

NSW Domestic and Family Violence Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy 2017 – 2021



Health
Women NSW

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MINISTER'S INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to present the NSW Government's Domestic and Family Violence Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy 2017- 2021, which provides a clear focus on preventing violence before it occurs, and intervening early to create safer lives for women, men and children. The Strategy is a commitment of the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016-2021 ('the Blueprint') and will inform the way NSW Government agencies, non-government organisations and communities, design and deliver prevention and early intervention activities.

The Blueprint was launched in August 2016 and provides the direction for a domestic violence system for the next five years that works to prevent violence, intervene early with vulnerable communities, support victims, hold perpetrators accountable, and deliver evidence-based quality services to make victims safer and support their recovery.

The Strategy supports the delivery of the NSW Premier's priorities which are driving efforts to reduce domestic violence reoffending, protect children from harm, and support young people experiencing homelessness. It does this by identifying priority areas to achieve change by shaping our environments differently to prevent violence from occurring in the first place; establishing a shared understanding and awareness of what constitutes domestic and family violence; responding to people's multiple and different experiences of violence; and strengthening the domestic and family violence system in NSW.

One of the key actions of the Strategy is a \$20 million Domestic and Family Violence Innovation Fund, announced by the NSW Government in the 2016/17 Budget. It will fund initiatives that innovatively deliver prevention, early intervention and crisis responses to domestic and family violence. The Fund provides for an increased focus on prevention and early intervention activities, striving to achieve a significant and sustained reduction in the rate of domestic and family violence over time.

I look forward to the change experienced by individuals and communities, over the next five years as a result of the work we are doing together.



Pru Goward MP

Minister for Women

Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault

UNDERSTANDING DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

The NSW Domestic and Family Violence Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy 2017- 2021 ('the Strategy') presents a vision, and provides direction, for achieving change. The Strategy establishes a framework to support work across government and the whole community, in preventing domestic and family violence before it occurs, and intervening early to stop violence escalating and becoming entrenched in intimate and family relationships. The Strategy is a key commitment under the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016-2021 ('the Blueprint') and supports the NSW Premier's priorities which are driving initiatives to reduce domestic violence reoffending, protect children from harm, and support young people.

Domestic and family violence is a complex problem that impacts on all levels of the community.

- Domestic and family violence includes any behaviour, in an intimate or family relationship, which is violent, threatening, coercive or controlling, causing a person to live in fear. It is usually manifested as part of a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour.
- Domestic and family violence can include physical and sexual violence. It can also include verbal, emotional, social, psychological, and financial abuse, and other behaviours that limit a person's freedom to think and act.
- An intimate relationship refers to people who are (or have been) in an intimate partnership whether or not the relationship involves or has involved a sexual relationship.
- A family relationship includes people who are related to one another through blood, marriage or de facto partnerships, adoption and fostering relationships, sibling and extended family relationships.
- Domestic and family violence occurs in all parts of society, however rates of violence can be higher among groups experiencing other forms of social inequality, including those based on race and ethnicity, sexuality and gender, social class, disability and geographical location.
- One in six Australian women, and one in 20 Australian men have, since the age of 15, experienced physical or sexual violence from a partner they have lived with.¹
- For 62% of the women who had experienced physical assault by a male perpetrator, the most recent incident was in their home.²
- Women are over 3 times more likely to experience violence from an intimate partner than men.³
- Some women are considered at higher risk of experiencing domestic and family violence including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities, women with disability and mental ill-health, people who identify as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersex and Queer, young women and women in regional, rural and remote communities.⁴
- The rate of reported domestic violence-related assault for Aboriginal females in NSW is four times higher than for the whole female population.⁵
- People living in the same house, people living in the same residential care facility and people reliant on care may also be considered to be in a domestic relationship if their relationship exhibits dynamics which may foster coercive and abusive behaviours.

Domestic and family violence in intimate relationships, families and communities is preventable.

- Historically resources have been directed towards helping women, children and other victims of domestic and family violence to support them through immediate crisis, and as they deal with the long term effects of their trauma.

