

FDSV agencies supporting military families

Are you an FDSV agency working with a current or ex-serving military family experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence?

The experience of family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) for military families is unique and complex. As a mainstream service working with these families, there are several important things you need to be aware of.

The information within this fact sheet is by no means exhaustive and you are encouraged to reach out and seek further advice and information as needed.

What do I need to know about identification and engagement?

It is important to sensitively enquire about a family's military connection—this will not only inform your assessment, but will also determine what supports, services and resources may be available. Military families may be reluctant to identify their military connection due to concerns regarding confidentiality (within a small and potentially 'tightknit' community) and the stigma associated with disclosing experiences of violence, particularly in the context of military members being seen as 'heroes' within society.

hesitations around engaging with military or veteran specific services. It is important to respect their decisions around which services they are comfortable accessing.

What do I need to know about assessment and intervention?

The military lifestyle poses unique challenges to families—including frequent relocations due to postings. These relocations are often interstate (or sometimes overseas) and occur approximately every 2–3 years. This can result in military partners experiencing increased social isolation (as a result of a highly transient lifestyle and living away from natural support networks) and increased financial dependency (with higher rates of unemployment and underemployment compared to their civilian counterparts). These factors can increase vulnerabilities within military families and should be taken into consideration during assessment and intervention planning.

Current serving military families often reside in a Service Residence property provided by Defence Housing Australia. The housing entitlement is a condition of the military member's employment. Civilian partners/families hold no entitlement to a Service Residence outside of their relationship to the military member.

Those with military training often possess a unique set of knowledge and skills. These may include specialist IT/cyber expertise, threat neutralisation, combat training and weapons handling.

Awareness of any specialist military skills/training held by someone perpetrating FDSV should inform your risk assessment and safety planning processes.

The Department of Defence has its own military justice system and offences committed by military members can be prosecuted under this system. The Department of Defence has requirements about the reporting of Intervention Orders.

For specialist advice about Department of Defence policy and legislation, mainstream FDSV agencies can contact the Defence Member and Family Helpline (DMFH).

Contact with the DMFH Helpline can be anonymous.

Where can I get further advice and information?

Defence Member and Family Helpline

 **1800 624 608 (24/7)**

 **memberandfamilyhelpline@defence.gov.au**

The Defence Member and Family Helpline (DMFH) provides a range of practical and emotional support programs for families facing emergency or crisis, including assistance in times of illness, injury, domestic crisis or bereavement.

Families can also seek support or referrals any time. Mainstream FDSV agency staff can make contact to seek specialist advice around Defence legislation, policies and procedures.

Defence Families of Australia

 **dfa.org.au**


Defence Families of Australia (DFA) is the official Australian Defence Force (ADF) families advisory body to the Minister for Defence Personnel and Chief of the Defence Force (CDF). DFA can provide advice and assistance with complex family matters for families of current serving military members.

Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner | Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA)

 **VFA@dva.gov.au**

The Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner represents the perspectives of veteran families in ongoing policy and decision-making across Government. The Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner may be able to provide advice and assistance with complex family matters for families of ex-serving military members.

Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling

 **1800 011 046 (24/7)**

The Open Arms counselling service provides 24-hour free counselling and support to you and your family, whether current or ex-serving members.

Open Arms also provides a crisis accommodation program to alleviate an urgent situation such as FDSV or an immediate housing crisis. Access may be up to five nights depending on the circumstances. In exceptional circumstances, an extension for accommodation may be given.

ADF Mental Health All-hours Support Line

 1800 628 036 (24/7)

The All-hours Support Line (ASL) is a confidential telephone service for ADF members and their families that is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The ASL is a triage line which will help you access ADF or civilian mental health services more easily, such as psychology, medical, social work and chaplain services. When calling the ASL, you can expect a qualified mental health professional who has a good understanding of what services are available to you.

Further resources:

scan me



Office for Women

Where can I find out more about FDSV?

A range of online resources are available to help you better understand FDSV.

They include:

-  **Department of Defence**
defence.gov.au → Defence Family and Domestic Violence Strategy
-  **Department of Veterans' Affairs**
dva.gov.au → DVA Family and Domestic Violence Strategy
-  **Australian Government**
plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au → Partner Service Pension extension
-  **Break the Cycle**
breakthecycle.sa.gov.au
-  **Our Watch**
ourwatch.org.au
-  **Stop it at the Start**
respect.gov.au
-  **White Ribbon**
whiteribbon.org.au
-  **Women's Safety Services SA**
womenssafetyservices.com.au
-  **Embolden (Peak body for FDSV services in SA)**
embolden.org.au