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## IDENTIFYING SIGNS OF FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Exploring how signs of family and domestic violence and abuse present themselves in the lives of young people with disability and some referral pathways and tips.

### THIS FACT SHEET CAN HELP IF...

1. You would like to better understand how to identify signs of family and domestic violence, specific to situations involving young people with disability
2. You are interested in discovering some referral pathways for young people with disability experiencing abuse
3. You would like to better understand different things to consider when identifying abuse and seeking help

### THIS FACT SHEET IS HELPFUL FOR...

**Anybody** who wants to learn more about how to recognise the signs of domestic violence and relevant referral pathways for young people with disability



### IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL PERPETRATORS

It can be very difficult to identify if someone you know is experiencing abuse, just as, in some cases it can be difficult to identify if you are experiencing abuse yourself. This is especially true for young people with disability as it is statistically most likely for members of this group to experience abuse at the hands of their family or the people that provide them care.



When attempting to identify an abusive relationship it can be helpful to consider the kind of role an abuser is likely to have in a young person's life. For example, an abuser could be a:



- Family member, such as a parent, sibling or grandparent
- Support worker, career or friend, this person may be known through school, sport or work
- Romantic partner, such as a boyfriend, girlfriend or even spouse
- BUT it is important to remember that an abuser does not have to fit into any of the roles listed above

Both young people and people with disability respectively can be especially vulnerable to being misinformed and manipulated by abusers, due to the authoritarian status an abuser typically holds within a young person and/or person with disability's life. This means that for this group, it can often take longer than usual for abuse to come to light. Which is why we encourage young people with disability and the people in their lives to be extra vigilant when abuse is suspected.



## HOW DO YOU KNOW IF FAMILY VIOLENCE OR ABUSE IS OCCURRING?

There are five main categories that most kinds of abuse falls into. These categories are physical, emotional, sexual, financial and social. If you would like to read a list of examples of how abuse could be occurring within these categories, please refer to the [first fact sheet](#) in this series.

If any of the examples on this sheet sound familiar to your own experience or the experience of somebody you know, then it is very likely that violence or abuse has occurred. If you suspect that some of these things may be happening to a young person you know it is best not to look the other way. Ask other people close to the person if they have similar suspicions or if they have noticed negative changes in the young person's behaviour and disposition.

If you do this REMEMBER to be extremely tactful, as you could accidentally alert the abuser.

Generally speaking, however, if you or someone you know is treated in a way that makes them feel really uncomfortable, scared, gross or bad about themselves, those feelings should not be ignored. Listen to those instincts and take action. There is a list of referral pathways at the end of this fact sheet. These services can help guide you through the best next steps to take.

## BARRIERS TO REPORTING ABUSE

Sometimes even when you are aware of services that you or somebody you know could benefit from accessing, it can be extremely difficult to take that first step.

Abuse is not an easy thing to talk about for anybody. Many young people with disability avoid telling other people what is happening to them because they feel:

- Embarrassed
- Ashamed
- Scared of the person who is harming them
- Like nobody will believe them or care about what happened
- Unsure if what they are experiencing is abuse



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Many people, regardless of disability report feeling embarrassed and ashamed in relation to experiences of violence or abuse. It is important to assure young people with disability that experiencing harm in this way is something that the perpetrator should be ashamed of and no reflection of their self-worth or actions.

Young people with disability are unfortunately often correct in assuming that they will not be taken seriously when reporting abuse, especially where they may not have the vocabulary or resources to express themselves as articulately as they would like.

**It is essential to always follow up on reports of abuse and to take disclosure seriously,** even if you find a young person hard to believe or difficult to understand initially.

If you are a young person with disability experiencing abuse there are other helpful resources listed at the end of this fact sheet that can give you more information about identifying abuse and provide you with tangible steps to take to help remove yourself from an abusive environment.

All of the services below can give you more personalised information on the best course of action to take in your specific situation.



## REFERRAL PATHWAYS

### GENERAL SERVICES : CONTACT NUMBERS



#### 1800 RESPECT

This service is available 24 hours a day and available Australia wide  
1800 RESPECT provides counselling for people experiencing sexual assault and domestic and family violence



#### 1800 737 732

It is free to call 1800 RESPECT from a landline, payphone and most mobile phones, however, some mobile phone companies may charge you a small fee



If communication over the phone is not accessible or preferred you can use the online chat bellow:

<https://chat.1800respect.org.au/#/welcome>

#### Domestic Violence Helpline

This service is available 24 hours a day in Western Australia



#### 1800 007 339

Remember to call **000** or **TTY 106** if you are in immediate danger

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## REFERRAL PATHWAYS

### DISABILITY SPECIFIC SERVICES



#### National Relay Service

An Australia wide service for Deaf and hard of hearing people who need assistance making phone calls

TTY voice calls **133 677**

Speak and listen **1300 555 727**

SMS relay **0423 677 767**



### **Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA)**

This service is run by and for women and girls with disability  
Their definition of women and girls is inclusive of feminine  
identifying and non-binary people



**03 6244 8288**

wwda@wwda.org.au



### **People with Disability Australia (PWDA)**

This service is led and governed by people with disability  
PWDA is a national disability rights and advocacy organisation



**1800 422 015**

TTY **1800 422 016**

pwd@pwd.org.au

#### **OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES:**

1. **1800 RESPECT** provides more specific information on how to make a safety plan and escape a dangerous home situation on this webpage:  
<https://www.1800respect.org.au/inclusive-practice/supporting-people-with-disability/safety-planning>
2. **The Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria** put together this quiz to help people identify warning signs of abuse. The resource says 'for women' but could be helpful regardless of gender:  
<https://www.dvrcv.org.au/knowledge-centre/quizzes/quiz-warning-signs>
3. **The Victorian State Government** outlines avenues for help through their Better Health Channel:  
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/people-with-a-Disability-who-experience-violence-abuse-or-neglect>
4. **Reach Out** defines forms that abuse may take and recommendations of what you can do about it: <https://au.reachout.com/articles/domestic-violence-and-what-you-can-do-about-it>
5. **The NSW Government** provides first hand accounts of abuse and steps to take: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/domestic-violence/my-situation/im-a-person-with-disability#what-you-can-do>
6. **Children and Young People with Disability Australia** put together a fact sheet aimed at care takers about what to do if you expect harm:  
[https://www.cyda.org.au/images/pdf/what\\_to\\_do\\_when\\_harm\\_occurs\\_\\_or\\_if\\_you\\_suspect\\_it.pdf](https://www.cyda.org.au/images/pdf/what_to_do_when_harm_occurs__or_if_you_suspect_it.pdf)