Anglicare Top End	8985 0040
Top End Association for Mental Health	8981 4128
EAS	8941 1752/1800 193 123
Somerville Family Services	9845 1533
Anglicare	8985 0000

Legal Services

Withnal Maley Free DV Legal Help mobile service	8941 1896
NT Legal Aid Commission	8999 3000/1800 019 343
^w Top End Women's Legal Service	1800 041 998
Family Court Counselling Service	8941 2933
Darwin Community Legal Service	8982 1111/1800 812 953
Domestic Violence Legal Help Drop In Service	8941 7940
Local Magistrates Court	8999 6225
Victims of Crime NT	8941 0995/1800 672 242
Victims Support Unit	8999 7533
Lone Father's Association	8932 3339

Territory Wide Services

Crisis Line	1800 019 116
Amity Community Services	
Drug and Alcohol Counselling	1800 629 683
Employee Assistance Service NT	1800 193 123
Men's Helpline	1300 789 978
NT Interpreter and Translator Service	1800 676 254
Victims of Crime	1800 672 242
Victim Support Unit	1800 659 449
Family and Children's Services	1800 700 250
Aboriginal Interpreter Service	89998353
Centrelink Social Workers	89363769

Sexual Assault Services

Sexual Assault Referral Centre – 24 hours	8922 7156
^w Ruby Gaea House, Darwin Centre Against Rape	8945 0155
Centacare – Family Program	8941 2211

Drug and Alcohol Counselling

Alcohol Awareness and Family Recovery	8941 2211
Alcoholics Anonymous	8948 5202
Amity Community Service	1800 629 683
Banyan House	8947 0832
Alcohol & Other Drug Services`	8922 8399

Crisis Accommodation

^w Dawn House Women's Shelter – with child/24 hours	8945 1388
^w Darwin Aboriginal and Islander Women's Shelter	8945 2284
Palmerston Family Crisis Accommodation and Support Service – for families escaping domestic violence	8932 9155
^w Catherine Booth House – 24 hours/single women	8981 5928
^w Oakley House - young mums & pregnant women	8945 3774
^w Stanley House - single young women	8945 3774
^w YWCA Casy House Youth Refuge	8948 2044
Red Shield Hostel	8981 5994
A New Start Towards Independence – ANSTI	8988 2600
Crisis Care and Resource Centre - (Christian Outreach Centre)	8947 0633
^w Towards Independence – and families, not emerg	8952 7965
Palmerston Community Accommodation (Somerville)	8932 6111
Ozanam House (St Vincent de Paul) - men only	8981 4374
Bakhita Centre – St Vincent de Paul Men only	8985 5333
Coral House Vietnam Vets only	8948 0050
Darwin Homeless Person's Centre – men only (Sunrise Centre – Salvation Army)	8981 4199

Indigenous Services

ARDS Aboriginal & Islander Family Centre & Hostel	8984 4174
Aboriginal Legal Aid	8982 5100
CAAPS (Council for Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services)	8922 4818
Danila Dilba Aboriginal Medical Services	8936 1700
^w Darwin Aboriginal and Islander Women's Shelter	8945 2284
FORWAARD	8981 8673
Aboriginal Development Foundation	8984 3539
Danila Dilba Emotional & Social Wellbeing Service	8936 1777
Danila Dilba Counselling/Healing Service	8936 1818
North Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service Inc	8981 5266
Galawu Hostel	8981 4106
Silas Robert Hostel	8981 5071

¹⁴ Adapted from material supplied by The Office of Women's Policy, 2001, *Domestic Violence Let's stop it... now Campaign*, NT Government

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Darwin Cont ...

