



INFORMATION FOR WORKPLACES ABOUT FAMILY VIOLENCE

Self-Care & Safety

Sometimes talking and learning about family violence and its impacts on women and children can be confronting, distressing, and may be triggering. It is important that everyone who works or learns in this space takes time for self-care. Some ways to self-care include:

- ✿ Be aware and recognise what is going on for you
- ✿ Have regular breaks from reading about family violence
- ✿ Seek social support and find someone to talk to in private
- ✿ Seek professional support – see supports on page 4
- ✿ Have realistic expectations
- ✿ Know and maintain your boundaries
- ✿ Be aware of triggers from your own experiences

What is family violence?

Domestic violence, family and domestic violence, and family violence are often used interchangeably by academics in research and usage also differs between federal and state government departments. The term **'family violence'** is used throughout this document and used in all initiatives of the Community, Respect and Equality project. The following outlines why this term has been adopted:

Historically, **domestic violence** is a term used that refers to acts of violence that occur between people who have or have had, an intimate relationship that takes place in domestic settings (*Morgan & Chadwick, 2009*). It involves an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling a partner through fear, and can include physical and sexual violence, emotional and psychological abuse, social isolation and financial control (*Morgan & Chadwick, 2009*). Other non-physical forms of abuse include technological and spiritual abuse and stalking. It can also be a stated or implied threat of such abuse, which causes the partner to modify their behaviour or limit their choices in an attempt to protect themselves. This is referred to as coercive control, which can be described as the partner 'walking on eggshells' (*Our WATCH, 2019*). However, it has been recognised that the impacts of violence and abuse often extend beyond the couple's relationship, to other members of the family, household or community.

Family violence is a broad term that refers to violence between family members as well as intimate partners that varies across cultures. It is the preferred term for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as it refers to kinship and extended family relationships in Aboriginal communities (*Day, Jones, Nakata, & McDermott, 2012*). The term family violence covers intimate partner violence, sexual abuse and assault, child sexual abuse, elder abuse and relational abuse that occurs to and between children, parents, elders, kinships and extended family members (*Day et al., 2012*). It is also important to recognise that men and same-sex relationship partners also experience these varying forms of family violence (*Phillips, Dunkley, Muller, & Lorimer, 2015*).

Violence against women

Research reveals that family violence is a gendered issue. In Australia, family violence is prevalent across all cultures, ages and socio-economic groups, with the majority of those who experience violence being women (*Phillips & Vandenbroek, 2015*). Women typically experience violence within intimate relationships and the abuse is usually perpetrated by men against women (*Our WATCH, 2016*).



Key Statistics

Data sources and surveys reveal that family violence in Australia is widespread and that the majority of those who experience these forms of violence are women.

- ✿ On average, one woman is killed every 9 days by a current or former partner.
- ✿ 1 in 3 women have experienced physical violence since age 15.
- ✿ Almost 1 in 4 women have experienced workplace sexual harassment.
- ✿ Nearly 1 in 5 women have experienced sexual violence.
- ✿ Nearly 1 in 6 women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner.
- ✿ Aboriginal women are 3.1 times more likely to experience violence than non-Indigenous women.
- ✿ Aboriginal women are 11 times more likely to be homicide victims than non-Indigenous women.

(Australian Institute of Health & Welfare [ABS], 2018; Australian Human Rights Commission [AHRC], 2018; Our Watch, 2018).

Impacts of family violence

The impacts of family violence are varied and they can be short-term or long lasting. Women and families may require support for many years after the violence has ended. Impacts to women and children include homicide, financial hardship, homelessness and may affect physical, emotional, and mental health. Exposure of children to family violence can affect their social, behavioural, and cognitive development *(Phillips & Vandenbroek, 2014)*.

If the situation is so bad, why does she stay?

There are many reasons why women stay in a violent relationship. It is important to understand the complexity of the situation and the risks involved. Reasons why she may not leave include:

- ✿ She is at a greater risk of being killed just after she leaves.
 - ✿ Fear that the abuse will escalate for her, and the children may be hurt.
 - ✿ She is financially dependent upon her partner.
 - ✿ She has constant family pressure to stay.
 - ✿ Her instinct is to protect the family and their reputation in the community.
 - ✿ Lack of trust with support services. She is not confident that the police and crisis support services can protect her.
- (DVRVC, 2021)*

How to respond to disclosures safely?

