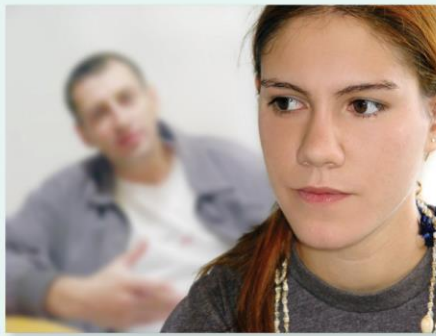




Government of South Australia
Department of Human Services

Domestic Violence Workplace Policy

Staff guidelines



Domestic/Family Violence Workplace Guidelines

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1. Introduction

Domestic and family violence is prevalent and preventable, and causes a significant amount of distress in our community. We know that it is widespread, that it is devastating and that it is underreported. We also know that most often, but not always, people who experience domestic and family violence are women and girls; and perpetrators are often, but not always, men. Statistics show:

- More than one in three women (37%) aged 18 years and over have experienced violence since the age of 15.¹
- Nearly one in five women (18%) aged 18 years and over have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15.²
- Australian women are most likely to experience physical and sexual violence in their home at the hands of a male current or ex-partner.³
- Violence against women is the leading risk factor contributing to the burden of disease for Australian women aged 18-44.⁴

We also know that women who experience domestic/family violence are often in paid work. This means that they are our colleagues, friends and acquaintances. The Department of Human Services (DHS) takes the issue of domestic/family violence seriously, and that is why we offer special leave entitlements to our staff so they may attend appointments or make arrangements that will assist them in dealing with this issue.

DHS does not and will not tolerate the perpetration of domestic and family violence against any employee of the department. It is our duty to provide support to all of our employees in addressing this issue and to put in place preventative measures in the workplace that work to stop violence from occurring. We have a departmental Domestic/Family Violence Policy and were the first South Australian department (as the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion) to become accredited by White Ribbon Australia.

There have been a range of developments in this space in recent years, including: strengthening protections in legislation; development of the Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Service; introduction of special leave entitlements; and holding domestic violence forums with key stakeholders about what can be improved in our policies. We are committed to continuing to improve our responses to domestic/family violence and to listen to those on the front lines and to those who have survived. We will continue to ensure we are providing the best possible

¹ ABS 2017 Personal Safety Survey – Summary of 2016 survey results, viewed at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0>

² As above

³ As above

⁴ 2016 ANROWS Burden of Disease of Intimate Partner Violence - Compass report.

responses to those in crisis, as well as working to put in place preventative measures and early intervention initiatives.

It is the whole department's responsibility to address these issues and I will personally work to ensure we do not lose focus on domestic and family violence, and to ensure that employees of DHS have the support and resources they need to survive experiences of this violence. We must all work towards the elimination of domestic and family violence in every sphere.



Tony Harrison

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



2. Definitions

This guideline adheres to the definitions legislated by the South Australian Government in the *Intervention Orders (Prevention of Abuse) Act 2009*. For a comprehensive description of the following, refer to the legislation.

What is the meaning of “domestic/family violence”?

Domestic/family violence is an abuse of power perpetrated mainly (but not only) by men against women both in intimate partner relationships and following separation after relationship breakdown, as well as in other familial relationships. A central element of domestic/family violence is an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at power and control through fear. The most commonly acknowledged forms are physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional and social abuse and economic deprivation.

What is the meaning of “Aboriginal family violence”?

The term Aboriginal Family Violence is accepted amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as a more appropriate term to describe violence perpetrated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, families and communities. The term Aboriginal Family Violence includes violence perpetrated within intimate partner relationships, however, it also encompasses other forms of violence perpetrated against individuals, families and communities. Whilst the term domestic/family violence is used throughout this guideline, it is important to recognise for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees the term ‘family violence’ may be more appropriate.

What other forms of violence/abuse are not covered by the DHS Domestic/Family Violence Workplace Policy?

An individual is not considered to be experiencing domestic/family violence if they have been a victim of violence by someone who is not in a close relationship with them. For example, being a victim of crime perpetrated by an unknown person, whilst distressing, is not considered domestic/family violence.

3. Support in the Workplace

The experience of domestic/family violence can have serious impacts on a person’s physical, mental and emotional health, financial and housing security.

Employees who are experiencing or escaping domestic/family violence are encouraged to advise their manager or People and Culture in order that appropriate safety measures can be put in place (in the workplace) and support provided. Managers and/or People and Culture can discuss options for flexible working arrangements and leave that may assist the employee to address health or personal matters related to their experience of domestic /family violence, and can also refer them to counselling and support services.

