

Learning Guide Module 1: Prevent

Module 1: Prevent

Why domestic and family violence occurs and increased risk factors for women with disability?

This module provides an overview of what domestic and family violence is, why it occurs and the risk factors for women with disability. It explores how you can contribute to violence prevention against women with disability.

Please watch the Module 1 video and explore the other resources provided to learn more about the following topics:

- Women: Domestic and family violence.
- Causes (Drivers) of domestic and family violence.
- Causes (Drivers) of domestic and family violence for women with disability.
- Different women's experiences of domestic and family violence.
- Prevention and Response.
- Challenging drivers of domestic and family violence for women with disability.

Taking Care

Sadly, domestic and family violence is common, and you may feel distressed as you learn more.

Here is a good organisation for both personal and professional help and support:

[1800 Respect website.](#)

Women: Domestic and Family Violence

Is a global issue impacting our mothers, grandmothers, sisters, friends, cousins and sometimes, ourselves.

It is even more prevalent against women with disability.

It impacts women regardless of economic status, cultural or ethnic backgrounds.

Violence against anyone is unacceptable but, there are distinct gender-based patterns of violence against women.

Men commit most of the violence: Whether the victim is a man or a woman – 95 per cent experience violence from a man (see Diemer, 2015)

Violence against women is common: Approximately 30 per cent of women worldwide have experienced different forms of physical and sexual violence in their lifetime (see World Health Organisation, 2013)

Violence against women is serious: Violence against women has health consequences, social and economic costs, and consequences for children (see VicHealth, 2017)

Tip

Women with disability are diverse and experience a great diversity of experiences of domestic and family violence.

Human Rights

Women with disability have a right to be safe and in control of their own lives.

Violence against women is a breach of human rights. Examples include:

- Right to live (section 16).
- Protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (section 17).
- Freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief (section 20).

- Freedom of expression (section 21).
- Right to liberty and security of person (section 29).

Causes (drivers) of DFV

Gender inequality and the way that it is expressed predicts higher rates of violence against women. Examples include:

- Condoning of violence against women.
- Men's control of decision-making that limits women's independence in public and private life.
- Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity.
- Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

Causes (drivers) of DFV for women with disability

To contribute to violence prevention, it is important to understand the drivers of violence against women with disability.

Examples include:

- Excusing or justifying the behaviour of perpetrators.
- Putting the blame on the victim.
- Downplaying the violence.
- Using language that defines people by weakness rather than by their strengths.

Tip

Perceptions of people with disability as cognitively impaired or as having high support needs reinforces exposure to violence

Different women's experiences of DFV

Gender inequality is at the core of violence against women but violence is not experienced in the same way by all women.

Other inequalities impact on the prevalence and experience of violence against women for some groups and in multiple ways. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, Culturally or Linguistically diverse women, LGBTIQ+ and women with disability.

Tip

An intersectional approach is client centred, trauma informed, accessible and culturally safe. Start by finding out what the person wants and needs.

This intersection between various forms of inequality, discrimination and disadvantage and the role they play in women's experience of violence against women is known as 'intersectionality'.

These intersections can create additional barriers and risk for violence against women.

For example the intersection between characteristics such as gender, nationality, disability, sexuality, age, and race

Prevention and response

The good news is Domestic and Family Violence against women with disability is preventable!

Prevention and response: About the system and where you fit.

It is useful to understand that as a worker who engages with women with disability experiencing DFV you are working as a part of a broader system to keep women and children safe. In a role such as disability support for example, you may be working across all levels to prevent and recognise DFV and to connect with professionals working at the Tertiary prevention or response level regarding an immediate risk.

There are three levels of prevention which include:

Tertiary prevention or response

Supporting survivors' safety and holding perpetrators to account. Aims to prevent the recurrence of violence

Secondary prevention or early intervention

Identify signs of violence to prevent it from happening again or to reduce the harm of the long-term.

Primary prevention

Actions aimed at stopping DFV from occurring in the first place. Challenging the drivers of DFV.

Taking Action: Being an informed bystander

No matter who you are, or where your role fits in the system, you can take action to contribute to DFV prevention.

- Show it's not OK
- Support women
- Speak up to stop disrespect

Tip

Doing nothing causes harm.

Challenging the drivers of DFV for women with disability

DFV against women with disability is preventable. One of the ways we can contribute to violence prevention is by challenging myths and drivers about violence against women with disability. These drivers include victim blaming, negative attitudes or perceptions of people with disability as 'helpless' or 'hard work' and justification of violence against them.

