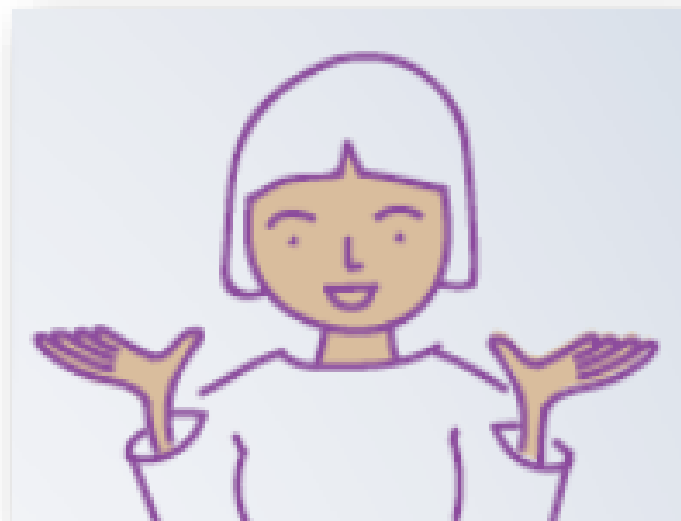


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Safety & Respect Women with Disabilities & Family Violence



Womenwithdisabilitiesvictoria
empowering women

13 March 2019



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
- 173 services responding to family violence
- 1,918 professionals linked to various initiatives



About Women with Disabilities Victoria

Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV) is the peak body of women with disabilities in Victoria.

WDV is an organisation of women with disabilities, for women with disabilities.

Mission

To advance real social and economic inclusion for women with disabilities in Victoria.

WDV recognises that women with disabilities are among the most marginalised in our community. This is because the intersection of gender inequality and disability presents a situation of multiple levels of discrimination.

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What is Family Violence?

Family violence is 'a pattern of coercive control that one person exercises over another in order to dominate and get his way. It is behaviour that physically harms, arouses fear, prevents a person from doing what she wants, or compels her to behave in ways she does not freely choose'.

Jones, A. & Schechter, S. (1992). *When Love Goes Wrong*. Melbourne: HarperCollins.

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Violence Against Women with Disabilities

Compared to women without disabilities, women with disabilities:

- Are targeted by male perpetrators of family violence at significantly higher rates, more frequently, for longer, and in more ways
- Are twice as likely to experience gendered psychological, physical, sexual and economic abuse and coercive control
- Are 3 times more likely to be sexually assaulted by a stranger
- Have considerably fewer pathways to safety, justice and recovery
- Experience discrimination that results in reduced likelihood of reporting experiences of violence and abuse

However, programs and services for women with disabilities who experience family violence either do not exist or are extremely limited.



What to expect from today

Today's forum will assist you in **strengthening** your responses to women with disabilities who experience family violence.

Participants will:

- **Consider** structural barriers experienced by women with disabilities
- **Explore** the best ways to partner with women
- **Reflect** on their current practice
- Make a commitment to improving responses to women

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Agenda

Film: Our Right to Safety & Respect

Activity One: Unpacking barriers to safety and respect

Keynote Speaker: Leah van Poppel (CEO, WDV) - Upholding the rights of women with disabilities

[BREAK]

Panel Discussion: Advice from women

Panel Discussion: Workers reflect on practice

Activity Two: Strengthening Practice



What have you learned from working with women with disabilities?

- Women with disabilities have strengths and know best how to manage their safety - it is us (workers) who need to listen to them.
- That women with disabilities face a unique set of challenges in their experience of family violence.
- They are at higher risk due to a range of barriers, accessibility to support and finances.
- I have learned the importance of listening to their story.



What concerns you about the way services respond to women with disabilities?

- Disability is often taken into account, but not in a compounding, intersectional way.
- Many mainstream services have not consulted with women with disabilities when planning and developing their services, particularly around accessibility issues.
- Practitioners may pathologise women with disabilities, and unfairly attribute responsibility for managing their partner's violence.
- They lack an understanding of the ways in which perpetrators use tactics of control to target the disability and gain power.



