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About Domestic and Family Violence

Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) includes any behaviour, in an intimate or family relationship, which is violent, threatening, coercive or controlling, causing a person to live in fear and to be made to do things against their will. DFV can happen to anyone and can take many forms. It is often part of a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour.

An intimate relationship refers to people who are (or have been) in an intimate partnership whether or not the relationship involves or has involved a sexual relationship, i.e. married or engaged to be married, separated, divorced, de facto partners (whether of the same or different sex), couples promised to each other under cultural or religious tradition, or who are dating.

A family relationship has a broader definition and includes people who are related to one another through blood, marriage or de facto partnerships, adoption and fostering relationships, sibling and extended family relationships. It includes the full range of kinship ties in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (see below – Family Violence), extended family relationships, and family of choice within lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer (LGBTIQ) communities.

People living in the same house, people living in the same residential care facility and people reliant on care may also be considered to be in a domestic relationship when one or both people in the relationship try to create an imbalance of power to establish coercive control and commit violence.

The behaviours that may represent domestic and family violence include:

- Physical violence including physical assault or abuse
- Reproductive coercion
- Sexualised assault and other abusive or coercive behaviour of a sexualised nature
- Emotional or psychological abuse including verbal abuse, threats of violence, threats of self harm or suicide, blackmail and bribery
- Economic abuse; for example denying a person reasonable financial autonomy or financial support
- Stalking; for example harassment, intimidation or coercion of the other person's family in order to cause fear or ongoing harassment, including through the use of electronic communication or social media (NSW Government, 2014).

Women and children are overwhelmingly the victims of DFV and those who use violence are overwhelmingly male. DFV can be perpetrated by a partner, family member, carer, house mate, boyfriend or girlfriend. Women also commit DFV against men, as do same-sex partners. DFV is also committed by and committed against people who identify in non-gender binary terms. (Domestic Violence NSW, 2018)

What is Family Violence?

The term 'Family Violence' is preferred in an Indigenous context. It is used to describe the range of violence that takes place in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities including the physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological and economic abuses that may be perpetrated within a family. The term also recognises the broader impacts of violence; on extended families, kinship networks and community relationships. It has also been used in the past decade to include acts of self-harm and suicide, and has become widely adopted as part of the shift towards addressing intra-familial violence in all its forms. (Gordon, 2002)