

Family & Domestic Violence

The Family & Domestic Violence Policy outlines our commitment to employees to create a safe, supportive and compassionate workplace culture that offers assistance to and is a source of strength to those impacted by domestic and family violence.

We recognise the impact of domestic and family violence on individuals across all elements of their lives, both physically and psychological, and the negative impact that can flow on to the workplace. Failure to recognise domestic violence as a possible cause of health problems may lead to employees attending the workplace when they may not be fit enough to do so or may lead to an increase in absence and/or a lowering of performance.

Further, perpetrators of domestic violence may attempt to seek out the victim at their workplace and this may result in the victim and other employees being put at risk.

What is Family & Domestic Violence?

Family and domestic violence is defined by the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (VIC) as acts of abuse, violence, threatening, intimidation and coercion that occurs between people of different or same sex who have, or have had, an intimate relationship; violence between family members; between partners, housemates or violence towards or from children.

These acts can include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or economic abuse and leave the victim feeling fear for their safety or wellbeing or that of another person.

Family and domestic violence is a crime including but not limited to:

- Emotional/Psychological abuse including undermining and diminishing self-esteem and self-worth, isolation or confinement, emotional blackmail, stalking, swearing and humiliation and intimidation;

- Physical abuse such as assault and the use of weapons or objects on the body causing injury or death (including to animals);
- Economic abuse such as controlling money earned or provided to the victim and preventing the victim from seeking or keeping employment; and
- Sexual abuse including forceful or non-consensual activity.

Family and domestic violence may impact our employees in many different ways, including:

- Directly where the employee is the victim; or
- Indirectly where the employee is the housemate, child, parent or relative of the victim.

Employees who are experiencing family and domestic violence are encouraged to seek support through advising their manager or by utilising external support services.

Support for employees

We are committed to supporting employees experiencing family and domestic violence through a broad range of support and appropriate measures.

Support measures available to employees include:

- Flexible working arrangements such as altering the standard hours or days of work on a temporary or permanent basis;
- Allowing an employee to work from home more frequently;
- Changing work phone numbers or work email addresses or screening incoming calls to the employee; and
- Ensuring adequate support is provided for affected employees including providing information detailing counselling and external support services available through domestic and family violence support services and if necessary developing a safety plan.

We acknowledge that a consequence of family and domestic violence may include a decline in an employee's attendance and/or performance. As such, we will address all performance issues sensitively. Furthermore, we will ensure employees are protected from adverse action or discrimination on the basis of their disclosure and experience of family and domestic violence.

We will continue to support employees experiencing family and domestic violence through promoting continual awareness and conducting internal training, including how family and domestic violence impacts individuals in the workplace and how to recognise signs that an employee may be experiencing domestic or family violence.

Family & Domestic Violence Leave

All employees (including part-time and casual employees) are entitled to 5 days unpaid family and domestic violence leave each year.

Leave may be taken when an employee directly impacted by family and domestic violence is unable to work physically or mentally, or to attend appointments with support organisations, solicitors, court applications, and other activities that may be necessary to maintain the employee's safety.

Employees who are indirectly impacted by family and domestic violence may require this leave to accompany the victim to legal proceedings, counselling and appointments as a support person, assisting with safety arrangements or other activities including caring for children.

Leave loading does not apply to additional leave utilised under the Family & Domestic Violence Policy.

Evidence required

An employer can ask their employee for evidence that shows the employee took the leave to deal with family and domestic violence. If the employee doesn't provide the requested evidence, they may not be entitled to family and domestic violence leave.

This evidence must be able to convince a reasonable person that the employee required the leave to deal with the impact of family and domestic

violence.

Types of evidence

Types of evidence can include:

- Documents issued by the police;
- Documents issued by a court;
- Family violence support service documents, or
- A statutory declaration.

Employers can ask employees to provide evidence for as little as 1 day or less off work.

Identification

Identifying early warning signs that an employee may be affected by family or domestic violence can mitigate future risk to health and safety.

There are a number of potential indicators that may be displayed including:

- Decline in employee performance and quality of work;
- Regular non-attendance or tardiness;
- Changes in behaviour including increased anxiety, unhappiness or hopelessness and deliberately isolating themselves from others;
- Bruises or injuries that look suspicious and have been noted to be due to 'clumsiness';
- Wearing high-coverage clothing that may be inappropriate for the season (to hide physical abuse); and
- Increased personal phone calls or text messages that seem to be unwelcome.

How to show support

If you believe or an employee has disclosed that they are affected by family and domestic violence, you can take a number of actions to support them, including:

- Asking if something is wrong or what type of support you can provide;
- Expressing concern and offering your support and understanding;
- Listening and being sensitive, taking a non-judgmental approach;
- Focusing on their safety and that of their family;
- Arming yourself with information for support services that will assist with managing the situation;
- Suggesting external support services and offering to assist with the process;
- Respecting and supporting the employee's decisions;
- Maintaining discretion at all times and keeping the information confidential if asked; and
- Calling 000 if there is immediate risk of danger.

Privacy

All employee records concerning family and domestic violence will be kept confidential. Confidential information will only be disclosed in exceptional circumstances where it is imperative to maintain the safety of the employee and/or other staff.

External Support Providers

If you or someone you know is at risk of or is experiencing family and domestic violence, we encourage you to contact one of the following external support providers:

- **1800RESPECT - www.1800RESPECT.org.au, 24 Hour Response Line 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)**
- **Lifeline – 131 114 – personal crisis support services if you are affected by family or domestic violence**
- **Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800 – support for young people aged 5 to 25**

- **Financial Counselling Australia – 1800 007 007 – free and private financial counsellors**
- **Family Relationship Advice – 1800 050 321 – provides information on family issues and parenting arrangements after separation**
- **Daisy – free app that connects you to services in your local area**
- **Victims Access Line – 1800 633 063 - provides confidential support, referral and information for victims of crime**
- **Another Closet – services and information on violence in gay and lesbian relationships**
- **Mensline – a 24-hour service for men with counsellors who are trained in dealing with male victims of domestic violence**
- **Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program – 1300 888 529**
The Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCASs) provide court support, advocacy, referrals and information. Some WDVCAS have specialist workers to help Aboriginal women, or women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- **National Legal Aid – <https://www.nationallegalaid.org/> - providing assistance to help you find legal aid in your state or territory**