A consequence of domestic/family violence may be the deterioration in an employee's attendance and/or performance at work. The department's Domestic/Family Violence Workplace Policy recognises the need for managers to consider the impact such violence can have on an employee's performance and be sensitive to their experience of domestic/family violence when addressing attendance and/or performance issues.

3.1 Confidentiality

An employee who discloses they are experiencing domestic/family violence to their manager or to People and Culture is assured their information will be kept strictly confidential and will not be recorded on their personal file. There may be times, however, when there is an inherent safety risk to either the affected employee or other employees. For example, if there is a risk the perpetrator might come into the workplace. In these instances, disclosure of the situation will be kept to a minimum and on a 'need to know basis' for the purpose of maintaining safety in the workplace.

3.2 Counselling and Support Services

Employee Assistance Program

The department's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides counselling and support to any employee or their immediate family member seeking assistance with a challenging issue or to improve their health and wellbeing.

The EAP provides timely intervention to help employees deal effectively with any difficulties and assists them with referral to other professionals or agencies if longer-term assistance is needed. Contact details for EAP providers can be found on the DHS Intranet (<https://sagov.sharepoint.com/sites/DCSI>) or by contacting Workforce Health and Safety.

1800RESPECT

1800RESPECT is a national 24 hour online and telephone service offering counselling and support to anyone experiencing domestic and family violence and/or sexual assault and their family and friends.

Contact 1800RESPECT at www.1800respect.org.au or on – **1800 737 732**.

Domestic Violence Crisis Line

The Domestic Violence Crisis Line is a 24/7 telephone service that assists women who are experiencing domestic/family and Aboriginal family violence in South Australia. The service provides information, counselling, support and referrals to local specialist domestic/family and Aboriginal family violence services. These services are located throughout South Australia and provide a range of services, including counselling, support and assistance with emergency and longer-term housing.

Contact the Domestic Violence Crisis Line on **1800 800 098**.

For a comprehensive list of domestic/family and Aboriginal family violence services and sexual assault services across South Australia, please see Appendix 1.

4. Safety Planning

In situations where an employee who is experiencing or escaping domestic/family violence is concerned for their safety in the workplace, it is recommended they develop a workplace domestic/family violence safety plan in consultation with their manager. The plan should reflect the specific needs of the employee and take into account the nature of their role and the workplace environment. A workplace domestic/family violence safety plan may include:

- programming mobile phones with emergency and contact numbers;
- screening incoming calls to the employee;
- changing work phone numbers and email addresses; and
- ensuring the employee is in a security restricted area/location.

Changes to an employee's work phone number, email address, working hours and nature and place of work can be negotiated on either a temporary or permanent basis to support the safety of the employee.

For advice on developing a safety plan, see Appendix 2.

5. Employee Entitlements

There are times when an employee who is experiencing or escaping domestic/family violence may need time away from work for a range of reasons, for example to address health, legal, child care, housing or other personal matters. The following outlines paid and unpaid leave options, and flexible working arrangements that may be available to them.

5.1 Leave Options

An employee (other than casual employees) experiencing domestic/family violence may access up to 15 days special leave with pay in accordance with the relevant DHS policies governing access to such leave. In order to maintain confidentiality, it is appropriate for the employee (after speaking in confidence with their manager regarding their reason for seeking special leave) to record the reason for their special leave application simply as "urgent pressing necessity".

Accessing this form of special leave does not prevent an employee accessing other forms of leave usually available to them.

This entitlement to special leave does not apply to perpetrators of domestic/family violence.

5.2 Flexible Work Options

Flexible working enables staff to take time away from work to attend to matters related to their experience of domestic/family violence in a way that is supportive of their needs. Flexible working is designed in partnership with, and approval by, an employee's manager. This enables both the employee and manager to feel confident with the arrangement.

Types of flexible work include:

- Flexi-Time
- Compressed Weeks
- Part Time/Job Share
- Working from Home

For further detail on the leave and flexible work options, visit the People and Culture section of the DHS Intranet Page

(<https://sagov.sharepoint.com/sites/DCSI/peopleandculture>).

Applying for Leave and Flexible Work Options

Employees will need to talk to their manager to negotiate flexible work arrangements and/or special leave.

If for any reason they are uncomfortable speaking to their manager about their reasons for applying for leave, they can seek advice and assistance from their Human Resource Business Partner.

6. Returning to Work

When returning to work after leave due to domestic/family violence related issues, employees are encouraged to talk to their manager regarding any ongoing safety concerns they may have. Employees who have identified a risk to their safety or that of their colleagues in the workplace are encouraged to develop a workplace domestic/family violence safety plan (if they have not previously developed one), or to review a safety plan that was previously in place if circumstances have changed.

