



Supporting those Experiencing Family & Domestic Violence during COVID-19

every connection matters™



This guide is to support the responses and considerations of management for those staff members experiencing domestic and family violence. Due to the restrictions of COVID-19, these individuals may be in close proximity to the person using violence while they work from home. A common strategy of those users of violence is to intentionally isolate those being abused in order to minimise resistance. Given that, this period of forced isolation may highly increase the risk of violence.*

Considerations

Some considerations for supporting those experiencing family and domestic violence whilst working from home:

- Speak with the staff member about what they may need from you during this time. Consider your family and domestic violence policy with regards to flexible working or even finding an alternative remote working location where possible
- The user of violence may be able to hear/see and monitor working from home. Consider a 'safe word' that the staff member can use to indicate that now isn't an appropriate time to talk. Consider additional IT protection as appropriate
- Consider the space where they are set up. For example, is there a second door? Can they be heard from outside?
- Speak with the staff member about which channel (email, text, phone) they would prefer to communicate through, and at what time of day. Consider providing a second phone or new email address
- Consider that staff may not show up for online video meetings. Allow for cameras to be turned off as an option and give staff the capacity to control this feature themselves

- Acknowledge the importance of connection, income, and value of work for the staff member. Checking in and allowing for variation in focus or decrease in workload may become apparent and supported
- Check in regularly to adjust or update responses
- Take any fears seriously and believe them. Do not blame them or justify any behavior
- Remember a person may be at increased risk if authorities are called without knowledge, or if they are intending to leave.

Resources and Referrals

Domestic and Family Violence services are considered an essential service. At this time, face-to-face services are mostly unavailable; however, services are working hard to provide alternative support, including video and telephone services. Services will be able to work together through a plan to keep them as safe as possible whilst working in the home, including what to do in an emergency.

1800 Respect (1800 737 732) is a 24/7 anonymous counselling and referral service for those experiencing family and domestic violence and sexual assault. They offer a 'Chat Online' service for those unable to talk. They can refer you to your local crisis service or local domestic violence service. The service is open to all, including those worried about others.

Support is Available

If you require further management support, you can receive support and advice through Acacia's Manager Hotline service, which is available 24/7. Our experienced clinicians are also available for those experiencing, or concerned for those experiencing, family and domestic violence. Remember if the staff member is in immediate danger, they will need to call 000 for the most appropriate response.

*With thanks to Insights Exchange, DVSM, 2020, and Parkinson, D., and Zara, C., (2013), The hidden disaster: Domestic violence in the aftermath of natural disaster. *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 28, 28-35.

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