



The complexities of working with
family violence and substance abuse



- **Introduction to Family Violence**
- **Overview of safe steps organisation**
- **Overview of services offered and pathways**
- **Working with victims of family violence**
- **Working with perpetrators of violence**
- **How to work with these clients when their lives are impacted by substance abuse**

Power and Control



A 'family member' is...

- a person's spouse
- domestic partner
- intimate relationship partner
- relative
- parent
- carer
- other person who has a dependent or interdependent personal relationship with the person.

Preliminary assessment

Aide memoire

Note: these risk factors should be explored through the course of a conversation rather than in checklist fashion.

Risk factors for victims	Presence of factor		Comments
	Yes	No	
Pregnancy/new birth*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Depression/mental health issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Drug and/or alcohol misuse/abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has ever verbalised or had suicidal ideas or tried to commit suicide	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Isolation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Risk factors for perpetrators			
Use of weapon in most recent event*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Access to weapons*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has ever harmed or threatened to harm victim	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has ever tried to choke the victim*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has ever threatened to kill victim*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has ever harmed or threatened to harm or kill children*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has ever harmed or threatened to harm or kill other family members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has ever harmed or threatened to harm or kill pets or other animals*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has ever threatened or tried to commit suicide*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Stalking of victim*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sexual assault of victim*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Previous or current breach of Intervention Order	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Drug and/or alcohol misuse/abuse*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Obsession/jealous behaviour toward victim*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Controlling behaviours*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Unemployed*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Depression/mental health issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
History of violent behaviour (not family violence)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Relationship factors			
Recent separation*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Escalation — increase in severity and/or frequency of violence*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

* May indicate an increased risk of the victim being killed or almost killed.



Risk factors

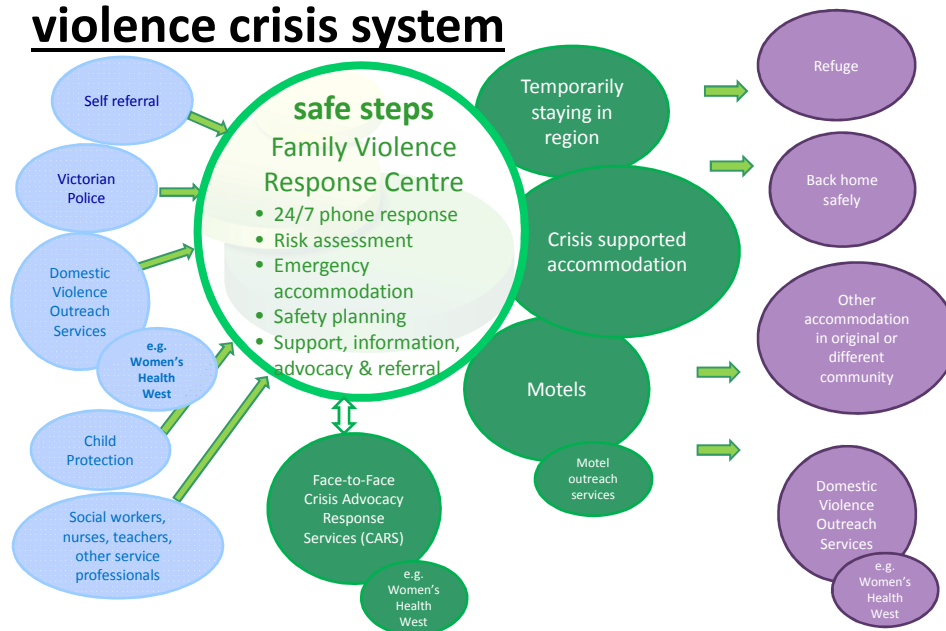
When does family violence become a crisis?

What do we do?



- **safe steps** is the 24/7 state-wide family violence response centre for intervention, support and advocacy.
- Our services:
 - **24/7 family violence response line**
 - **Risk assessment – rapid risk & full assessment**
 - **Short term case management**
 - Emergency accommodation and/or refuge
 - Safety planning
 - Information
 - Advocacy
 - Referral

Statewide Specialist family violence crisis system



Impact substance use has on power and control



- Isolation: lack of supports from family and friends
- Financial Abuse: Perp creating drug debts for women
- Using Intimidation: subsequent involvement with negative associates
- Manipulation: Threatening to tell family/friends about woman's substance use
- Threats: Threatening woman with calls to Child Protection and other organisations
- Minimisation: Making woman believe the abuse is her fault/ it is not his fault as abuse is related to his substance use
- Some victims of FV are forced into sex work to fund drug use for herself and/or perpetrator