In the workplace, there may be occasions when people come to you and disclose that they have experienced family violence. This may be current (happened recently) or historical (in the past or childhood experience). A basic understanding of how to manage disclosures and refer to appropriate support services is important to help those in need.

When someone comes to you and discloses that they have experienced family violence, follow these basic guidelines of brief intervention:

- ✿ Listen and believe what they tell you.
- ✿ Help them to understand that the violence is not their fault.
- ✿ Take it seriously and talk to the person about safety.
- ✿ Provide support and ask them what they would like assistance with.
- ✿ Respect their right to make their own decisions.
- ✿ Talk to them about services available and assist if asked.



What services are available for those who experience and/or those who perpetrate violence?

There are many support services available in Geraldton for people experiencing family violence.

If there are immediate and high risk safety concerns, it is always recommend the person call 000 or the local Geraldton Police on 08 9923 4555. 000 can be accessed on mobiles even without credit.

Please note that in non-emergency situations it is not recommended that you ring the police without the victim's consent. Let them take the lead on how to handle their situation and ask them how you may be of assistance. You can contact the phone services listed below for support for yourself, or the victim in non life-threatening situations:

- ✿ Desert Blue Connect manages 'Chrysalis House Women's Refuge' which can accommodate women and their children up to 18 years old (both boys and girls are accepted with their mother if the children are under 18). The Refuge operates 24 hours a day and also provides support and advocacy for women. Phone 9964 2173.
- ✿ Desert Blue Connect offer other family violence services which include counselling for family violence, sexual assault and child sexual assault, support and intervention, advocacy and women's health clinics. They also offer the Men's Community Intervention Service for men who perpetrate violence. Phone 9964 2742.
- ✿ The Geraldton Regional Hospital is available for those experiencing family violence who may have sustained an injury and require immediate medical treatment; the emergency department is available 24 hours a day. Phone 9956 2222.
- ✿ Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Services (GRAMS) is a health service available during weekdays, who have a specialist family violence team. Phone 9956 6555.
- ✿ Department of Communities – Child Protection and Family Support are an important contact if children are involved. They provide family support for women and their children. Phone 9965 9500.
- ✿ Legal services are also important to those who are experiencing family violence, particularly if children are involved. Local legal services include Aboriginal Family Legal Service (AFLS) [9965 4654], Legal Aid [9921 0200] and Regional Alliance West (RAW) [9938 0600].

Other 24 hour phone services include:

- ✿ 1800 RESPECT 1800 007 339
- ✿ Women's DV Help Line (WA) 18000 007 339
- ✿ Men's DV Help Line (WA) 1800 000 599
- ✿ DV Assist (WA) 1800 080 083 (10am – 7pm)

Primary Prevention of family violence

The prevention of family violence involves a three-level approach that includes primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention. Our WATCH (2015) offer the following definitions:

Tertiary prevention focuses on longer term support for women and children or aims for longer term reduction of violence by changing perpetrator behaviour. It involves strategies that are implemented after violence occurs and includes ongoing support and treatment for women and children who are affected by violence or for men who use violence. They aim to deal with the violence, prevent its consequences, and ensure it does not occur again or escalate further. Tertiary responses include ongoing social support and advocacy for women, criminal justice, and behaviour change programs for men.

