

Resource:

Identifying the risk of domestic abuse &/or family violence

Flexible working arrangements and working from home has become increasingly commonplace in organisations. It is therefore important to consider that 'home' is not necessarily a safe place for everyone. Some people may be going home to an environment where they face abuse and aggression at the hands of their partner. Others may use aggression towards family members as an outlet if they are struggling to deal with challenges in their professional or personal lives. As a manager or a colleague, you may be one of the first people to notice warning signs of potential issues or risk factors for domestic abuse and/or family violence in the home environment.

Section 1 – Experiencing abuse or violence

Warning signs that someone may be experiencing domestic abuse &/ or family violence

Research has found that a person's experience of violence is more likely to be dismissed or excused during times of crisis or emergency. If a person is facing crisis or difficulties in their own life as a tactic or excuse to withhold necessary items such as food or hand sanitiser, misinform others about the pandemic to control or frighten them or excuse, blame or justify their abusive and/ or violent behaviour. The important message here is that times of stress, adversity and hardship are never an excuse for abuse or violence.

Warning signs that someone may be experiencing abuse in their relationship include:



Appears afraid of their partner or anxious to please them



Withdraws or rapidly ends calls or conversations when their partner may be present



A partner who requests the identity of the caller frequently or who is frequently present during the conversation



Appears anxious, depressed or withdrawn, particularly when their partner is present



Appears reluctant to leave their child or children in the care of their partner for short calls or meetings



Regularly is late for work or meetings



Regularly needs to take leave for short periods



Wears inappropriate clothing for the season



Appears restricted in access to money or social networks (including extended family).

What if I notice these signs in an employee or colleague?

Step-by-step guidance is included below:

- Check that you are prepared and comfortable to have what might be a difficult conversation (self-care first)

Preparation may include:

- Speaking with your manager or contact People Services
- Contacting EAP for coaching and guidance via their Manager Assist service
- Contacting the Domestic and Family Violence hotline run by the EAP

Note: Details of these support services are outlined in section 3

- Create a safe space where you can talk privately. For example, start the conversation by asking if the person is in a safe environment to talk in a way that allows them to answer with a simple 'yes' or 'no'?
- Start the conversation by calling out the behaviours or warning signs of concern, and ask the person if they feel safe in the home environment

Throughout these conversations it is important to remember to:

- Take a non-judgmental and curious approach
- Believe the person
- Avoid imposing your views and understanding of their safety
- Listen to their distress

If the person reports that they are not feeling safe, you could continue with the following steps:

- Support the person to decide where and when the danger is the greatest
- Be guided by what they know is safest for them
- Ask the person what kind of assistance they need
- Provide information about referral and support services (these are detailed in section 3)
- Ask them to identify the safest way for you to stay in touch

One of the most important ways to support someone is to listen to their perspective closely. Remember - they know their circumstances better than anyone and know when they are safest. They have been evaluating risk and choice since the violence begun.

Section 2 – Engaging in abuse or violence

Warning signs that someone may be engaging in domestic abuse &/ or family violence

Signs that someone may be using abuse in their relationships include:

- Avoids questions about their partner/ex-partner and home life
- Makes derogatory jokes or comments about their partner's/ex-partner's gender (or their partner/ex-partner specifically)
- Prone to outbursts or displays of anger
- Talks about things that they make their partner/ex-partner do, or things that they don't have to do because 'that's their partner's/ex-partner's job'
- Angry or defensive reactions to mentions of domestic abuse or strategies/actions to address it
- Talks about their control over money/partners actions/what their partner eats/where they go
- Visible anger about custody or disputes around access to children or pets
- Espouses an adherence to rigidly defined gender roles and identities i.e., what it means to be masculine and feminine

What if I notice these signs in an employee or colleague?

Step-by-step guidance is included below:

- Check that you are prepared and comfortable to have what might be a difficult conversation (self-care first)

Preparation may include:

- Speaking with your manager or People Services
- Contacting EAP for coaching and guidance via their Manager Assist service
- Contacting the Domestic and Family Violence hotline run by the EAP

Note: Details of these support services are outlined in section 3

- Create a safe space where you can talk privately
- Start the conversation by calling out the behaviours or warning signs of concern and ask the person if they are making the home environment unsafe (if you suspect that they are using abuse as a coping mechanism)

If the person reports that they are behaving in ways that are unsafe, you could continue with the following steps:

- Support the person to decide where and when the risk and/ or danger of them losing control is the greatest
- Investigate the persons healthy coping strategies and be guided by what they know works for them (discounting the abuse as a strategy)
- Ask the person what kind of assistance they need
- Provide information about referral and support services (these are detailed in section 3)
- Ask the person which is the safest way of staying in touch and what support networks that they have (outside of their partner/ex-partner/affected family member)

Section 3 – Support services available

Domestic and Family Violence Leave

Australia Post offers help and support to anyone experiencing family or domestic violence, including leave, safety planning and temporary flexible work options. You can talk to your HR representative to help start the process of getting support.

