

Family Violence and Sexual Violence

Providing help for those who need it

A guide for emergency workers

In emergency situations, violence can escalate and become even more hidden or dangerous.

As an emergency worker, you will be talking to and seeing people regularly. Some of these people may be impacted by violence. You can play an important role helping those who need it.

What is family violence and sexual violence?

Family violence and sexual violence takes many forms – it's not just physical.

It can be:

- Threats, name-calling, jealousy, put downs, smashing things, stalking, controlling their actions
- Hitting, kicking, biting, pushing, strangulation, using weapons
- Taking money, running up debts in their name, checking all receipts, controlling spending, stopping someone buying something they need
- Rape, forced or manipulating sexual activity, unwanted touching, sexual activity with a child or young person under 16, online harassment
- Not providing food, shelter, clothing, leaving children home alone, not getting medical attention
- In situations of communal living, or over-crowded housing, violence and abuse may increase, and people could be at more risk. It's important that children are kept safe at all times.

What signs might you notice?

People being hurt often try to hide the violence because they feel ashamed and guilty. Keep an eye out for the signs.

People experiencing violence may:

- Be fearful, nervous, or worried
- Be upset, sad, angry
- Be in pain, have bruises or other injuries
- Be monitored by their partner
- Defer to their partner for approval
- Have slurred speech or be talking fast

They may say something like:

- Can you help me? I'm scared
- I'm frightened for my children
- I don't have enough money
- It's probably all my fault
- I'm not OK

You may also notice:

- Children looking frightened
- Children not wanting to be left alone with someone, being scared of someone

When talking to someone who you think is being abused or harmed, be discreet and:

- Take it seriously – don't make excuses for violence. Violence is never OK.
- Give support, not advice
- Ask "Are you OK?"
- Say "I believe you", "It's not your fault and help is available"
- Suggest "Let's contact someone who can help"
- Don't force children to do things, or be around people they don't want to

Be aware that victims may be scared to talk about it, in case the violence gets worse

What can you do?

If you are worried about somebody's safety, or someone is being visibly hurt, immediately call the Police on 111 even if you're not sure. Police will respond as appropriate.

If you think someone is being abused, hurt, and controlled, you should take action. Contact a supervisor, manager, or colleague to help. Discuss your concerns with them and decide what to do.

If you are worried about violence or you might use violence, use the following numbers:

The Family Violence Information Line (24/7) on **0800 456 450**

Shakti Ethnic Women's Support (24/7) on **0800 742 584 (0800 Shakti)**

If you are worried about sexual violence, use the following numbers:

Safe to Talk (24/7) on **0800 044 334** or text **4334**

The helplines will provide support and options. Someone who knows about family violence and sexual violence will check safety and link the person to the best service for them.

Afterwards

Make sure your manager or supervisor knows that you have responded to family violence or sexual violence. This will help ensure you get the support you need.

Call one of the helplines to talk to someone if needed.