

# Workplace responses to domestic and family violence during COVID-19

The workplace challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic are enormous. In addition to the technical, logistical, management and general wellbeing challenges associated with managing teams who are working remotely, there are additional challenges for team members experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV).

Adverse events (bushfires, job loss, financial crisis, financial stress) can lead to an escalation of gendered violence and domestic abuse\*.

Remote working and self-isolation measures will exacerbate the physical isolation of people experiencing DFV and put them in almost constant, close proximity with the person who is abusing them. Perpetrators of DFV intentionally isolate victims from others to increase their control over the victim and to minimise the victim’s resistance to the perpetrators abuse and violence.

It is highly likely abusers will exploit this period of enforced isolation to increase their use of violence during this period.

\*Parkinson, Debra & Zara, C.. (2013).

The hidden disaster: Domestic violence in the aftermath of natural disaster. Australian Journal of Emergency Management. 28. 28-35.



See page 2 overleaf to read about the importance of Workplaces as responders and explore the free ready resources.

## Do | Don't | Remember

With this in mind, here are some tips for employers and people managers during this time:

### Do

- Assume that a perpetrator of violence can hear, see and/or monitor all work communications you have with your employee.
- Ask employees what channels they prefer to be contacted through. Keep checking as this may change.
- Ask employees if there are better and worse times of day for you to contact them. Keep asking as this may change.
- Ask employees if there are any other challenges they are facing in working from home, and if there is a way you can help them with these. Keep asking as this may change.

### Don't

- Assume employees are safe, or safer, at home than at work.
- Assume that if someone does not join a scheduled work call that they are uninterested/unwilling, incompetent or ignoring instructions.
- Underestimate the potential value of work for connection, safety and income.

### Remember

Domestic and family violence services are deemed “essential services” by all levels of Australian government and continue to operate through this time. Most services have moved to significantly reduce face to face contact but have increased remote methods of working. Where it’s safe and appropriate to do so, you can continue to refer people to specialist services.

## Workplace responses to domestic and family violence beyond COVID-19

Workplaces, supported by employee assistance programs, are well placed to provide timely and significant support to victims of DFV and we encourage organisations to develop their awareness and readiness to respond in ways that uphold dignity and build on safety.

Make the next steps to be a workplace that has insight informed design and responses to people experiencing domestic and family violence.

Read more in the Workplace Resources (Adjacent)



**It's so important to hear about how we as employers can impact victim survivors. Our response is critical, and we have a responsibility to get it right.**

[QBE Insurance]

**The absolute importance of workplaces to have systems and supports for people who work for them and their customers/clients. How important it is to train staff on how to respond to disclosures with dignity at the heart of all engagement. This is everyone's responsibility.**

[No to Violence]

**Creation of shared understanding and commitment to building conversations about DFV in own community to respond effectively. Reinforcing the importance of all manager receiving training in DFV and need for broader community education so we can support one another.**

[Community Services Directorate – ACT Government]

**Reinforces the responsibility we all have as responders to do so with the voice of victims in mind. Reminder of resources and reigniting energy to use our network through EAP to educate clinicians and also customers to improve knowledge and response.**

[Access EAP]



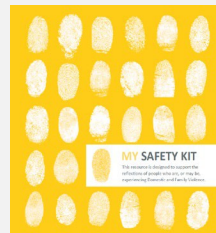
### Resources | Ready to use and share



Read and share [Insights Paper](#) Experiences and perceptions of workplace responses to domestic and family violence.



Watch the [short Follow My Lead animation](#) (4mins) Read and share [Follow My Lead](#) An awareness raising resource for any person who may be listening to and responding to a person experiencing domestic and family violence. [Read More](#)



Watch the [short My Safety Kit animation](#) (2.5mins) Read and share [My Safety Kit](#) A reflection resource for people who are (or may be) experiencing domestic and family violence. [Read More](#)



The [workplace responses presentation](#) is in a video format (24mins) and is in two parts: [Read More](#)



The readiness and quality of Employee Assistance Program responses to domestic and family violence matter. Every EAP. Any workplace. The [EAP responses to domestic and family violence presentation](#) is in a video format (28mins) and is in two parts. [Read More](#)

For more insights and resources like these, visit [Insight Exchange](#).