UNDERSTANDING DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

- Violence against women and their children is not an inevitable or intractable social problem. Rather, it is the product of complex yet modifiable social and environmental factors.⁷
- Gender inequality sets the social context for domestic and family violence to occur, and where violence against women and children is condoned.
- A small proportion of current investment by the NSW Government in domestic and family violence is targeted towards primary prevention and early intervention.
- Investment in addressing the underlying causes and drivers of domestic and family violence is essential to achieving an overall reduction in the rate of domestic and family violence and the demand for crisis services.

In responding to domestic and family violence, it is time to focus on prevention and early intervention

PREVENTION

Approaches aiming to reduce or prevent new instances of violence across whole populations before they occur, by addressing underlying causes. They address the underlying causes of domestic and family violence by: increasing knowledge, awareness and understanding of the nature and causes of domestic and family violence; and influencing attitudes to bring about behavioural change.

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Key focus areas for prevention include:

- Awareness building
- Promoting healthy relationships
- Influencing social norms

EARLY INTERVENTION

Approaches aiming to keep people safe and change attitudes and behaviours or build skills of individuals or groups who are at risk, or exhibiting early signs, of using or experiencing domestic and family violence. These approaches seek to prevent escalation and address issues arising from the experience of domestic and family violence. They include: prevention programs; and early interventions for victims, perpetrators and their children in relation to newly identified or disclosed incidences of domestic and family violence.

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Key focus areas for early intervention include:

- Identification
- Early engagement to change behaviour
- Referral pathways

Focusing on prevention and early intervention has clear benefits:

Human Benefits

The effects at the personal level are profound and long-lasting, causing significant impacts on individuals' health and wellbeing. Alleviating the fear and trauma associated will have a substantial impact on a person's ability to recover from their experience of violence. Preventing violence from occurring and intervening early will avoid human suffering and reduce people's need for support services.

Social Benefits

Domestic and family violence puts major strain on society, and the networks of relationships that connect people and communities. Preventing domestic and family violence will make communities safer and enable them to function better. Generational patterns of trauma and disadvantage can be interrupted.

Economic Benefits

The economic cost of domestic and family violence each year in NSW is now estimated at around \$5.6 billion.⁵ The majority of these costs are borne by individuals, with substantial costs to governments, employers, and the community. This does not take into account the enormous emotional and psychological costs to victims and families.

VISION FOR PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

After a significant shift in media coverage and community concern, governments and social service organisations are mobilising across Australia with new resolve and a vision for generational change to stop domestic and family violence.

Government and non-government experts have come together to develop the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy. They have envisaged a future where people are safe at home, and live their lives free from violence, abuse and discrimination. The invisible nature of domestic and family violence is becoming more visible. Instead of asking why doesn't she leave? Society is asking why doesn't he stop?

The generational change will have occurred when all women and girls are empowered to make decisions about their wellbeing and that of their family; when men and boys are engaged in building and supporting healthy relationships; and when communities are connected and have ownership of their cultural and social identities.

There are opportunities to improve existing processes, services and systems with new knowledge about the drivers of domestic and family violence and the environments which enable violence supporting attitudes and behaviours. There is an emphasis on new ways of working, by inviting innovative thinking about the problem and responding differently. To reach this future state, fundamental shifts in attitudes and behaviours need to occur.

Key shifts to achieve change

CURRENT STATE

People do not recognise violence and abuse in their relationships



There is a high threshold for violence



Victim blaming in the media and wider community is accepted/condoned/normalised



People experience fear and shame and do not seek help



The domestic and family violence system is responsive after the violence and abuse has already occurred



The domestic and family violence system is fragmented and disconnected



There is a lack of data and evidence to guide/inform decision making



Some individuals and communities are at higher risk of experiencing domestic and family violence



FUTURE STATE

Relationships are free from violence and abuse

People take action on an individual, professional and community level to respond to violent behaviour and attitudes

Attitudes, behaviours and social norms do not support or enable domestic and family violence

Services are user-friendly and accessible

The domestic and family violence system works to prevent and intervene early (before violence and abuse escalates or becomes entrenched)

The domestic and family violence system is cohesive, accountable and adaptive

The domestic and family violence system continuously improves through evidence, research, data collection and analysis

Individuals and communities at higher risk of experiencing domestic and family violence do not experience domestic and family violence

VISION FOR PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Priority areas to achieve change

SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT

1.