Our Right to Safety & Respect Film

“ Violence and abuse against women with disabilities has gone on long enough and when you develop resources specifically for women with disabilities, in alternative formats, this is a win-win situation. Knowledge is power – a resource can enable women with disabilities to take back control.”

“ Knowledge has no power unless you use it and share it. We'd like to make this world one worth surviving for!!!”

“ Make sure women know about their rights. Everyone deserves respect. Keep it short and simple – use easy English and pictures.”

“ A good future will be one where we have safe places to learn about our rights, to disclose, and to be supported.”

“ Despite our disabilities we have abilities and are able to fully contribute to this world. There should be avenues we can seek should we feel threatened. No one should be threatened by us and we should not be threatened by others.”

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Activity One

At your table, introduce yourself and your role.

Discuss the following and record your responses on the coloured circles:

As a community in what ways do we make it difficult for women with disabilities experiencing family violence to access safety, justice and recovery?

[15 mins]



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Keynote Speaker

Leah van Poppel, CEO
Women with Disabilities Victoria

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**Women with Disabilities Victoria
Keynote Presentation
Leah Van Poppel - CEO**

**Safety and Respect: Women with Disabilities and
Family Violence Forum 13 March 2019**

Women with Disabilities Victoria

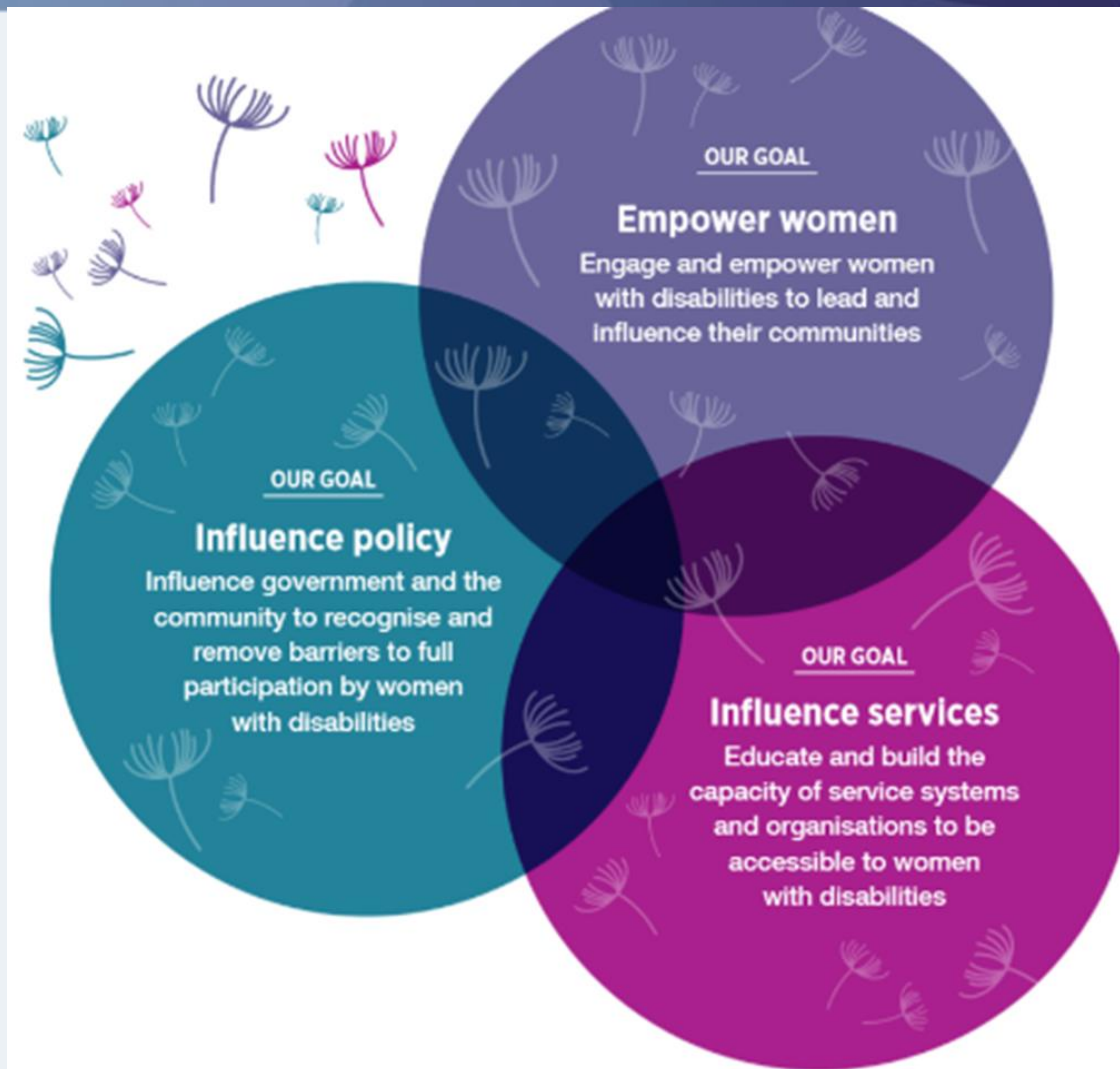
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Our Vision and Goals

