

## **DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE: Information for our residents and housing applicants**

This Fact Sheet explains what we can do to help if you are experiencing domestic and family violence.

### **WHAT IS DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE?**

Domestic and family violence is a crime in Australia. It is punishable by law.

Domestic and family violence is any form of physical, psychological and/or financial abuse or control a person experiences from a partner, ex-partner, family member, someone close to you or in a family-like arrangement such as carers or flatmates.

#### **It's not just physical**

You do not have to be physically hit or hurt to have experienced domestic and family violence.

Domestic and family violence is more than physical abuse. It includes behaviour that is threatening and controlling that can cause you to fear for your own safety or another person's safety.

Other types of domestic and family violence can include:

- *Emotional abuse* eg manipulation, isolation, put-downs, mind games;
- *Financial abuse* eg forcing you to hand over control of income or assets, coercing you to take on debt or sign a contract, not allowing you to earn an income;
- *Sexual abuse* eg any unwanted sexual activity;
- *Social abuse* eg insulting you in public;
- *Threats* of physical violence and revenge;
- *Property damage* eg smashing your belongings;
- *Isolation* eg isolating you from your family or friends;
- *Preventing* you from practising your religion;
- *Harming or threatening to harm* your pets.

Domestic and family violence can leave you feeling stressed, anxious and/or depressed and can impact your health and wellbeing. It can affect anyone in the community, regardless of gender, sexual identity, race, age, culture, ethnicity, religion, disability, economic status or location.

### **WHAT WILL WE DO TO HELP YOU?**

#### **Advice and Information**

You can report domestic and family violence to us by **phone (1800 693 865)** or by **email ([info@evolvehousing.com.au](mailto:info@evolvehousing.com.au))**.

We know that every case is different so we will listen to you and advise you of what options you have. We can give you information about other agencies that offer further advice and support on such things as housing and legal issues. With your permission, we will refer you for help.

#### **Safe communication and a safe place to meet**

Your safety is really important to us. We want to help you secure ongoing safety from domestic and family violence. You can meet our staff in private at our offices, or at an agreed safe place. We will also agree with you how we can stay in contact with you in a safe way.

We understand that you might be more comfortable talking about your situation to someone who is the same sex as you. You should let us know if you want to speak to someone of the same sex and if we can, we will arrange that for you.

If you need an interpreter or translation service, we can also arrange this.

#### **Keeping your information secure**

Your information is strictly confidential and will only be shared with a support service that is bound by law to keep it secure.

We will not give your details or any other information you provide to anyone without your permission unless there are serious concerns for the safety of you or your children. In these cases, we have a legal responsibility to share information.

Your information will never be shared with the person who has harmed or threatened you.

### **Assessing the risk to the safety of your home**

We carry out a risk assessment for all situations involving domestic and family violence. After the assessment, we will go through your options with you, which may include increasing the security of your home.

If it isn't safe for you to stay in your home, we will give you advice, information and support to help you get alternative accommodation (such as emergency accommodation).

### **Support services**

An important way for us to help you is to make a referral to a support service.

A referral will include information about you, for example: your name, phone number, what has happened and information about any court notices or protection orders that might be in place. The referral will also include any information about the person who has harmed or threatened you, so that the service can better understand your situation and needs.

A referral is automatic when police officers attend a domestic and family violence incident or where there are domestic violence proceedings in court.

### **Support services for you and your family**

After the referral is made, a support service will contact you and offer you help with different issues you may face. Support may include:

- Safety planning;
- Emergency accommodation;
- Counselling;
- Access to financial assistance;
- Court support; and/or
- Other services you may need to increase your safety.

### **Working together we are stronger**

Important decisions about your safety should be made by you, and in most cases we will seek your consent before making a referral to a support service.

We will work with our support partners to provide support to you and where possible to deal with anyone who is causing domestic and family violence. We know that domestic violence cases can involve many organisations and we will work with them to help ensure you and your family are safe.

### **Housing management**

We recognise that sometimes it is in the best interests of a victim of domestic and family violence (and their children) to be provided with support so that they can remain safely in their family home. In other cases, the best action is to assist the victim to move to new accommodation. We will work with you to assist you to either maintain or secure safe and affordable housing.

For eligible residents and applicants for housing, we have access to the 'Rent Choice Start Safely' program which provides short to medium-term financial support to eligible clients who are escaping domestic and family violence, so that they can secure private rental accommodation and do not have to return to an unsafe environment.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION AND USEFUL CONTACTS**

If you still have **questions** about the matters raised in this Fact Sheet, please contact us at Evolve on **1800 693 865**.

Other contacts and sources of information include:

- Domestic Violence Line – 1800 65 64 63
- Link2home Homelessness Information Line – 1800 152 152
- Counselling services through 1800 RESPECT – 1800 737 732
- [www.whiteribbon.org.au](http://www.whiteribbon.org.au)
- <http://www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au>

**IF YOU NEED IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE, CALL 000 FOR POLICE, FIRE OR AMBULANCE.**