

# ...but he's a good dad, right?

Responding to fathers who perpetrate family violence



Presented by:



**WOMEN'S HEALTH  
IN THE NORTH**



# What to expect from today

**Understand** the risks and opportunities in working with fathers who perpetrate family violence

**Hear** about the suite of programs available to fathers in the northern metropolitan region

**Reflect** on your practice in responding to fathers who perpetrate family violence to prioritise the safety of women and children



# Agenda

## Setting the scene

Sarah Johnson, Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinator

## Small group activity

How do you know if you are working with a father who perpetrates family violence? What are the risks?

## Key note presentation

'Can he be a good dad and a violent partner?' Dr Kristin Diemer, University of Melbourne

[BREAK]

## Panel discussion

Risks and opportunities in responding to fathers who perpetrate family violence

## Small group discussion

Case study

## In pairs

What will you do differently?



# About NIFVS

Northern Integrated Family Violence Services (NIFVS) is the partnership that leads the integration of family violence and related services in Melbourne's northern metropolitan region.

## Our mission

To maintain and continually develop the integrated family violence service system in the North, in order to improve the safety of women and children and to hold perpetrators accountable for their use of violence.

## Our partners

- 25 committee members
- 125 services responding to family violence
- 840 professionals linked to various initiatives

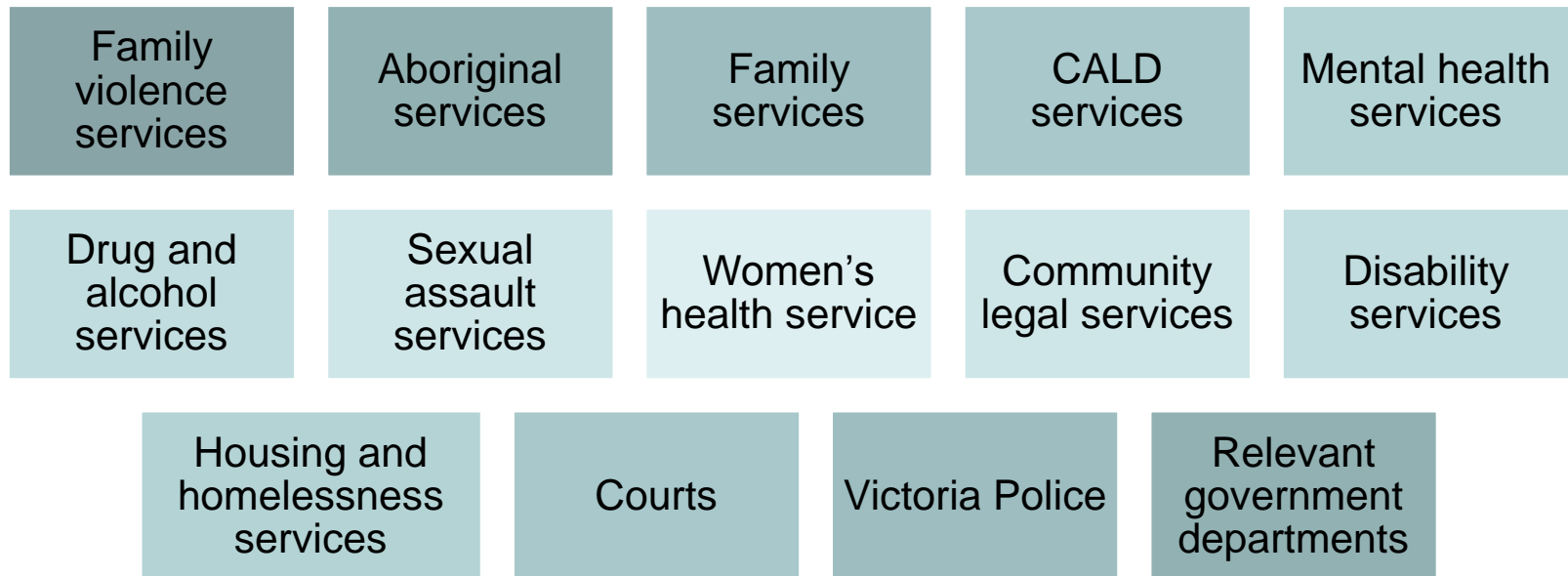
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# Regional integration committee

The NIFVS Regional Integration Committee identifies and prioritises local and regional family violence issues within the state-wide policy framework. Members of the committee represent **service types or sectors** including:





# NIFVS priorities for 2017

Post the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence, the NIFVS Regional Integration Committee's priorities include:

- developing **Support and Safety Hubs**
- **workforce development** planning and advocacy
- **cross sector integration** with housing and homelessness, mental health, alcohol and other drugs and health and the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group

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# Why are we here?

