

# Supporting Staff Affected by Family Violence

**FAMILY VIOLENCE — IT'S NOT OK  
FOR WORKMATES**



# FAMILY VIOLENCE - IT'S NOT OK, BUT IT IS OK TO ASK FOR HELP.

**FAMILY  
VIOLENCE  
IT'S NOT OK** | **IT IS  
OK** **TO ASK  
FOR  
HELP**

0800 456 450 [areyouok.org.nz](http://areyouok.org.nz)

**Organisations can be committed to providing a safe and supportive workplace, and supporting violence-free families.**

This means making sure that your staff members who are experiencing family violence can ask for and receive confidential help and support, and have access to appropriate help.



**Whether you are a manager or colleague it's important you respond appropriately to an employee experiencing or disclosing family violence, and that you are responsive to the needs of the staff member affected.**

Lots of things can stop people from asking for help when they're in violent situations. These include:

- their own experiences and perceptions
- resources available to them
- how others respond to the situation
- fear of not being believed, losing their job or losing friends
- believing the violence will get worse.

## **What is family violence?**

**Family violence, domestic violence or abuse, are all terms used to describe violence within families or close personal relationships.**

Family violence takes many forms – it's not just physical. It can be psychological, sexual, financial and verbal. A single act may amount to abuse. A number of acts that form a pattern of behaviour may amount to abuse, even though some or all of those acts, when viewed in isolation, may seem minor.

Children are affected by family violence whether they see it, hear it, or just know about it. They are affected even if they are in another room.

People who are experiencing violence at home try to hide the violence because they feel ashamed and guilty.

## **The danger signs**

**Separation is the most dangerous time for victims of violence — women and children are particularly at risk from death and serious violence when a relationship is ending.**

Danger signs include:

- the victim is very afraid
- a relationship has ended or a court order has been issued
- threats to kill or commit suicide have been made
- excessive jealousy or controlling behaviour from a partner or ex-partner
- the victim is being stalked
- the violence is getting worse and more frequent
- the victim is isolated
- aggravating problems such as drug or alcohol misuse, mental health problems
- violence to others
- cruelty to animals.

## **What does a healthy relationship look like?**

**In a healthy relationship people feel loved, trusted, respected and safe.**

When people are in safe relationships, all members of the family benefit.

Disagreements and arguments happen in a healthy relationship, but are resolved in a non-violent way by expressing and listening to each other's feelings, allowing for differences of opinion and compromise.



**NO ONE SHOULD  
BE FRIGHTENED BY  
THEIR PARTNER,  
A FAMILY MEMBER  
OR SOMEONE  
CLOSE TO THEM.**



## **Family violence – its impact on the workplace**

**New Zealand has high rates of family violence with 1 in 3 women experiencing physical or sexual violence from a partner in their lifetime. This means family violence can impact on our staff and our workplaces.**

Employees who are **victims** of family violence may be:

- distressed, anxious, distracted and fearful at work
- struggling to manage their workload
- forced to leave their job so they can hide from the abuser
- prevented from getting to work on time or at all
- absent a lot
- phoned or emailed constantly by the abuser.

If someone has a protection order, this could have implications for the workplace, for example the violent person cannot contact or visit the workplace.

Employees who are **perpetrators** of violence may:

- pose a risk to the victim's colleagues
- pose a risk to workers and clients in their own workplace
- use work time and resources to harass, stalk and monitor their victim
- need to take time off to attend court or stopping violence programmes.

