

Introduction to Family Violence Response

May 2021

'Victims of violence resist mistreatment, try to preserve their dignity, and enact responses that maximise their safety and the safety of others, even when there is very little room to manoeuvre' [Cathy Richardson Kinewesquao](#)



**WOMEN'S HEALTH
IN THE NORTH**



About these Slides

These slides are not a stand-alone resource, and should only be used alongside the recording of **Introduction to Family Violence Response**.

You can access the [recording here](#).



Outline

- Context: What is Family Violence?
- Power and Control
- Barriers to Justice and Safety
- MARAM High Risk Factors
- Partnering with Victim Survivors
- Responding to Victim Survivors
- Safety Planning
- Self Care and Resilience
- Referrals
- Useful Resources



What is Family Violence?

Family violence is ‘a **pattern of coercive control** that one person exercises over another in order to dominate and get their way. It is behaviour that physically harms, arouses fear, prevents a person from doing what they want, or compels them to behave in ways they do not freely choose’.

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





Family Violence: Context

- **Gender inequality** sets the necessary context for family violence to occur – it is the cause and consequence of violence against women.
- In addition to gendered drivers, drivers of family violence are also reflective of **structural inequality**, including, but not limited to, colonisation, racism, ableism, classism, ageism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

Our WATCH (2016) *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*; State Government of Victoria (2018) Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework, P 23





Family Violence: Context

- Victim survivors are **not inherently vulnerable** or ‘at risk’ but made so by policies, structures and systems.
- **Perpetrators target victim survivors** where the location and circumstances allow them to be in control.
- Discrimination, marginalisation and bigotry creates **barriers** for victim survivors in accessing the services and resources they require for safety, justice and recovery, and **perpetrators know this**.



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Why Doesn't She Just Leave?

- Perpetrators are most likely to cause serious harm or commit homicide within the first two months, post-separation.
- On average, one woman a week is murdered by a current or former male partner.
- Over half of the women who are killed by their abusive partners are murdered when they attempt to leave or post separation. This equates to one every nine days.





What is the MARAM?

The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment & Management Framework (MARAM) builds on and replaces the Common Risk Assessment Framework (CRAF).

It aims to establish a system-wide shared understanding of family violence and requires collaborative practice to be effective.

It is a **best practice model** and guides professionals across the continuum of service responses, across the range of presentations and spectrum of risk.



Multi Agency Risk Assessment & Management Framework



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Evidence Based Risk Factors

High risk factors relevant to adult victim survivor circumstances:

- Physical assault during pregnancy/ following new birth
- Planning to leave/recent separation
- Escalation in severity & frequency



Evidence Based Risk Factors

High risk factors caused by perpetrator behaviours:

- Controlling behaviour
- Has ever threatened or tried to self-harm or commit suicide
- Stalking of victim
- Obsession/jealous behaviour toward victim
- Drug and/or alcohol misuse/abuse
- Access to weapons
- Use of weapon in most recent event
- Has ever tried to strangle or choke the victim
- Has ever threatened to kill victim
- Has ever harmed or threatened to harm or kill pets or other animals
- Sexual assault of victim
- Unemployed / Disengaged from education





Evidence Based Risk Factors

Risk factors specific to children caused by perpetrators behaviours:

- Exposure to family violence
- Sexualised behaviour towards the child by the perpetrator
- Child intervention in violence
- Behaviour indicating non-return of child
- Undermining the child-parent relationship
- Professional and statutory intervention





Please recognise that I am already active in resisting the violence, building safety for myself and others, and managing risk. I am constantly...





Partnering with Victim Survivors

To ensure our responses are effective, we must **centralise the victim survivors' expertise**. This means we:

- **Partner** with the victim survivor to discuss what an increase in safety could look like for them during this time
- **Understand** that the victim survivor lives with the risk day to day, and has multiple ways to manage their safety
- **Understand** that the violence they experience is an affront to their dignity
- **Support** their choices, whilst using the resources available to us to boost their options
- **Resist** seeing the victim survivor as passive
- **Support** self-determination
- **Believe** that victim survivors are experienced in anticipating patterns and tactics of abuse used against them
- **Understand** that risk is changing constantly, and what might make them safe today, might not be effective tomorrow

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Responding to Victim Survivors

Prioritise victim survivor safety, strength and expertise in all interventions – when phoning, always ask if it's safe to talk.