Women with Disabilities Victoria is an organisation run by women with disabilities, for women with disabilities.

Our Vision

A world where all women are respected and can fully experience life.



Our Current Priority Areas of Work

Our Priorities

Our commitment to create opportunities for women with disabilities to realise their leadership and advocacy potential is central to our work within each priority area.

Violence

We will **prevent and respond to violence and abuse against women with disabilities.**

NDIS

We will **work to make the NDIS relevant and responsive to women with disabilities and empower women to engage with the new system.**

Health

We will **promote access to health services for women with disabilities.**

Who are women with disabilities?

Can include women with physical, psycho-social, cognitive (acquired brain injury, intellectual disability), communication and sensory disabilities and chronic health issues. Can be temporary, episodic or permanent.

Women with disabilities:

- ▶ may not identify as having a disability, even if they are in receipt of NDIS funding or a Centrelink payment for people with disabilities
- ▶ may not want to disclose their disability:
 - ▶ due to fear of judgement or discrimination
 - ▶ because they may be tired of having to 'educate' providers about their disability
 - ▶ because they may not trust you yet
 - ▶ because they have had negative experiences with parenting services or child protection.

Intersectionality: Women with disabilities may experience disadvantage due to being a woman and having a disability. May face additional disadvantage if they have other experiences of diversity or marginalisation: Aboriginal, CALD, refugee, newly settled, LGBTI, in prison or ex-prison, sex workers etc.

The social model of disability.

Family Violence and Women with Disabilities

The research literature confirms:

- Family violence is the leading cause of death or disability in women under the age of 45 in Australia
- Women with disabilities experience higher rates of family and sexual violence than women and men without disabilities
- Some women with disabilities are at higher risk of family violence and sexual assault than others, for example women with intellectual disabilities
- Women with disabilities experience violence over longer periods of time
- Women with disabilities experience violence from many (usually male) perpetrators
- Women with disabilities experience a wide range of violence throughout their lives, in a variety of settings, including violence in institutional settings and denial of care

Family Violence and Women with Disabilities

The research literature confirms:

- Women with disabilities experience the same kinds of violence experienced by other women as well as ‘disability-based violence’
“I wanted to leave this house to just have time away and I got off my wheelchair to change... into my clothes and he came in to my room and took a wheel off my wheel chair so I couldn’t then leave.” (Voices Against Violence research participant)
- Women with disabilities are less likely to report incidence of violence to the police and less likely to seek support than women without disabilities. Many women report fear of not being believed as one of the main reasons for not reporting
“...as my ‘carer’ they’d look to him, and he’d discredit me and then they’d not believe what I’d say. And say ‘oh, she’s just making this up’. The whole community could not believe that this person could do this. It makes it so much harder for the victim to voice something, cause they know nobody’s going to believe them!” (Voices Against Violence research participant)