**Colleagues** of people experiencing violence at home may:

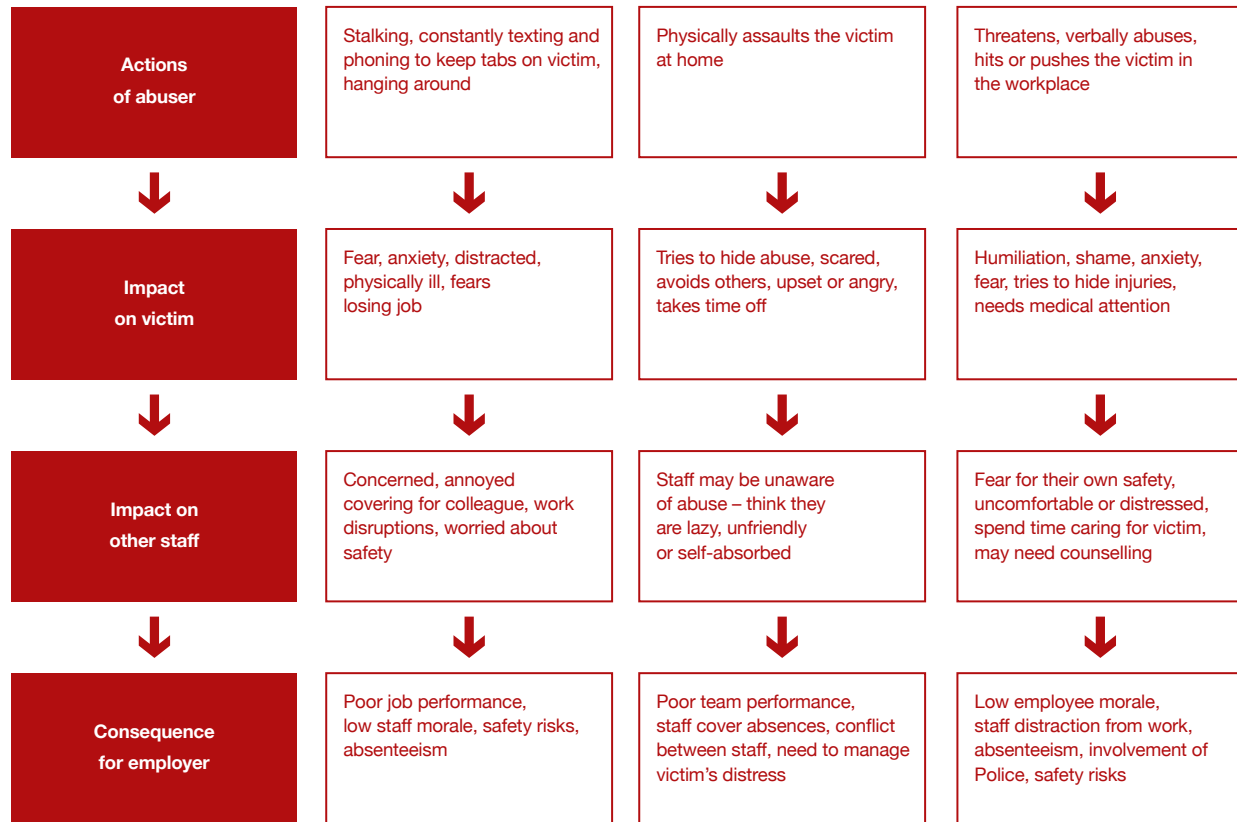
- feel resentful because they are carrying the workload for people who are away a lot
- not be aware of the abuse their colleague is experiencing and appear unsupportive
- be worried about safety for their colleague/friend and themselves.



## **Workplace benefits**

# **Providing a safe and supportive environment for people who are experiencing violence benefits the workplace:**

- less absenteeism
- lower staff turnover
- greater productivity
- fewer safety risks
- better morale
- staff feel valued.



*The impact of family violence on the workplace*

## **Supporting Staff**

**One person can make a difference.  
Research shows some ways of offering help  
and support are more effective than others.**

Here are some ideas:

- give support, not advice
- listen
- be available and approachable
- don't tell them what to do
- take violence seriously
- let them make their own decisions
- challenge the behaviour not the person
- always think about safety—your own and the person you want to help.

**What to do:**

- keep in touch
- be there
- keep the door open
- offer a safe place to go
- discuss support from external agencies who can help
- discuss support from internal staff who can help.



**ARE YOU  
SCARED  
TO GO  
HOME?**

**IS THERE  
ANYTHING  
I CAN DO?**

**IS SOMEONE  
HURTING YOU?**

**DO YOU FEEL  
SAFE AT HOME?**

**What  
to say**

**IT'S NOT OK  
THAT YOU ARE  
BEING HURT.**

**IT'S NOT YOUR  
FAULT SOMEONE  
IS HURTING YOU.**

**WHEN YOU  
ARE READY  
I AM HERE.**



## **Helping people who are violent**

**People who are using violence in their family relationships need support to get help too.**

You can:

- let them know violence is not OK and help is available
- find out what help is available
- offer to go with them to get help.