Disability Services

Disability Local Area Coordination – Darwin/Outer Darwin/Palmerston	8922 7218
Disability Services Coordinator – Rural	8922 8375
^w Women with Disabilities Australia	8941 1649
Anglicare	8985 0000
Aged & Disability Rights Team	8981 3651
Red Cross	8981 4499
NT Carers Association Inc	8948 4877
Darwin Accommodation Services	8945 2270
Carpentaria Disability Services Inc	8931 3436
Support Services	8945 4977
Sommerville Family Services	8945 1533
Home Care – Red Cross	8945 3588
Total Recreation	8981 3686
Disability Rights Team	8982 1111

Ethnic and Migrant Services

Multicultural Council of the NT	8981 1784
Office of Ethnic Affairs	8999 7332
Council on the Ageing	8948 1511
Torture & Trauma Service of the NT	8985 3311
Department of Immigration	131 881
Chung Wah Society	8941 0898
Canossian Sisters	8985 3128
Greek Community Welfare Office	8981 7203
Greek Orthodox Community	8981 4219
Translating & Interpreting Service	131 450
NT Interpreter & Translator Service	8999 7566

Community Health Centres

Danila Dilba Aboriginal Medical Services	8936 1700
Casuarina Community Care Centre	8922 7301
Darwin Community Care Centre	8999 2876
Palmerston Community Care Centre	8999 3344

Alice Springs

Family & Children's Services (24hrs) 89515170

Hospital Social Work Department (on pager) 8951 7777

Outreach and Support

Centrelink Social Workers -b/h	89363769
Victim Support Unit- b/h	89515800

Police

NT Police Alice Springs (24 hrs)	8951 8888
NT Police Domestic Violence Unit	8951 8859

Counselling

Domestic Violence Counsellor	8952 6048
Centacare NT	8953 3177
Mental Health Association of Central Australia	8952 3311
Relationships Australia NT	8952 7344
Alice People Services	8953 4770
EAS	8953 4225/1800 193 123

Legal Services

^w Central Australian Women's Legal Service	1800 684 055
Domestic Violence Legal Service	8952 1391
NT Legal Aid Commission	1800 019 343
Family Court Counselling Service	8952 8222

Sexual Assault Services

Alice Springs Sexual Assault Referral Centre (24hrs)	8951 5880
Sexual Assault Counsellor	8951 5888
EAS	8953 4225/1800 193 123

Drug and Alcohol Counselling

Drug & Alcohol Services Association	8952 8412
Alcoholics Anonymous	8955 0031
Holyoake	8952 5899
Central Australian Alcohol & Other Drug Services	8951 7580

Alice Springs Cont ...

Indigenous Services

Aboriginal Housing and Information Referral Service	8952 3366
Arrente Council	8953 1533
Central Australian Aboriginal Congress	
Medical Service	8951 4444
Youth Outreach Service	8951 4484
Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service	8952 2933
Intjartnama	8956 7849
^w NPY (Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjarra Yankunytjatjara)	
Women's Council Aboriginal Corporation	
Domestic Violence Service	1800 180 840
Tangentyere Council	8952 5855
Tangentyere Night Patrol	8953 3110
Indigenous Housing Association	8931 1455
CAAAPU	8955 5336
Central Australian Aboriginal Congress	8951 4444
Ayiparinya Hostel	8952 4981

Ethnic and Migrant Services

Migrant Resource Centre of Central Australia	8952 8776
Office of Ethnic Affairs	8951 5389

Information Services

^w Alice Springs Women's Information Centre	8951 5880
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Community Health Centres

Alice Springs Community Health Centre	8951 6744
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Crisis Accommodation

^w Alice Springs Women's Shelter	8952 6075
Anglican Lodge	8952 3108
Red Shield Men's Hostel	8952 1434

Disability Services

Disability Local Area Coordination	8951 7713
Disability Advocacy Services	8953 1422
Disability Services & Liaison	8951 5177
Central Australian Supported Accommodation	8953 4311
Community Care Centre	8951 6711

East Arnhem

Family & Children's Services

89870400

Outreach and Support

Centrelink Social Workers 89363769

Police

NT Police Groote Eylandt	8987 6122
NT Police Nhulunbuy	8987 1333

Counselling

Domestic Violence Counsellor	8987 0403
Anglicare Resolve	8987 6421
EAS	1800 193 123
Relationships Australia	1800 652 404

Crisis Accommodation

Crisis Accommodation Gove	8987 1166
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Sexual Assault Services

Anglicare Resolve	8987 6421
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Disability Services

Disability Local Area Coordination	8987 0404
Anglicare	8987 6598
Alyangula Community Health Centre	8987 6255

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East Arnhem Cont ...

