

Fact Sheet 2: Warning Signs

What you need to look out for

This fact sheet provides a snapshot of what to look out for that may indicate that women with disability may be experiencing DFV. While some signs are obvious others can be harder to identify.

Tip

Perpetrators may attempt to collude with you against the victim.

DFV is about Power and Control

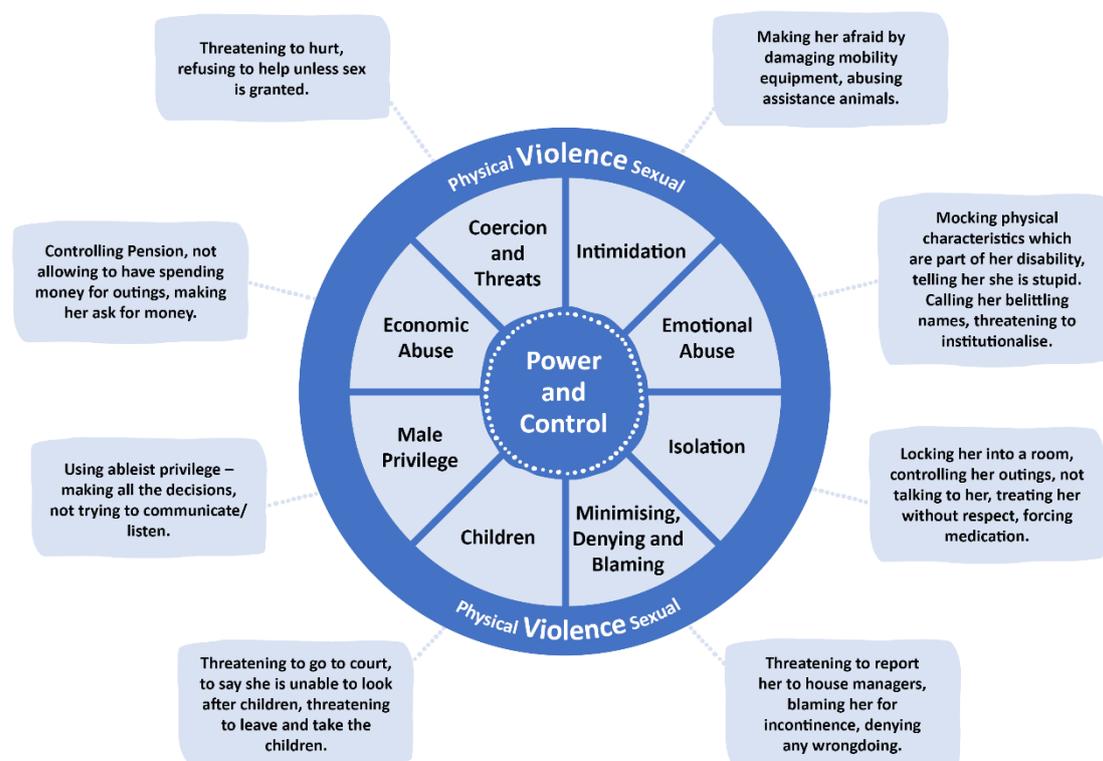
The Duluth Power and Control wheel places “power and control” at the centre of the wheel and represents physical and sexual violence as tactics in the outer circle of the wheel and eight other areas of power and control or tactics as sections within the wheel. The concentric circles of the wheel indicate the relationship between physical and sexual violence and other tactics used in DFV and how these are used to gain power and control.

In the Duluth Power and Control wheel pictured below, included are some ways or tactics that perpetrators may use violence against a woman with a disability to gain and maintain power and control. Examples are aligned to sections of the Duluth Power and Control wheel, and you will notice these tactics may apply across multiple sections.

Areas of Power and Control or “tactics” with examples include:

- Intimidation – Making her afraid by damaging mobility equipment, abusing assistance animals.
- Emotional Abuse – Mocking physical characteristics which are part of her disability, telling her she is stupid. Calling her belittling names, threatening to institutionalise.
- Isolation – Locking her into a room, controlling her outings, not talking to her, treating her without respect, forcing medication.

- Minimising, Denying and Blaming – Threatening to report her to house managers, blaming her for incontinence, denying any wrongdoing.
- Children – Threatening to go to court, to say she is unable to look after children, threatening to leave and take the children.
- Male Privilege – Using ableist privilege – making all the decisions, not trying to communicate/listen.
- Economic Abuse – Controlling pension, not allowing to have spending money for outings, making her ask for money.
- Coercion and Threats – Threatening to hurt, refusing to help unless sex is granted.



Common Warning Signs

- Suddenly being unable to meet essential day-to-day living needs.
- Lack of contact with friends or family.
- Handprints or bruising on the face, neck, arms or wrists.
- Unexplained sprains, fractures, or dislocations.
- Signs of injuries to internal organs such as vomiting.

- Wearing torn, stained, soiled, or bloody clothing.
- Appearing hungry, malnourished, disoriented or confused.
- Anxiety, loss of confidence, constant apologising

Look out also for exploitation of vulnerabilities – these may be more difficult to identify

- Damaged or missing disability aids or equipment.
- Frequently flat disability aids that make it difficult to communicate or leave the house.
- Denying access to parts of the house.
- Fear of decision making – having to check in for permission.
- Injured pets or assistance animals or excessive concern about them.
- Fears about being placed into an institution or aged care.
- Lack of access to required medications.
- Asking you to retrieve things for her that should be accessible.
- Lack of access to money for small expenses.

Be aware of signs or fears that may indicate threats or manipulation against particular population groups

- Fears of having children removed.
- Fears of homelessness or exclusion from community.
- Fears of outing of sexuality.
- Fears of deportation.

Tip

Gaslighting is a form of psychological abuse and manipulation.