Resource: Domestic and Family Violence Policy

Resource: Domestic and Family Violence Leave FAQs

People Services

1300 116 947

Managers can seek further support and advice regarding the policy outlined above by contacting the People Services Team.

Support through the Australia Post EAP provider - Converge International

EAP Manager Assist

1300 687 327

As a manager or team leader, contact **1300 687 327**, visit **www.convergeinternational.com** or download the EAP Connect App to book your sessions today to receive information and guidance on how to best support your team members.

Domestic and Family Violence Helpline

1300 338 465

Our EAP service provides a **Domestic and Family Violence helpline** for confidential, free advice and access to a counselling service for people who are affected by, or using abuse or violence. This service is also available to our extended workforce including principal contractors, licensees, sub-contractors and their employees and family members.

Employee Isolation Support

1300 687 327

In response to the current pandemic, our EAP provider has developed a new manager-referred support program which provides weekly outbound call support to employees working from home, who may be at risk in the home environment for reasons of mental wellbeing, illness, family violence or social isolation.

Resource: Isolation Support Brochure

Support available outside Australia Post

1800 RESPECT

1800 737 732

Contact the 1800 RESPECT 24/7 hotline if you or someone that you are concerned about is affected by domestic or familial abuse or violence. You can call the number, or visit **<https://www.1800respect.org.au/>** for resources and webchat. This webpage is equipped with a quick exit.

No to Violence - Men's Referral Service

1300 766 491

Call the No to Violence hotline or visit **<https://www.ntv.org.au/>** if you are subject to violent behaviour from a partner or family member, or are finding yourself out of control and taking it out on your loved ones. This webpage is equipped with a quick exit.

Mensline Australia

1300 78 99 78

Call Mensline Australia or chat online (**<https://www.mensline.org.au/>**) if you are a man struggling with issues around domestic abuse or violence and require some non-judgemental advice and guidance.

Dads in Distress

1300 853 437

Call Dads in Distress for support for separated dads and their families. You can also visit **<https://www.parentsbeyondbreakup.com>**.

QLife

1800 184 527

or chat online at **<https://qlife.org.au/resources/>**. QLife provides support for same-sex and gender diverse couples and the LGBTI+ community.

Additional support recommendations for managers

As a manager/people leader, you can consider implementing the following supports:

- Schedule regular check-ins with the staff member
- Follow up with the EAP Manager Assist service for more targeted guidance
- Facilitate your staff member being able to attend a facility or corporate building for work (to provide some safe time away from the home environment)
- Provide your staff member with work-issued technology (smart phone and/or laptop) if they do not have it already. This can provide an alternative to personal devices which are monitored by their partner/family member, ensure that they always have credit to call for help, can access online supports more discreetly, and that their device cannot be taken away from them. If you do not have devices to provide, you can contact Telstra Safe phones for assistance.

Section 4 – Looking after yourself

How do I look after myself after having a difficult conversation?

It is vitally important that you look after yourself before and after having difficult conversations. To be able to support others effectively, it is important that you are feeling well and thinking clearly. To do this, it is important to identify what causes stress for you and put in place some steps to reduce stress.

As a first step, consider speaking with your manager or a trusted peer, whilst maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of the person. Other resources to support you include:

- The EAP Manager Assist service provides coaching and support in managing any people-related issue. Call **1300 687 327** to be connected to a specialist management consultant or to seek support for yourself.
- The EAP also has a free resource hub with a range of helpful information about the impact of coronavirus, including resources on domestic abuse and/or family violence. You can find this page by clicking [here](#), clicking 'portal log in' on the top right-hand corner and logging in with the details below.

Username: AUSPOST

Password: eap

URL: <https://www.convergeinternational.com.au/>

Acknowledgments:

The above information is based on advice from our EAP service provider, Converge International, as well as the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, Relationships Victoria and Respect Victoria. To review the sources, please see details below.

Converge International - <https://www.convergeinternational.com.au/>

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria - <https://www.dvrcv.org.au/help-advice/coronavirus-covid-19-and-family-violence/family-friends-and-neighbours>

Relationships Victoria - <https://www.relationshipsvictoria.com.au/assets/PDFs/Resources/Tip-Sheets/FV-in-the-Workplace-Tipsheet-W16057.pdf>

Respect Victoria - <https://www.1800respect.org.au/help-and-support/self-isolation-and-covid-19>