7. Perpetrating Domestic/Family Violence from the Workplace

DHS does not tolerate domestic/family violence being perpetrated in or from the workplace; this behaviour is in direct violation of the Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector. Any employee who threatens, harasses or abuses a family or household member at, or from, the workplace will be subject to disciplinary action. This includes employees who use workplace resources including, but not limited to, online technologies, telephones including smartphones, email, mail or other means to threaten, harass or abuse a family member. If an employee is observed or suspected of perpetrating domestic/family violence from the workplace, managers have a responsibility to respond appropriately, which may result in disciplinary action.

Appendix 1

Domestic/Family and Aboriginal Family Violence Statewide Support Services

1800RESPECT – National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service

1800RESPECT is a national 24 hour online and telephone service offering counselling and support to anyone experiencing domestic and family violence and/or sexual assault and their family and friends.

Toll free: 1800 737 732

Online: www.1800respect.org.au

Domestic Violence Crisis Line

(Formerly Domestic Violence and Aboriginal Family Violence Gateway Service)

The Domestic Violence Crisis Line is a state-wide service offering assistance to women experiencing domestic violence in South Australia by providing information, counselling and safe accommodation options.

Toll free: 1800 800 098

Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service

Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service is an inclusive service for anyone in South Australia who has been sexually assaulted and provides medical and counselling services.

Ph: (08) 8226 8777

Toll free: 1800 817 421

After hours: (08) 8226 8787

Website: <http://www.yarrowplace.sa.gov.au>

Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (SA Police)

South Australia's Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) provides an avenue for a person who may be at risk of domestic violence to get information about their partner or former partner to help make decisions about their safety and the future of the relationship. Requests may also be made by people concerned about the welfare of someone they know.

Website: www.police.sa.gov.au/your-safety/dvds

Victim Support Service

Victim Support Service provides information and practical support to people affected by family and domestic violence in South Australia.

Toll free: 1800 842 846 (Victim Helpline)

Website: www.victimsa.org

Staying Home, Staying Safe scheme – Victim Support Service

The *Staying Home, Staying Safe* scheme provides free home safety audits and tailored home security packages including the installation of locks, sensor lights and alarms. Safety planning assistance is also available to women and their children.

Toll free: 1800 842 846 (Victim Helpline)

Email (VSS): info@victimsa.org

Website: <https://www.victimsa.org/staying-home-staying-safe-program>

Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Service – Victim Support Service

The Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Service (WDVCAS) provides women experiencing domestic/family violence with assistance navigating legal matters relating to intervention orders and tenancy disputes.

Victim Support Service WDVCAS helpline: 1800 246 642

Email: wvdcas@victimsa.org

Website: <https://www.victimsa.org/womens-domestic-violence-court-assistance-service>

RSPCA - Safe Kennels DV Project

The RSPCA Safe Kennels DV Project provides emergency boarding for the pets of people affected by domestic violence.

Ph: 1300 4 777 22

Website: www.rspcasa.org.au

Appendix 2

Advice for Developing a Workplace Domestic/Family Violence Safety Plan

A workplace domestic/family violence safety plan is a document developed in partnership between an employee and their manager when it has been identified that the employee's safety in the workplace or that of their co-workers is at risk.

When developing a safety plan, risks associated with the current working arrangements are discussed and changes to improve safety identified. The following can be considered to help form an effective safety plan:

- Inform your manager if the perpetrator has threatened you at the workplace, in person, over the phone, via email or fax, or threatened to come to the workplace, or if you are concerned this may occur.
- Inform your manager if stalking has been a problem.
- Consider obtaining an intervention order (domestic violence order) and include the workplace as a location the perpetrator is prevented from approaching.
 - Intervention orders are legally binding orders made by a magistrate to protect the victim. They include conditions that prevent the perpetrator contacting the victim or frequenting places the victim is likely to be.
 - Applications for an intervention order can be made through the police or can be made directly to the Magistrates Court.
 - If an intervention order has been filed that includes the workplace it is recommended that a copy be provided to management and security.
 - Save any threatening or intimidating emails, letters or voicemail messages from the perpetrator and provide copies to the police or courts.
- Phone/email
 - If possible, have your phone calls screened.
 - If possible, have your phone number and email changed.
 - Remove your phone number from any internal directories (such as SA Direct).
- Can your work area be relocated for better security?
- Do work hours and schedules need to be temporarily adjusted?
- Can parking/travelling to work arrangement be altered to increase safety?

- Can security assist in keeping the workplace safe?
- If you are temporarily residing in a confidential location, ensure that designated workplace personnel have emergency contact information.
- Identify a contact person you can be contacted through in an emergency