The Royal Commission into Family Violence recognised that “holding perpetrators to account is a basic objective of family violence laws, policies and services”.

The Commission found that: “all organisations and agencies that have contact with perpetrators need to work towards a set of common objectives and principles and need to understand and reinforce each other’s roles and responsibilities in keeping victims safe.”

*(Royal Commission into Family Violence: Summary and recommendations, 2016: p28)*





# Why are we here?

In response to this challenge we want to unpack one of the biggest excuses made for perpetrators:

“...but he’s a good dad.”

We often hear violent behaviour being tolerated in this way.

Victorian government advertising campaign: “There’s nothing good about dads who abuse women”.

David Mandel (Safe and Together Institute) talks about family violence as being a ‘parenting choice’.





# Principles for responding to fathers who perpetrate family violence

- Prioritise the safety of women and children
- Believe that violence is a choice made in a broader context of gender inequality
- Foster a safe, meaningful and accountable environment
- Focus on the impact of the abuse, not the intent
- Build empathy for both women and children
- Maintain your hope for change

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# What not to do

No To Violence, the peak organisation for the prevention of male family violence, advise that there are few things that are important to avoid:

- Don't say that his behaviour doesn't matter
- Don't assume that the abuse is trivial or minor
- Don't accept excuses or allow him to blame others
- Don't focus on trying to understand why he's abusive
- Don't try to make him feel better about his behaviour



**No To  
Violence**

Male Family Violence  
Prevention Association





# Services for fathers who perpetrate family violence

- Men's Referral Service (Statewide telephone support)
- Men's Active Referral Service (L17 intake at Plenty Valley Community Health)
- Aboriginal Centre for Males Referral Service (Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd)
- Men's Unit (Victorian Aboriginal Health Service)
- Caring Dads (Children's Protection Society)

Men's Behaviour Change Programs delivered by:

- Kildonan
- Plenty Valley Community Health
- Sunbury Community Health Service



## Activity one

At your table, introduce yourself and your role.

Discuss:

*How do you know if you are working with a father who perpetrates family violence?*

*What are the risks in responding to perpetrators of family violence?*

*[15 minutes]*



# Key note presentation

## Can he be a good dad and a violent partner?

Dr Kristin Diemer, Senior Research Fellow

'Fathering Challenges in the Context of Domestic & Family Violence'  
University of Melbourne

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Take a break...

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... See you in 20 minutes





## Panel discussion

**Shau Teo**, Kildonan: Using their roles as fathers as a 'hook'

**Ron Briggs**, Odyssey House: The important role of Aboriginal services

**Lili Filar**, Anglicare Victoria: Centering women and children

**Fiona Edwards**, Children's Protection Society: Child-centred fathering





## Activity two

Case study: Carlos states that he has had a 'good week' as 'Effie has gone out drinking three nights in a row and left him with the kids'.

*Discuss at tables:*

- *What is wrong with this statement?*
- *What are we being invited to do?*
- *What does this statement reveal about Carlos' attitudes, beliefs and behaviours as a father and partner?*
- *What are the risks and opportunities for the worker?*

*[20 minutes]*



## Activity three

Discuss in pairs:

*As a result of this forum, what will you do differently in your response to fathers who perpetrate family violence to prioritise the safety of women and children?*

[15 minutes]



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# Staying involved

There are a number of ways to stay connected with the work of integration in the family violence sector:

- Order **Family Violence Help Cards and resources**
- Attend **Regional Family Violence Induction**
- Participate in **Identifying Family Violence Training**
- Join a **Local Family Violence Network**
- Run a **Week Without Violence** event in October
- Subscribe to monthly **NIFVS eNews**

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





# Next steps

Visit [nifvs.org.au](http://nifvs.org.au) to:

- Access a forum summary and the presentations from today
- Find referrals and resources on working with men who are perpetrators of family violence

# Contact details

Northern Integrated Family Violence Services

Women's Health In the North

680 High Street Thornbury 3071

Tel. 9484 1666

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

[info@whin.org.au](mailto:info@whin.org.au)



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