



What is family and domestic violence?

Family and Domestic Violence is a term used to describe a wide range of behaviours used to control or dominate someone or cause them to fear for their personal safety or wellbeing.

Family and domestic violence can occur in intimate, family, or informal care relationships (definitions for these outlined below).

Family and domestic violence takes many forms. Examples can include, but are not limited to:

- **Physical violence** – e.g. direct assaults on the body such as slaps, hits, punches, being pushed, burning, or choking; use of weapons such as knives or firearms; deprivation including sleep or food deprivation; forced feeding; waterboarding
- **Sexual assault or sexually abusive behaviour** – e.g. unwanted sexual advances including unwanted touching and rape; being forced to perform or engage in unwanted sexual acts; being forced to watch or engage in pornography; being subject to sexually degrading insults; assault of the genitals; coercive sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease; unwillingly engaging sexual intercourse out of fear of what might happen; forced prostitution
- **Verbal abuse** – e.g. put-downs and name-calling; belittling or insulting someone's intelligence, appearance, sexuality, body image, capacity, or value as a person or family member; humiliating or degrading language; swearing; yelling or shouting; threatening
- **Emotional abuse** – e.g. gaslighting (making the person question their judgements and reality by misleading the victim and creating false narratives); undermining the person's self-esteem and self-worth; withdrawing all interest and engagement i.e. 'silent treatment'; emotional manipulation; public embarrassment; patronising or condescending remarks; dismissiveness of things that are important to the person or making light of upsets or concerns, denying and minimising the impact and ridiculing the person for raising them; belittling the person's accomplishments or putting down the person's interests, hobbies, spirituality, beliefs, preferences, or friendships; using guilt as a control mechanism; using the person's love or goodwill against them, e.g. "If you really loved me, you would..."
- **Spiritual or cultural abuse** – e.g. preventing the person from practising their religious or cultural beliefs; ridiculing the person's beliefs or practices; misusing spiritual or religious beliefs and practices to justify other types of abuse and violence; denying access to ceremonies, land, or family
- **Economic or financial abuse** – e.g. stopping the person from getting or keeping a job; making the person ask for money or restricting their access to money, e.g. by managing any allowance or pay they receive; making all of the decisions about finances and spending on behalf of the victim; taking the victim's money; incurring debts on behalf of the victim without the victim's consent.
- **Serious neglect where there is a relationship of dependence**, e.g. not allowing services to help someone; withholding access to a person's money, belongings, or essential items such as food, water, medications; withholding essential care such as leaving the person in dirty or soiled clothing, not providing or assisting with hygiene or dental care, denying social or other enrichment, denying access to education, refusing to provide medical care or restricting the person's access to external medical assistance or care
- **Intimidation and stalking**, e.g. sending repeated upsetting text messages, emails, phone calls, or voicemails; visiting the person at work in inappropriate ways; making unwanted contact; driving recklessly while the person is in the car with them; yelling and screaming; looks, actions and gestures that are threatening; breaking or destroying furniture and property, punching walls, throwing things or pounding tables; displaying weapons



- **Coercion and threats**, e.g. using a range of tactics which try and force the victim into bending to the perpetrator's will such as threatening self-harm or suicide, threatening to make false reports about the victim to child protection authorities or the police, insisting on any legal charges against them being dropped, or insisting that the victim do illegal things, or implicating the victim in blame for illegal things that the perpetrator has done
- **Isolation**, e.g. intentionally separating the victim from their regular support networks, such as friends, family, jobs and hobbies by: controlling who the victim can see and where they can go, limiting spending money and tracking expenditure, controlling what the victim wears, watches, or reads, refusing access to a driver's licence or car, insisting on when to be home and checking up on the victim while they are out
- **Pet abuse**, e.g. threatening to harm or kill pets; injuring, killing, or abducting pets
- **Using children to commit abuse**, e.g. asking children to relay messages, or covertly using them to threaten the victim, e.g. placing notes in their bags or clothing; purposely turning up late to appointed contact with the children or refusing to bring them back on time; using access visits to threaten and harass the victim; telling the children that the victim is to blame for family breakdown; actively turning the children against another parent; threatening to take the children away from the victim

Intimate relationship is defined as a personal relationship where two people (regardless of gender) are, or were, a couple, engaged, married, in a de facto relationship, in a registered relationship, or the parents of a child.

Family relationship is defined as a personal relationship of two relatives (by marriage or blood), including a child, parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, nephew, niece, stepparent, or stepchild. This may also include other close relationships not related by marriage or blood but considered relatives according to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander kinship rules.

Informal care relationship is defined as a personal relationship where one person is, or was, depending on another person for help with daily living activities. (*NOTE: this does not include paid or formalised Carer arrangements*).



Who are the victims of family and domestic violence?

Anybody can be a victim of family and domestic violence. However, there are factors which put some people at further risk of experiencing or becoming a victim of this type of violence.

Statistics show that family and domestic violence is overwhelmingly a gender-based violence issue (e.g. most victims are female or female-presenting and most perpetrators are male or male-presenting).

In addition to this, Link Wentworth recognises the intersectionality of family and domestic violence and the increased vulnerability and risk of exposure to family and domestic violence by certain groups including, but not limited to:

- LGBTQI+ community
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- People with a disability
- Elders and children