Responding to victim survivors:

- Ask gentle but **direct** questions
- Respond to them before you **respond** to the situation
- Hear, **believe** and validate
- Discuss only when they are in a **safe** place
- Assess, prioritise and action immediate **safety**
- Outline **options** including referrals
- **Respect** their readiness
- Follow up and 'keep your door open'



Useful Questions

- I'm concerned about you because I notice [list family violence indicators present]. When I hear/see things like this, I worry that there might be more going on. Is it ok if I ask you a few questions about how things are at home?
- Is it safe to talk right now?
- How are you and your family coping at the moment?
- Do you feel unsafe with anyone in your home?
- What happens if...?
- Would you like any help with this now?



Helpful Responses

- I believe you
- This must be scary/upsetting/worrying – tell me about what you're doing to stay safe/to protect your children
- You are not to blame for their behaviour - it's never your fault
- You and your kids have the right to be safe
- Do you know what you would like to do next?
- Would you like to speak about your options for support and safety?
- Let's talk about safety planning



Unhelpful Responses

- Why do you stay with a person like that?
- What could you have done to avoid the situation?
- Why did he hit you?

- He seems really stressed and angry
- Sounds like he just snapped
- He is a good dad, though, right?



Safety Plan Checklist

WHEN IT'S SAFE TO TALK, ASK FIRST:

“What are you already doing or not doing to keep yourself safe?”

WHO needs to be involved in the safety plan?

WHAT would you need to take with you if you flee?

WHERE is a safe place to go where you won't be found?

HOW will you get there?

WHEN will you put an action plan into place?

Remember, leaving is *only one* strategy and may not be an option for all. It's important to provide options and **follow the lead** of the victim survivor.

See [MARAM Responsibility 2: Attachment 4 Flow Diagram of Response Options and Safety Plan](#) for more detail



Response Options

If they **want support**:

- Offer to call police (000) if safe and appropriate
- Note the services and options available
- Discuss a safety plan
- Consider child wellbeing and safety needs
- Seek support from specialist family violence service

If they are **not yet ready for support**:

- Provide information about help and options available
- Monitor closely, check in regularly
- Consider child wellbeing and safety needs
- Let them know that they can seek assistance from you

Remember to document your interventions.

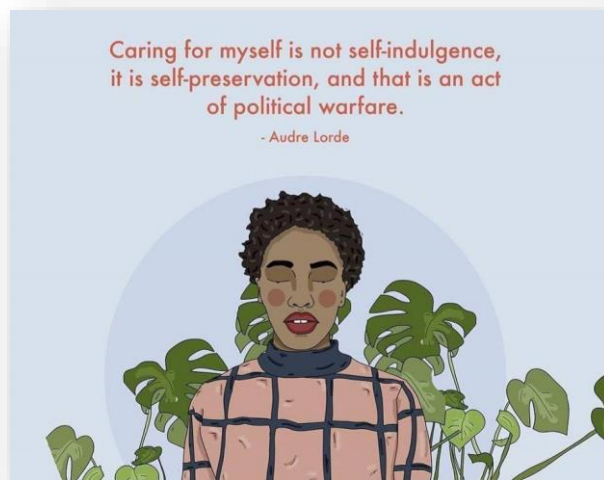




Self Care and Resilience

What are some self care strategies that you use regularly to ensure you are looking after yourself professionally and personally? How do you resist burnout?

- Secondary consultation
- Further training
- Debriefing
- Talk to colleagues
- EAP
- Clinical Supervision
- Reflective practice
- Activism



Artwork by Alison Rachel

You can find self care resources from [NIFVS Workforce Resilience Forum](#)





Referral & Secondary Consultation Options

Emergency: **000**

Safe Steps 24 Hour Crisis Response: **1800 015 188**

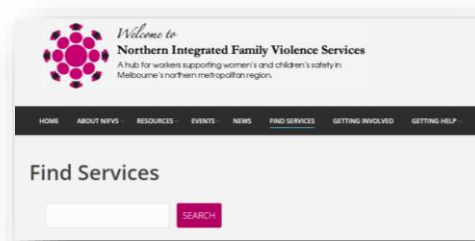
1800 RESPECT 24 Hour Counselling Line: **1800 737 732**

Berry Street Northern Family Violence Service
(Hume Moreland Area): **9450 4700**

The Orange Door (North East Melbourne Area): **1800 319 355**

Family violence **counselling** and **group work** is available through community health centres in the northern metro region

NIFVS Services Directory
www.nifvs.org.au





Useful Resources

- NIFVS [Service System Overview](#)
- [Interactive online](#) NIFVS training
- NIFVS [MARAMIS web portal](#)
- Read the [NIFVS e-news](#)
- [Aligning Practice](#): A Guide to Family Violence Counselling
- [Follow My Lead](#) A resource that supports effective responses to victim survivors
- [Power and Control Wheel](#) video series



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