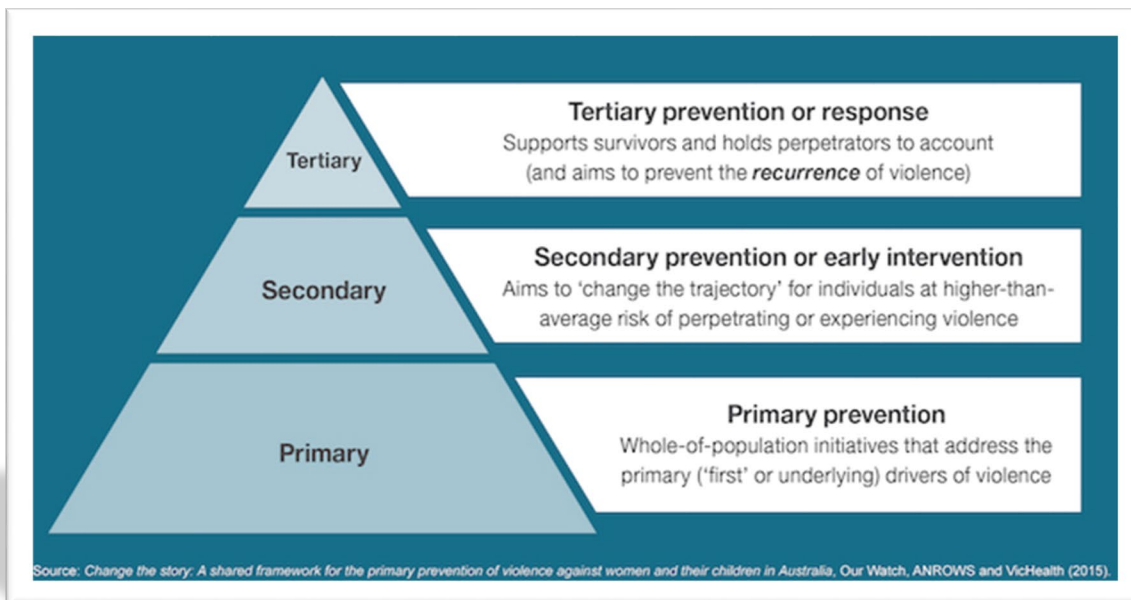
Secondary prevention or early intervention aims to change behaviours or build skills of those who are at risk of perpetrating or experiencing family violence. It targets individuals and groups who exhibit early signs of perpetrating violent behaviour or those at a greater risk of being subjected to violence, with the aim of 'changing the trajectory' and preventing the violence from occurring.



Primary prevention is stopping violence from occurring in the first place. It addresses underlying causes and aims to prevent or reduce new instances of family violence across whole populations before violence occurs. Some primary prevention strategies focus on changing behaviour and/or building the knowledge and skills of individuals. However, the structural, cultural, and societal contexts in which violence occurs are also very important targets for primary prevention. Strategies that do not have a particular focus on violence against women but address its underlying causes (such as gender inequality and oppression) are also primary prevention strategies as they target the main causes of family violence.

According to the Our WATCh Framework (Our WATCh, 2015):

“Primary prevention requires changing the social conditions, such as gender inequality, that excuse, justify or even promote violence against women and their children. Individual behavioural change may be the intended result of prevention activity, but such change cannot be achieved prior to, or in isolation from, a broader change in the underlying drivers of such violence across communities, organisations and society as a whole. A primary prevention approach works across the whole population to address the attitudes, practices and power differentials that drive violence against women and their children.”



Our WATCh (2019) the relationship between primary prevention and other work to address violence against women

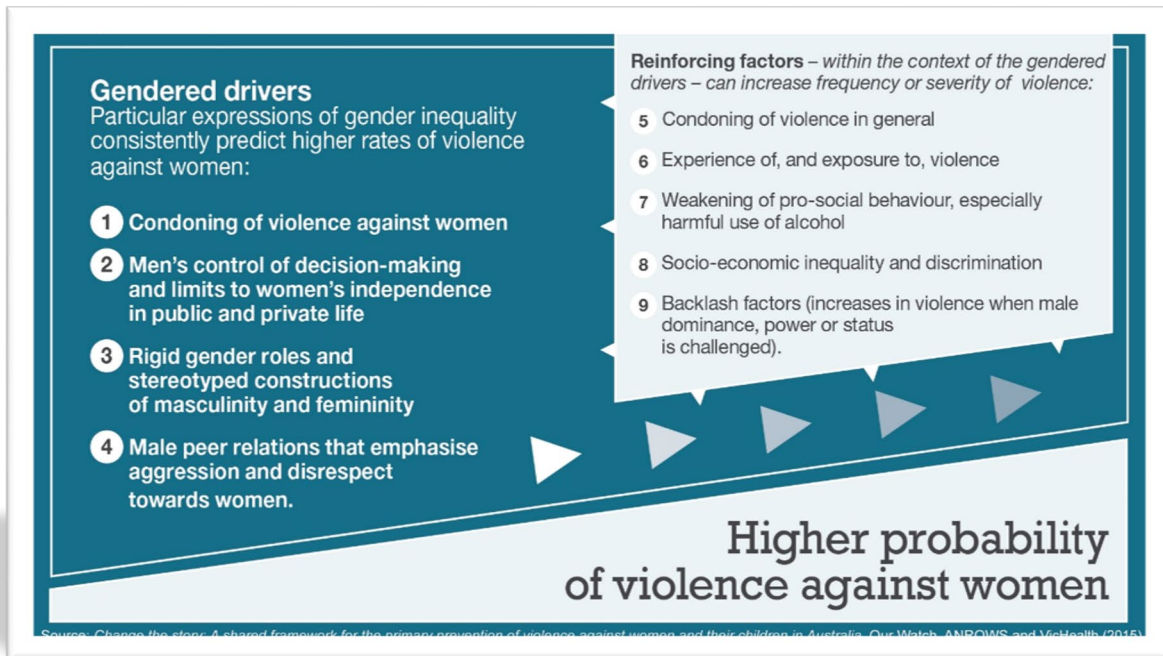
There is a strong network of local providers in Geraldton who recognise and refer women to appropriate secondary and tertiary response services. The region has a proactive family violence response team located at the Geraldton Police Station. Desert Blue Connect offers tailored counselling, advocacy, outreach and support to women experiencing family violence and operates Chrysalis House, a refuge for women and children at risk of homelessness due to family violence.

