



Artwork by: Nabahed Alheesa



Artwork by: Ghassan Fatoohi

## Fact Sheet 8: How to support your community

**Faith and community leaders play a vital role in reminding men and women from their communities that the use of violence is a choice, and it is important that men who choose violence are held accountable for their behaviour. An important aspect to remember when accessing the drivers of violence against women and their children and, when taking into consideration current or past adversity experienced by perpetrators, that this is not an excuse for the violent behaviour.**

**This fact sheet will help faith and community leaders gain a better understanding on the experience of the community member and how they may support them, based off Arabic Welfare's experience working with the community.**

Faith and community leaders need to implement interventions / approaches that challenge cultural and social norms that are supportive of violence. This can be done by using ECHO:

- **Encouraging** community to choose to treat themselves and others with respect and recognise and prevent unhealthy relationships.
- **Creating** opportunities for your community to be educated and informed about healthy and respectful relationships, what constitutes as family violence and the drivers of family violence.
- **Harnessing** your skills to assess and screen risk of family violence within the community
- **Offering** information and support to victim survivors or perpetrators of family violence within the community

Faith and community leaders can assist in breaking down the barriers that women from the community who are living with family violence may be experiencing. To be able to do this faith and community leaders may need to support and empower the women from the community to speak about their experiences of family violence to professional services.

This can be done by:

- Supporting them to tell their story – by asking some of the following questions:  
 What took place?  
 Do you feel safe?  
 Who knows this is happening and can provide you with support?  
 What would you like to do?  
 Is the abuse direct at only you or other family members as well?  
 Are the children witnessing this behaviour?
- Support them to understand their rights – you are in the position to help educate them about services that can provide them with adequate support. You may have to also assist them with making that connection with the service. There are specialist services and service with qualified workers who understand their language, are culturally appropriate and are able to implement targeted support such as Arabic Welfare Inc. For a list of service please see fact sheet 3: Family Violence Support Services. **Please remember that if the woman is in a crisis, you can contact Police on 000.**
- Support them to report the abuse if that is their choice – as a community or faith leader, your opinion and guidance is highly sought after. Therefore, you are in a prime position to reduce the stigma of accessing support due to the fear of community shame and gossip. Providing the women with support will reassure them that they will not be judged.

Faith and community leaders can assist in breaking down the barriers for men from the community who may be experiencing family violence. To be able to do this faith and community leaders may need to support and empower the men from the community to speak about their experiences of family violence to professional services. This can be done by:

- Breaking down stigma of being a male victim of family violence, which may influence his decision to speak out and seek help
- Male victims of family violence may think that he will be seen as a failure as a man if he speaks out. Encourage him that this is not the case, but it is a basic human right to feel safe

### CONTACT US

☎ (03) 9380 9536

✉ [info@arabicwelfare.org.au](mailto:info@arabicwelfare.org.au)

📍 Level 2, 61 Riggall Street, Broadmeadows VIC 3047



Artwork by: Nabahed Alheesa



Artwork by: Ghassan Fatoohi

## Fact Sheet 8: How to support your community

### SUPPORT PEOPLE TO DISCLOSE FAMILY VIOLENCE

The ultimate action that can be done is creating a safe space for an individual to disclose and access support.

Things to look for and be mindful of when supporting community members to understand and discuss their experiences of family violence include:

- They may be afraid:
  1. That what they say or do might upset their partner, causing the family violence to escalate
  2. That reporting to Police would cause harm to the perpetrator (victim survivors at times will express that they don't want harm to befall the perpetrator they just want the violence to stop)
- They are concerned about how financially they are going to survivor. This includes would they be removed from their home and community.
- They are worried about the judgement from community, regarding not being able to protect the children and "breaking up" the family unit.
- If they are not Australian Citizens, there is often concern of whether reporting or seeking help would affect their chances of gaining citizenship (as this is not leverage that the perpetrator uses against the victim survivor)

### MODELLING AND PROMOTING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS[1]

Faith and community leaders should take the opportunity to be well versed in the knowledge of healthy relationships. The following elements are important to this approach to addressing family violence with equality and respect:

- **Good communication** – each partner should speak honestly and openly to avoid miscommunication. If one person needs to sort out his or her feelings first, the other partner should be encouraged to respect those wishes and wait until he or she is ready to talk
- **Individuality** – neither partner should have to compromise who they are, and their identity should not be based on that of their partner
- **Mutual respect** – respect means that each person values who the other is and seeks to understand the other person's boundaries
- **Trust** – Partners should place trust in each other and give each other the benefit of the doubt.
- **Honesty** – Honesty builds trust and strengthens the relationship

There are many ways that faith and community leaders can promote healthy relationships including:

- **Modelling respect** – by embodying respect community and faith leaders can inspire community members to also behave in a respectful way towards family and friends. Be respectful of difference and promote inclusion, no matter a person's age, gender, sexual orientation and/or social status
- **Offering open communication** – be transparent and open when communicating with community members, listen to what they say, believe them and acknowledge their opinions and feedback
- **Offering person-centred support** – provide tailored support which is focussed on the individual as the expert in their lives, is non-judgmental and considers the needs of individual members and their families. Connect community members to support services when needed
- **Education and awareness** – educating community members about healthy relationships and its importance to maintaining the safety and happiness of all community members

References:

[1] Cause Effect Psychology: Are you in a Healthy Relationship – <https://www.cepsychology.com.au/are-you-in-a-healthy-relationship/>

### CONTACT US

☎ (03) 9380 9536

✉ [info@arabicwelfare.org.au](mailto:info@arabicwelfare.org.au)

📍 Level 2, 61 Riggall Street, Broadmeadows VIC 3047