Indigenous Services

Health & Community Services 8987 0434
N hulunbuy Hostel 8987 2553

Drug and Alcohol Counselling

Anglicare Resolve – Groote Eylandt 8987 6421

Ethnic and Migrant Services

Neighbourhood Community Centre 8987 2191

Community Health Centre

Alyangula Health Centre 8987 6255
W N hulunbuy Child and Maternal Health 8987 0435

Jabiru

Police

NT Police Jabiru 8979 2122

Outreach and Support

Centrelink Social Workers 89363769
Domestic Violence Counsellor 8979 3764

Counselling

Domestic Violence Counsellor 8979 3764
EAS 1800 193 123
Relationships Australia 1800 652 404

Disability Services

Disability Local Area Coordination 8922 8375

Community Health Centre

Jabiru Community Health Centre 8979 2018

Katherine

Family & Children's Services

8973 8600

Outreach and Support

Centrelink Social Workers 8936 3769

Police

NT Police Katherine 8972 0111

Counselling

Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Counsellor 8972 1733
Centacare NT Katherine Family Link 8971 0777
Wurli Wurlijang Health Services 8971 0044
Relationships Australia 1800 652 404
EAS NT 8971 2764

Legal Services

W Katherine Women's Information and Legal Service 8972 1712
NT Legal Aid Commission 1800 019 343
Katherine Aboriginal Family Support Unit 8972 3200
Somerville Family Services (12-25 year old) 8971 1107

Drug and Alcohol Counselling

Employee Assistance Service NT 8971 2764

Disability Services

Kintore Street Community Services 8973 8778
Step Out Community Access Service 8971 0689
Red Cross 8971 1246
Aged & Disability Rights Team 8982 1111

Other Numbers:

Katherine Cont ...

Indigenous Services

Aboriginal Legal Aid 8972 1133
Kalano Night Patrol 8972 2086
Katherine Aboriginal Family Support Unit 8972 3200
Wurli Wurlijang Health Services 8971 0044
Kalano Aboriginal Alcohol Rehab Program 8972 3588
Kalano Aged Care Hostel 8972 2541
Corroboree Hostel 8972 2177
Wardaman Aboriginal Corporation 8972 3874
Barunga Mayallaluk Community Govt Council 8975 4505
KRALAS (Aboriginal Legal Aid) 8972 1133

Crisis Accommodation

W Katherine Women's Crisis Centre 24 hours 8972 1332
Somerville Youth and Family Services 8971 1107
Anglicare Top End 8972 1571
Katherine Community Accommodation & Support Program
Ormonde House – St Vincent de Paul's – men 16+ 8972 1956

Community Health Centre

Katherine Community Health Centre 8973 8570

Tennant Creek

Family & Children's Services

8962 4334

Outreach and Support

W Tennant Creek Women's Refuge 24 hours + children 8962 1940
Centrelink Social Workers 8936 3769

Police

NT Police Tennant Creek 8962 4444

Counselling

Domestic Violence Counsellor 8962 1011

Sexual Assault Services

Sexual Assault Counsellor 8962 4364

Drug and Alcohol Counselling

Anyinginyi Congress 8962 2385
BRADAAG House – Sobering Up Shelter 8962 1136
BRADAAG – Staunton Street Centre 8962 1912

Indigenous Services

Ali Curung Night Patrol 8964 1955
Anyinginyi Congress 8962 2385
Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service 8962 1332
Elliot Night Patrol C/- Gurungu Council 8969 2079
Julalikari Council 8962 2699
Julalikari Night Patrol 8962 2151
Julalikari Disability Support Services 8962 2945
CAALAS (Aboriginal Legal Aid) 8962 1332

Crisis Accommodation

W Tennant Creek Women's Refuge, 24 hours + children 8962 1940
St Vincent de Paul's 8962 2779

Community Health Centre

Tennant Creek Community Health Centre 8962 4218

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GET THE CLIENT ON THEIR OWN - EXPLAIN THE SCREEN