Helpful responses – Anti-violence messages

Reduce victim blaming

Women with disability have a right to safety, respect and equality. The violence is not her fault.

Perpetrator accountability

Lots of people experience stress without becoming violent. Violence is a choice. He chose to use power over her.

There is no justification.

It is not ok, not ever.

Name the problem

This is family violence. This is sexual assault. This is abuse.

Use systems of accountability

This is unlawful

Challenge minimising

It's a big deal, and it's wrong.

Deficit and strength-based model/language

A deficit-based model and language implies weakness and suggests that a person's disability may be a reason for violence. Applying a strength based, factual model and language is empowering and recognises that women with disability are deserving of the right to a safe and happy life.

Deficit based model/language	Strength based model/language
Women with disability are vulnerable to violence	Women with disability are targeted for violence
She is bound to a wheelchair	She uses a wheelchair
She has the mentality of a 3-year old	She is an adult woman with an intellectual disability
She is suffering or struggling with a disability	She has dementia
She is dependent on her partner	Her partner provides her with support
She needs others to do everything for her	If she needs help, she will ask for it
She has low quality of life	The presence or absence of disability is not what predicts quality of life
She has difficulty remembering	She has a brain injury and understands information best when a written summary is provided

Adapted from Women with Disabilities Victoria, 2020

Group Activity

[Watch Akii's story on YouTube](#)

From Women with Disabilities Australia: Our Site, 2020.

Reflective questions

1. How has Akii's experiences as a young, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse woman with a disability further impacted on her experiences of DFV?

2. What were some of the key points you picked up about this?

Case Study

Your team meets each morning and you've noticed a pattern emerging.

Tony, one of your colleagues in a large disability service, always sits beside Delilah. He has been with the organisation for five years now, and Delilah joined three months ago when she moved to Australia from India. Yourself, Tony and Delilah all work as support workers.

Each morning there's a "round the group" update, but you've observed that Tony starts talking before Delilah has finished and then ignores her if she asks a question.

He also suggested that as the "new girl" she should be doing the coffee run before the meeting.

At first you thought nothing of it, but now it has happened often, and you've seen Delilah looking anxious when it's her turn to speak.

Note: These case studies are developed to assist you to explore power and control leading to DFV experienced by women with a disability. Your consideration of the case study should be focussed on the woman and her experience of this.

Reflective questions

1. How could you show Tony's behaviour is not OK?
2. How could you show support to Delilah?
3. What could you say to speak up about what is happening to Delilah?

A DFV Story

I am an Aboriginal woman with mental ill health and a physical disability. The last couple of years [of the marriage] I just thought, you know, there's something not quite right here I mean with the disability thing you're a bit, not quite there, you get stressed out.

I found out later on that my husband was trying to put me in the nut house to put it mildly. He admitted to doing that, I didn't believe it! I still don't, in some ways believe that this was my life. I didn't. Like I said, if I'd realised it was abuse, like verbal abuse. I just thought, unless they actually jobbed ya. Or, you got hit or something like that.

What was helpful?

I reckon talk to the Elders 'cause they've been a godsend to me. Yeah to be able to leave or be able to handle it, try to work it out, try to go to counselling, but I mean you gotta realise sometimes you just have to walk away and it's gunna hurt you whichever way.

Services working together

At one of the appointments with the DV worker, the disability worker, the woman with a disability and a local Elder, raised the issue of prevention and how to get the message across to other Aboriginal women with disabilities. Acknowledging that women with disabilities that have experienced domestic and family violence are experts on their lives and experiences, a decision was made to form a specific women's group to look at developing a culturally appropriate educational program. This program would be to provide education for Aboriginal women with disabilities on the nature of domestic and family violence, rights in relationships, and respectful and safe relationships. A joint submission was made to the local council and a small grant obtained to cover initial costs.

Where to find out more

[1800 RESPECT website](#)

[Our Watch - Doing Nothing Causes Harm website](#)

[Intersectionality video on YouTube](#)

[Our Watch resource - Change the Story framework](#)

[Our Watch - Change the Story video on YouTube](#)

Please also check out the Module 1 resources

Fact sheets

1. Taking action.
2. Violence against women with disability.

List of References

[A list of references can be found on the WorkUp Queensland website](#)

