

# Domestic Abuse and Family Violence

## Guidelines for those with pastoral responsibilities - Diocese of Tasmania

*"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." John 10:10*

The following guidelines have been prepared as part of the response to the 2015 Synod, who sought to raise awareness on domestic and family violence by making resources available for the church in its pastoral role.

Domestic abuse and family violence is a pattern of controlling and abusive behaviour used by an intimate partner during a relationship or after separation. Domestic abuse and family violence occurs in all walks of life, regardless of socio-economic status, race, age, religion, culture and sexual orientation. It may be physical, psychological, sexual, spiritual, verbal, emotional and financial. Whatever form it takes, fear, control and power are always components.

Customarily, domestic abuse and family violence occurs between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender. Children are exposed to family violence if they see or hear an incident of domestic and family violence, help to clean up after an incident, or comfort or assist a family member after an incident.

1 in 6 Australian women (post 15 years of age) have experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former partner; 1 in 4 Australian women (post 15 years of age) had experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner; 1 in 19 Australian men (post 15 years of age) have experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former partner; 1 in 7 Australian men had experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012 Personal Safety Survey).

## How to help

You are the first point of contact for a person experiencing domestic abuse and family violence

- Create a safe, respectful and supportive environment (a safe place to talk)
- Have someone else present if this is applicable, be culturally aware and sensitive
- Give time for the person to talk
- Listen and take it seriously
- Pick up on small clues and ask direct questions for example, 'how does the offender behave when angry?', 'do you become frightened?'
- Believe the person
- Challenge the violence or abuse, it cannot be excused or justified, reassure that it is not their fault and that the abuse is not deserved
- Give priority to immediate safety, 'are you afraid to go home tonight?'; 'I am afraid for your safety or the safety of your children'
- Explore options, encourage the person to think about their own needs
- Empower the person to make their own decisions
- Support and respect decisions/choices, even if the person chooses to return
- Give information about support and services, or offer to contact a service on their behalf.
- Refer to specialist counselling
- Protect confidentiality, do not pass information on without consent
- Offer ongoing support in a way that does not put the person at risk, offer support whether or not separation occurs

## What not to do

- Do not trivialize, judge, criticise or dismiss what you have been told
- Do not ask "what did you do or say to provoke your partner?"
- Do not suggest the person try a better partner
- Do not suggest "try not to make your partner angry"
- Do not ask "why do you stay?"
- Do not advise that the person return to the relationship
- Do not ask for proof
- Do not attempt to mediate or challenge the abusive partner

## What your Parish can do

Here are some specific ways clergy and lay leaders can help prevent domestic and family violence

- 1. Educate the Congregation:** Encourage practises that support non-violence, equality and respect for women and girls; in Bible studies look at biblical texts that may in the past have been used to justify abuse; include information to raise awareness on bulletin boards and newsletters. Use our diocesan resources, especially Faithfulness in Service, to equip people in living a Godly life.
- 2. Display a poster,** leaflets and information about help that is available.
- 3. Source and offer courses and support groups:** Pre-marriage and marriage courses, self awareness or confidence building, parenting courses and conflict resolution.
- 4. Invite a speaker** from a recognised agency to talk to a group or members of the church.
- 5. Partner with existing resources,** for example, become a 'White Ribbon' ambassador.
- 6. Become a resource:** Something we can all do is to learn more, investigate current information and look at Biblical perspectives to better understand and respond to domestic and family violence.
- 7. Support professional training:** Encourage training and education for pastoral care workers and parish leadership that promotes awareness of domestic abuse and family violence issues. Use Faithfulness in Service as a training tool.
- 8. Address internal issues:** Challenge inappropriate comments, behaviours and attitudes that may present.

## Further information

Tasmania Police – Safe at Home

<http://www.safeathome.tas.gov.au/>

1800RESPECT Tasmanian support and services – Domestic and Family Violence

<https://www.1800respect.org.au/service-support/tasmanian-domestic-family-violence-and-sexual-assault-services/>

Our Watch - end violence against women and their children

<http://www.ourwatch.org.au/>

One in Three campaign- Male victims of Family Violence

<http://www.oneinthree.com.au/>

<http://www.oneinthree.com.au/infographic>

White Ribbon

[www.whiteribbon.org.au/](http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/)

Tasmania government - DHHS program CHYPP

[http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/45856/FVCSS\\_Children\\_and\\_Young\\_Persons\\_Program.pdf](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/45856/FVCSS_Children_and_Young_Persons_Program.pdf)

You Tube- Attitudes to gender equality and violence against women

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yqb8Uzyej78&index=1&list=UUeHnUukYpnXhuwUkTKhhQAaw>

Family Violence Counselling and support service information booklet

[http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/63082/124\\_Family\\_violence\\_DL\\_ADULT\\_150310.pdf](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/63082/124_Family_violence_DL_ADULT_150310.pdf)