



# Family & domestic violence for SMEs

In Australia, on average, one woman is killed every week by her current or former partner. In 2016, the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that 2.2 million women and 703,700 men had experienced violence at the hands of a partner. The majority of men and women who experience violence are in paid employment.

## Why it is your business

Domestic & family violence affects work health and safety and employee productivity. It can increase sick days, lateness and staff turnover, and perpetrators may continue to target the victim at work.

For employees experiencing violence at home, work may be their safe place and only means of social and financial support. However, you should know that one in five employees say the violence continues into the workplace. You and your staff may not always be able to recognise this. [Find out more here.](#)

Under the Fair Work Act, employees affected by family & domestic violence are entitled to:

- 5 days unpaid family & domestic violence leave
- Access to paid carers' and personal leave for permanent staff and unpaid carers' and personal leave for casual staff
- The right to request flexible working arrangements

See the [Employer Guide to Family and Domestic Violence.](#)

## Recognise the signs

Employees experiencing violence or other serious home issues may:

- Be distracted, anxious, depressed, jumpy, fearful, or tired
- Not be able to concentrate or to make decisions
- Get a lot of personal calls, texts or visits
- Take many breaks or have unusual start and finish times
- Be late or away from work more often
- Not be able to take work-related trips
- Often have injuries they cannot explain
- Wear concealing clothes even if it is hot, or change their appearance
- Engage in self-harm or self-destructive behaviour, drink too much alcohol or take drugs



## Safety First

**If someone is in immediate danger, call 000.**

It is your job to keep your employees safe, including from perpetrators of family and domestic violence at work.

To lower the risk of perpetrators in the workplace you can:

- Train staff in incident response
- Lock barriers in reception areas
- Install duress alarms and/or CCTV

## Talking to employees if you suspect violence

It is ok to say something if you think an employee may be experiencing violence at home. Make sure that you:

- Talk to them privately and keep the discussion confidential
- Talk to them about what you have noticed, not about your opinions
- Respect their choice if they do not want to talk

If they do choose to talk:

- Believe them and always take their fears seriously
- Listen without interrupting, judging or blaming them
- Never excuse the actions of the perpetrator
- Understand it may not be safe for them to leave their abuser

The reasons why people stay in violent relationships are complex. Your job as their employer is to provide support, not judgement or advice about leaving. For more, see [what to do if someone discloses abuse](#). If you do not feel confident to talk to your employee, refer them to a specialist service like [1800 Respect](#) and [Women's Safety Services SA](#) (1800 800 098).

If you have an employee who is concerned about their own use of violence or risk of becoming violent, you can refer them to [MensLine Australia](#) (1300 789 978).

Refer employees to services like **1800 Respect** (1800 737 732) to help them with assessing risk and safety planning, which may save their life. 1800 Respect also provides advice to managers and HR staff supporting employees experiencing violence.

## Supports you can offer employees

- Give employees time to attend therapy, court or police stations
- Think about giving them paid or unpaid leave beyond the Fair Work entitlements
- Screen phone calls, and check security and lockdown procedures
- Help employees monitor their work if they want that, so workloads are manageable
- Provide information about employee rights and support services
- Reassure your employee that their job is safe
- Think about giving staff access to an Employee Assistance Program, for short-term counselling

**Do not assume you know what your employee needs. Talk to them about what would help.**

**For more detail on making your workplace safe and supportive, see [Male Champions of Change Playing Our Part](#).**

## Links

1800 Respect (1800 737 732)

[www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au)

Fair Work Australia - Employer Guide to Family and Domestic Violence

[www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/1414/employer-guide-to-family-and-domestic-violence.pdf.aspx](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/1414/employer-guide-to-family-and-domestic-violence.pdf.aspx)

Male Champions of Change - Playing Our Part

[malechampionsofchange.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Playing-Our-Part-MCC-Letter-on-Workplace-Responses-to-Domestic-Violence.pdf](http://malechampionsofchange.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Playing-Our-Part-MCC-Letter-on-Workplace-Responses-to-Domestic-Violence.pdf)

MensLine Australia (1300 789 978)

[mensline.org.au](http://mensline.org.au)

Women's Safety Services SA (1800 800 098)

[womenssafetyservices.com.au](http://womenssafetyservices.com.au)

White Ribbon - What to do when someone tells you they have experienced violence or abuse

[www.whiteribbon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/WR\\_WhatToDoWhenSomeoneFactSheet\\_HR2.pdf](http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/WR_WhatToDoWhenSomeoneFactSheet_HR2.pdf)

University of NSW - Addressing Gendered Violence in the Workplace

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQkfwOyyHHQ&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQkfwOyyHHQ&feature=youtu.be)

