

Family Violence during COVID 19: Support for Staff



During public health emergencies, such as COVID 19 (Coronavirus), there is likely to be an increase in existing family violence, but also new cases. Social isolation, economic insecurity, loss of work and independence, increased alcoholism and other contributors exacerbate gender inequality and family violence is likely to be amplified during the pandemic. These factors do not excuse family violence. The City of Casey has always had mechanisms in place through our Enterprise Agreement for staff experiencing violence. Acknowledging the increased risk during an emergency, more resources specific to COVID 19 where more people are working from home, have been developed.

This guide provides a list of support available to staff members who are experiencing, or are at risk of Family Violence. It provides:

- Key Messages
- Definition of Family Violence
- Support that The City of Casey can provide
- How do I tell someone at work to get confidential support?
- A list of Family Violence Support People across the organisation
- External Support Services we recommend you contact

Key Messages:

- Disaster, times of stress and hardship are never excuses for violence and support is available.
- Family Violence services are open and available for support and advice for anyone experiencing violence, or who are concerned about their safety and wellbeing.
- The City of Casey will support you and all efforts will be made to ensure your information is confidential.

What is Family Violence?:

Also known as 'Domestic Violence', 'Intimate Partner Violence', and Child Abuse. The definition includes physical, sexual, emotional or psychological, spiritual, economic, threatening or coercive behaviour. It includes any other way that a perpetrator may control or dominate that causes a family member, partner or ex-partner, to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of themselves or others. It also includes behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, abusive behaviour.

Family Violence can happen in all sorts of relationships including intimate partner and ex-partners, older people, other family members, parents with their teenage or adult children, friends and people living with disabilities and their carers.

Learn more specific to COVID 19 and Family Violence on DVRC website , how to develop a personal safety plan or how to support someone you know (including children and young people) here: <https://www.dvrcv.org.au/help-advice/coronavirus-covid-19-and-family-violence/survivors-during-coronavirus> .

Support the City of Casey can provide:

The safety and wellbeing of our staff is paramount and support to employees experiencing or at risk of violence is outlined in our Enterprise Agreement. Extra support provisions have been made available due to the 'work at home' context during COVID 19.

Support includes:

- Regular check in's with your supervisor or trusted colleague (you can decide who this is). We encourage regular check ins with all staff, however this can happen at more regular intervals if required. You may consider providing an emergency code word or signal that means your contact should call 000 immediately.
- An extra mobile phone can be provided discreetly by IT for emergencies.
- Access to family friendly and flexible work
- The option to work from Bunjil Place or Vibe (subject to government lock down restrictions)
- Access to Family Violence Special Leave (20 days pro rata)
- Referral to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) providing free counselling services
- Referral to external support service providers and resources (see below)

How do I tell someone at work to get confidential support?:

We understand that it can be really difficult to disclose an abusive situation to someone. Particularly if you are already feeling confused, frightened or overwhelmed. Please know that even if you decide to disclose to someone at work, you will not be pressured to do anything you do not want to do.

Staff worried about their safety can let their supervisor, a manager, a member of the People & Culture team, or a trusted colleague know.

There are also Family Violence 'Supports' that can guide you through a process, or assist you get the support you need within the workplace.

Please note these staff members are not trained counsellors, but will be able to provide correct referrals, assist with family violence leave applications, and help you negotiate the other supports out above.

Family Violence Supports in the organisation are:

Family Violence Supports	Contact Details
Krissy Nicholson, Family Violence Prevention Officer	knicholson@casey.vic.gov.au
Teresa Thomson, Gender Equality Officer	tthomson@casey.vic.gov.au
Angela Carter-Wilson, People & Culture	acarter@casey.vic.gov.au
Louise Green, People & Culture	lgreen@casey.vic.gov.au
Nik Filips, Community Safety	nfilips@casey.vic.gov.au
Nick Grant-Collins – Inclusion & Wellbeing	NGCollins@casey.vic.gov.au

Note: More Family Violence Supports are currently being identified and trained. They will be added to this list in due course.

External support and Resources:

It is important that you know that specialist family violence services are there to help and remain open for support or advice during COVID 19 and beyond.

The 'Gathering Support Safety for Women' available from DVRC. The booklet provides comprehensive information on how to keep safe during separation and where to get help.

- What is family violence?
- Thinking about separating
- How the law can help and getting an intervention order
- Making a safety plan
- Technology safety checklist
- Caring for yourself

Download: <https://www.dvrcv.org.au/sites/default/files/DVRCV-Gathering-Support.pdf>

Similar resources can be found catering for men, and diverse groups can be found in the links below.

Immediate support

In addition to support through the City of Casey, we encourage you to reach out to trusted friends and family where you can and where you feel it is safe to do so. We also encourage you to contact professional support services. A comprehensive list provided below.

Family Violence Support Services
Police: Call 000 (if in immediate danger)
1800 RESPECT (24 hours) Australia wide confidential support services, counselling, information and referral for sexual assault, and family violence for everyone. www.1800respect.org.au 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732)
Safe Steps: Family Violence Response Centre (24 hours) Safe Steps provides emergency accommodation, counselling and other support services. http://www.safesteps.org.au/ 1800 015 188
InTouch: Centre Against Family Violence Service https://intouch.org.au/ 1800 755 988
Djirra: Aboriginal and Torres Straight Island Service https://djirra.org.au 1800 105 303
Lifeline (24 hours) www.lifeline.org.au 13 11 14

Kidsline (24 hours)
www.kidshelpline.com.au
1800 55 1800

MensLine (24 hours)
www.mensline.org.au
1300 789 978

With Respect: LGBTQI Service
<https://www.withrespect.org.au>
1800 542 847

For further information or to provide feedback please contact:

Krissy Nicholson, Family Violence Prevention Officer: knicholson@casey.vic.gov.au

Teresa Thomson, Gender Equality Officer: Tthomson@casey.vic.gov.au