Working at the intersection of major reforms

A complex and fast-moving policy and funding environment

Family violence

- Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victoria) 2016 – 227 recommendations
- Family Safety Victoria – new state based government agency, new frameworks, plans, guides, systems
- National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 – 2022
- Our Watch – national prevention framework and evidence base

Disability service system

- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) – including Information Linkages & Capacity Building
- Quality & Safeguarding Framework (National)
- Parliamentary Inquiry into Abuse in Disability Services (Victoria)
- Royal Commission into Aged Care (National)
- Royal Commission into Mental Health (Victoria)
- Royal Commission into Disability Abuse recently announced (National)

Challenges and Gaps

- Women with disabilities face significant barriers to accessing family violence services

“The planner asked me how many friends I had. Then she asked me if I felt safe. She just asked me like they were run-of-the mill questions. In the taxi on the way home I cried. The question made me feel so bad.” (NDIS participant)

“They need to provide information on our rights and support services. Unless you know the systems, you don't know what to ask for, and you don't have any power.” (Sam, WDV member)
- There is a lack of specialist disability expertise to inform and support specialist family violence practice

“When we realised she was experiencing violence at home we called a case conference. We got her mum and dad in with all her workers. I truly regret that. Her father realised that we were onto him. We never saw her again.” (Disability Manager, anonymous call, 2015)

“I was supporting a woman experiencing violence to build support – planning so she was in a place where she could think about becoming free of the perpetrator. I used to be able to consult disability providers about what might be suitable. Now with the NDIS, no one would talk to me unless she already had a plan. Then I had no luck engaging with the NDIS Local Area Coordinator. (CASA worker, 2017)
- Family violence experienced by women with disabilities is under-reported and under-recorded in the available data

Opportunities

- ▶ Ensuring the FV and NDIS reforms (and ongoing system/service development) are informed by the voices of women with disabilities
- ▶ Women with disabilities need to be actively part of the solution (in workforce and leadership roles) at all levels of both reforms - policy, system design, implementation, service delivery and evaluation
- ▶ This is only possible through:
 - ▶ Building the capacity of Experts by Experience (women with disabilities)
 - ▶ Professional development for women with disabilities in the family violence sector (part of the workforce - entry level to leadership)
 - ▶ Sector capacity building in co-design, implementation/delivery and evaluation with women with disabilities
- ▶ It is critical that this is underpinned by an evidence base and research of good practice in co-design of system responses for victim survivors with disabilities across both reforms

Contacts

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WDV Website:

► www.wdv.org.au

* [Sign up to the WDV eNews](#)

* [Sign up to the Violence & Disability Quarterly](#)



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Take a Break

See you in 20
minutes!

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Panel Discussion

Advice from women

Jane, Tess & Nicole

Facilitated by

Kelly Parry Women with Disabilities Victoria

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Panel Discussion

Workers reflect on practice

Alyssa Fooks CASA House

Amuna Abdella Drummond Street

Jen Hargrave Women with Disabilities Victoria

Facilitated by

Kelly Parry Women with Disabilities Victoria



Activity Two

In pairs, discuss and record on your worksheet:

- 1. My service currently responds well to women with disabilities experiencing family violence by....*
- 2. My service could respond even better if...*
- 3. I commit to improving my own response by...*

[20 mins]



Next Steps

There are a number of ways to stay involved:

- Become a member of Women with Disabilities Victoria
- Order and display family violence posters
- Attend Family Violence Regional Induction (3 April)
- Participate in Identifying Family Violence: Responding to Women training (3 April & 16 May)
- Participate on *Working with Male Perpetrators of Family Violence* training (8 May)
- Join a local family violence network
- Run a Week Without Violence event in October

Visit www.nifvs.org.au and www.wdv.org.au for more information

Thank You

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