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## Fact Sheet 9: Family Violence Scenarios & good practice techniques

The following scenarios are described to provide you with some ideas about how to respond when individuals approach you on matters relating to family violence. Please note these scenarios are based on stories, cases and enquires from the community. These are not related to a specific individual, but rather a collection of people with similar circumstances.

In this fact sheet the pronoun She/Her will be used to for victim survivor and He/Him for perpetrator, as studies have shown Family Violence is gendered based violence, predominately affecting women. The same approaches and supports should be utilised for male victim survivors.

### ASSESSING AND SCREENING FOR RISK FOR VICTIM SURVIVORS

During your conversation with the victim survivor, asking the following questions can assist in completing a safety / risk assessment for them and children in the household:

- Do you feel safe to go home?
- Do you think the child/ren are safe?
- Has he/she, made any threats towards you or the child/ren?
- When did this behaviour begin?
- Has the behaviour changed in recent times and in what way?
- Is there a family member or friend you can call for support?
- Have you thought about seeking support for a worker who specialises in these situations?
- Can I share some information with you about some useful services?
- Can I support you to contact a support service or Police?

The above questions are difficult and personal questions to ask. If you are not comfortable asking these questions or you feel you are not the right person to be asking these questions, please encourage contact with Victoria Police or contact a service such as Arabic Welfare Inc. for support.

#### VICTIM SURVIVOR SCENARIO 1: BUT HE IS NOT HITTING ME

A woman comes to you and tells you she would like to speak with you about problems she is having at home with her husband. She has told you that her husband often tells her to shut up and questioned her daily on what she has done and who she has spoken with. She tells you that she has not shared this information with anyone, because she is not sure people would understand. As he doesn't hit her, but it is very difficult to live with him and it is impacting on her health and mental wellbeing.

#### VICTIM SURVIVOR SCENARIO 2: HE'S CHANGED

A woman is very active in the community, starts to withdraw and you notice that her manner of speech and personal style has changed. You go to visit the family and you notice that there are tension people the couple and every time the husband makes a loud comment or sudden action the women become very rigid.

#### VICTIM SURVIVOR SCENARIO 3: AM I GOING TO LOSE MY CHILDREN

A woman from the community, presents to you crying and distressed, and keeps repeating "they are going to take my children from me, you have to help". When you ask her who, she states "my husband and his family...I am her on spousal visa... and he told me, because I am not an Australia Citizen, he is going to send me back, but my kids will stay here in Australia, as they are Australian. Women further tells you that he is often aggressive at home, yelling, screaming, breaking things, a few times he came close to hitting her and the kids... so the other day she said to him she'll tell the Police and he said he'll take the kids from her.

### COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT: VICTIM SURVIVORS

- Speak with the victim in a safe space that is private.
- Actively listen to the victim – this will demonstrate to the victim that you acknowledge their experience. This will also help you gather a clear understanding of the situation which will help you to best offer supportive options that meet the person's stated requirements. Remember you are there to listen to victim, acknowledge their story, be empathetic and non-judgmental and offer to link them to support services.
- Believe and respect the victim – this will show the victim that you trust in them and their experience.
- Validate the victim experience – emphasis that violence is unacceptable, no matter what the circumstances! This will help the victim understand that the violence is not their fault. Many victims are told/ believe that the violence is their fault, or that they 'deserve it'. Remind the victim that the violent behaviour is the choice and responsibility of their partner.
- Empower the victim – by empowering the victim they can gain strength to make their own choices.
- Remind the victim – that sharing their experiences is a big step and praise them for having courage to come and talk to you.
- Reassure them that there is privacy and confidentiality when sharing their experience and that this privacy and confidentiality is also the principle of support services. It is important to approach the situation from a non-judgmental viewpoint, assuring them that they cannot stop the partner's violent behaviour on their own, and that there are relevant support services that can help to facilitate that change.
- Tone of voice can be a helpful indicator of victim's experience and the level of support required (if there is panic in her voice, she could be in crisis and may require a call made to Police). Important that we do not use a tone, that can be considered judgmental

#### PERPETRATOR SCENARIO 1: I NEED HELP

A man who has perpetrated violence against his partner comes to you seeking support and tells you that he is willing to accept responsibility for his actions, and that he genuinely wants to change his behaviour.

#### PERPETRATOR SCENARIO 2: IT'S NOT MY FAULT

A man has approached you and stated that he is having relationship issues with his wife. Lately they have been arguing a lot and sometimes, but only sometimes he gets too angry and once he hit her. He is scared that she is going to call the police on him.

### COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT: PERPETRATORS

If the perpetrator is willing to get support and acknowledge the behaviour:

- Actively listen to what he has to say
- Highlight how he has made a good choice by asking questions and taking accountability for his actions
- Support him to link in with support services that can assist him such as the Men's Behaviour Change programs

If the perpetrator is not willing to get support and acknowledge the behaviour

- Actively listen to what he has to say, however do not collude with his choice if action
- Highlight how it is important for him to take accountability for his actions and that you can support to do so
- Support him to link in with support services that can assist him such as the Men's Behaviour Change programs

### CAUTIONS:

- Avoid questions that might suggest that the victim is responsible for the violence – (e.g.: 'Why did he hit you?')
- Avoid offering support based on what you think the victim needs or tell them what they must do
- Do not dismiss the victim's disclosures or excuse the violence by naming it as 'relationship difficulties' – the victim is likely already doing that themselves and seeking support is a huge step. Remember family violence is not a relationship issue but a crime!

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### CONTACT US

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