## **Safety plans**

**Leaving a relationship is no guarantee of safety. It is a time of very high risk for a woman in a violent relationship and needs to be managed carefully.**

A workplace safety plan includes practical steps to ensure the safety of victims and their colleagues. It needs to be developed in consultation with the affected staff member and a specialist family violence service provider.

It could include providing a car park close to the main access, accompanying a person to and from their car, relocating their workspace and changing contact details or keeping them confidential.

**Women's Refuge** has lots of information on developing safety plans.

[www.womensrefuge.org.nz/WR/Get-help/Staying-safe](http://www.womensrefuge.org.nz/WR/Get-help/Staying-safe)

## **The three Rs**

- 1. Recognise Signs that an employee may be experiencing family violence include unexplained injuries, uncharacteristic absenteeism/tardiness, sensitivity about home life, special requests to leave early or taking a lot of time off, isolation from work colleagues, unusual number of phone calls or emails or disruptive personal visits to the workplace by a current or former partner.**
- 2. Respond Support and empower your colleague and ask about immediate safety for them and their children.**
- 3. Refer — to internal or external supports.**

## **Where to go for help**

**It is OK to ask for help from someone within or outside your organisation whether you are a victim, a perpetrator or someone wanting to help.**

**When you are unsure:** If you are supporting a colleague experiencing family violence, it is OK to seek advice – you don't have to disclose the person's name.

**What if:** The staff member affected by family violence is not ready to seek help, but you identify that there is a serious safety risk for the victim, their children or someone else. Call the Police on 111, even if you are not sure.

**Speak up for a child:** If you are worried about the safety of a child, and don't want to give your name, you can phone **0508 FAMILY** to discuss your concerns and options. You can also seek advice from your Family Violence Response Coordinator or a manager.

Children need adults to keep them safe and take charge of their safety – don't worry about offending an adult in order to help a child.

Your offer of help or support may be rejected. Don't take it personally – it can take many attempts for victims and perpetrators to get the help they need.

## Getting help

In an emergency phone the Police	<b>111</b>
Are You OK? Visit the <b>Get Help</b> section of <a href="http://www.areyouok.org.nz">www.areyouok.org.nz</a>	<b>0800 456 450</b>
Crimestoppers <a href="http://www.crimestoppers-nz.org">www.crimestoppers-nz.org</a>	<b>0800 555 111</b>
Child Youth and Family <a href="http://www.cyf.govt.nz">www.cyf.govt.nz</a>	<b>0508 326 459</b>
Women's Refuge <a href="http://www.womensrefuge.org.nz">www.womensrefuge.org.nz</a>	<b>0800 733 843</b>
Shine <a href="http://www.2shine.org.nz">www.2shine.org.nz</a>	<b>0508 744 633</b>
National Network of Stopping Violence Services <a href="http://www.nnsvs.org.nz">www.nnsvs.org.nz</a>	<b>04 802 5402</b>
Age Concern <a href="http://www.ageconcern.org.nz">www.ageconcern.org.nz</a>	<b>04 801 9338</b>
Family Court <a href="http://www.justice.govt.nz">www.justice.govt.nz</a>	<b>04 918 8800</b>



## **Additional online resources**

Good for Staff Good for Business

[www.areyouok.org.nz/files/ItsnotOK\\_Workplace\\_DL\\_v8.pdf](http://www.areyouok.org.nz/files/ItsnotOK_Workplace_DL_v8.pdf)

Positive Relationship Quiz

[www.areyouok.org.nz/files/Positive\\_relationship\\_quiz.pdf](http://www.areyouok.org.nz/files/Positive_relationship_quiz.pdf)

Auditing a Relationship

(Community Action Toolkit – Information Sheet 26)

[www.areyouok.org.nz/files/test/resources/Toolkit\\_inserts.pdf](http://www.areyouok.org.nz/files/test/resources/Toolkit_inserts.pdf)

Are You OK How Can You Help booklet

[www.areyouok.org.nz/files/test/resources/How-can-you-help-booklet-square.pdf](http://www.areyouok.org.nz/files/test/resources/How-can-you-help-booklet-square.pdf)

Family and Community Services Directory

[www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory](http://www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory)

Webhealth

[www.webhealth.co.nz](http://www.webhealth.co.nz)

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New Zealand Government

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