Recent research shows that **focusing only on the provision of support programs for women experiencing family violence does not reduce rates of violence against women in a community** (Ellsberg *et al.*, 2015). There is a need to work towards the prevention of family violence to make long term change and to challenge the community attitudes and behaviours that enable family violence.

Our WATCh has developed a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia called "Change the Story". The Community, Respect and Equality project has been developed using this framework and actions within the CRE Plan continue to be informed by the gendered drivers, reinforcing factors, and supporting actions in this framework.

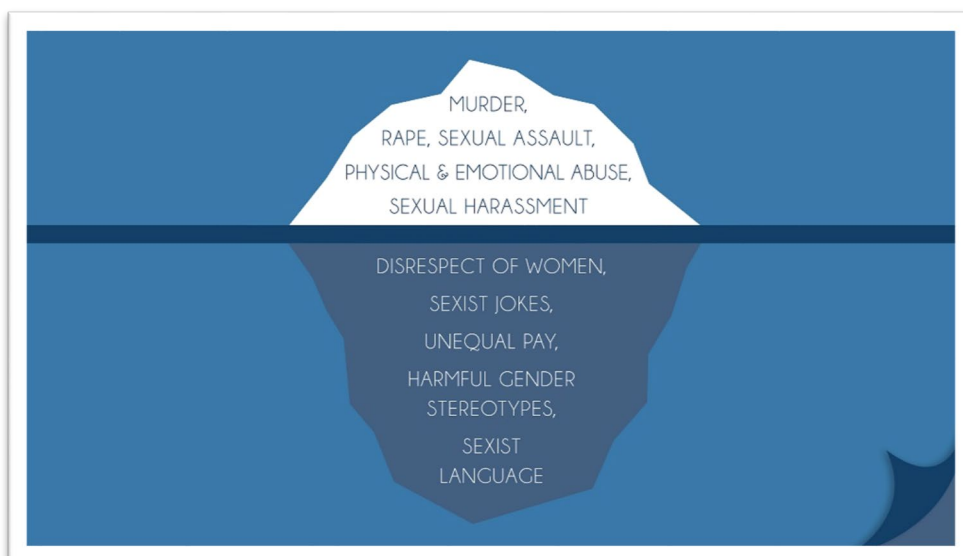


The following image illustrates the underlying gendered drivers, which are the causes of violence against women, and the reinforcing factors, which can make the violence experienced more frequent and severe. For example, the gendered drivers, such as gender inequality within society, are what start the fire, and the reinforcing factors add fuel to the flames.



Our WATCH (2015) a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia.

Another visual that can be helpful to describe the need to address the underlying causes of violence against women is this iceberg image below. Disrespect towards women, sexist jokes, unequal pay, harmful gender stereotypes and sexist language lie below the surface and can be harder to see; however, they create the necessary social context for the tip of the iceberg to emerge, where we see the worst forms of family violence such as sexual harassment, physical and emotional abuse, sexual assault, rape and murder.



Our WATCH (2021) what drives violence against women and sexual harassment

Further information on the “Change the Story” framework and primary prevention of family violence can be accessed here: <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/change-the-story/>.



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