Barriers faced by victims of FV who use substances



- Concerns that they will not be believed if they inform services about the abuse
- Family Violence seen as a secondary concern to other issues
- Services having restrictions on drug and alcohol use
- Concerns Child Protection will be informed if they contact services
- Not receiving appropriate assistance from police and emergency services
- Some women may be unable to accurately assess their own level of risk in a violent situation, due to substance use
- Shame around both substance use and the experience of FV
- Previous experiences with FV Services and being breached due to substance use
- Concerns around detoxing when in FV Services
- Cultural needs and the shame associated with disclosing abuse

Working with clients who are experiencing FV in AOD service



- Believe the woman's story and information she discloses
- Using a strengths based approach
- Highlighting that FV is a separate issue from client's substance use
- Violence is not okay in any relationship, no matter the circumstances
- Perpetrators substance use is not an excuse for violence (not all men who use substances are abusive to their partner's).
- Link women in with appropriate FV specific supports
- Call services and advocate for woman
- Assessing the client's risk (risk assessment) and what support need is of most importance to client
- Being flexible with client's who enter FV services, around a change in location and ability to attend scheduled appointments

Important information to remember when working with FV victims



- Women may not want to get perpetrator in trouble with police for other matters related to drug use, therefore not reporting FV
- Client's drug and/or alcohol use can increase due to the experience of FV
- Some woman use substances as a coping mechanism for the abuse they are experiencing
- Women experience FV in the form of 'forced drug use'
- Perpetrator may restrict women from accessing AOD services or sabotage their attempts to enter detox/refuge (as a form of power and control)
- If you are suspicious of FV, always try and speak with woman on her own if the perpetrator attends her appointments

Perpetrators and substance use



- The effects of substance use are often used as an excuse for abusive behaviour
- Perpetrators can minimise the violence
- They may advise that they don't remember being violent due to substance use
- As a client they will focus more on their own rehabilitation goals, separate from seeing FV as a primary concern or support need
- Resistance to men's behaviour change programs
- Financial abuse is a common form of abuse when there are substance use issues in the relationship
- An increase in substance use can be related to an escalation in FV incidents and safety to the victim

Working with Perpetrators who identify FV, in AOD setting



- If client recognises substance use is a factor in perpetrating family violence, there is a need to identify this with the client and that there is still an element of choice in regards to perpetrating violence
- Explore support services and discuss willingness to engage in these services
- Have open communication regarding the violence, but do not validate any minimisation or justification for the violence
- Identify FV as a separate issue from FV, while they can be interrelated the issues are separate due to the safety concerns for victims
- Must be careful not to incidentally encourage or condone any form of violence when having discussing a client's progress regarding FV.

Working with Perpetrators who deny FV, in AOD setting



- Explore client's attitude toward women, values in regards to healthy relationships
- Drug and/or alcohol use is not an excuse for FV
- Discuss client's strategies and techniques for coping with anger
- Be careful not to validate minimisation and justification for violent behaviours
- Be willing to talk about FV and ask direct question to the client regarding concerns
- Discuss that family violence is against the law and the legal ramifications

General information



- If both perpetrator and victim access the same AOD service, to be case managed by different workers to allow a safe place for victim to disclose the abuse
- Confidentiality made clear to client's where there are concerns for their safety
- Do not force women to report to police or access services, provide information for them to make an informed decision when they are ready
- Sometimes the worker for the perpetrator is in the best position to recognise when the victim is at high risk, as the women may not recognise the safety risks
- AOD and FV can be related, but substance use is not the cause of FV and as such, both topics must be explored as separate issues
- Contact can be made with FV services for secondary consultation if you hold concerns for client's safety

Safety Planning



- Having important phone numbers and a phone that can be used
- Transport (keys, petrol in car, car not locked in garage, access to myki, aware of closest public transport option)
- Informing trustworthy people of situation (the more people that know, the safer she will be)
- Having 'code word' or sentences to use with a family member, friend, or professional worker
- Explore willingness to contact police/possible relationship with local police station
- Where is the closest safe place to go? –friends/neighbours/police/public place
- Access to ATM card, money
- Organise a 'grab bag' with important documents (visa, passport, identification), any court information, medication and prescriptions

Important contacts



- Police 000
- Safe Steps: 1800 015 188
- In Touch (Multicultural Centre Against FV): 1800 755 988
- Men's Referral Service: 1300 766 491
- Mensline: 1300 789 978
- 1800 RESPECT: 1800 737 732
- Women's Legal Service Victoria: 03 8622 0600



QUESTIONS