People understand the effects of domestic and family violence on individuals and the community

2.

There is a shared awareness and understanding of what constitutes gender-based violence

EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS

3.

Services respond to people's multiple experiences of violence and discrimination

4.

Population groups at higher risk of domestic and family violence receive support that fits their needs

STRENGTHENING THE DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE SYSTEM

5.

The system adopts new and innovative ways of working and being effective

6.

Approaches to prevent and intervene in domestic and family violence are integrated in whole-of-government policy and programs

PRIORITY AREAS FOR PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

This Strategy covers two components from the Blueprint:



Preventing domestic and family violence



Intervening early with vulnerable communities

SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT

1.

People understand the effects of domestic and family violence on individuals and the community

Promoting awareness and ownership across the whole community and lifespan

Domestic and family violence is an issue that affects everyone and so everyone has a part to play in addressing it. Knowledge of what constitutes domestic and family violence is needed across the community, and communities need to be able to determine their approaches for action. Activities include creating awareness of the dynamics and characteristics of domestic and family violence and supporting individuals to know how to respond. Targeted and whole population approaches will reduce and prevent new instances of violence for people across their lifespan.

2.

There is a shared awareness and understanding of what constitutes gender-based violence

Shifting social norms, attitudes and behaviours to support healthy relationships

Domestic and family violence occurs in a social and cultural environment which is shaped by attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, structures and systems. Social norms exist that enable gender inequalities in public and private life. Removing gender inequality is central to preventing and reducing domestic and family violence. Changing social norms which enable violence will support increased gender equality and equity in the community. Power is expressed in relationships between intimate partners, family members, as well in schools, workplaces, in the media, and in institutions. Preventing and intervening in domestic and family violence starts with a shift in how people perceive respectful and healthy relationships.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS

3.

Services respond to people's multiple experiences of violence and discrimination

Embed intersectionality in prevention and early intervention practice

Intersectionality is about understanding a person's lived experience and the effects of domestic and family violence in the context of those experiences. Individuals and groups in the community experience different forms of systemic, social, political and economic disadvantage and discrimination. Characteristics including race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality and gender identity, age and disability, do not cause violence. However, taking a person's experience of these into account can improve the design and delivery of prevention and early intervention activities. This approach to understanding the impact of domestic and family violence in a person's life can help recognise and respond to their multiple experiences of violence and discrimination.

4.

Population groups at higher risk of domestic and family violence receive support that fits their needs

Understanding and working to support individuals and communities at higher risk

Increased knowledge and understanding about the nature of relationships and experiences of abuse in communities where there is higher risk of domestic and family violence, will improve the effectiveness of interventions. Identifying where people are marginalised and challenging the stigma and stereotypes that lead to systemic discrimination, will improve access to information and support and reduce vulnerability to domestic and family violence. Individuals and communities considered to be at higher risk of experiencing domestic and family violence include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities, people with disability and mental ill-health, people who identify as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersex and Queer, children and young people and people living in regional, rural and remote communities.

STRENGTHENING THE DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE SYSTEM

5.

The system adopts new and innovative ways of working and being effective

Encouraging innovative thinking and approaches in all aspects of service delivery

There is an opportunity to significantly shift the social and economic outcomes for domestic and family violence. New approaches and doing existing things differently will be achieved by bringing together the deep knowledge of communities and experts, and working to create new thinking about the problem and ways to address it. There is space for new skillsets and capabilities including with business and technology entrepreneurs, to work in different types of partnerships, to achieve positive social outcomes.

6.

Approaches to prevent and intervene in domestic and family violence are integrated in whole-of-government policy and programs

Building a strong culture of knowledge-sharing to achieve equality of outcomes for individuals and communities

Working towards shared outcomes across the whole-of-government will improve the way evidence, research, and data are embedded in policy and programs to achieve change. There is an opportunity to build a strong knowledge base and rich data, while also creating effective processes for learning and evaluation. Preventing and intervening in domestic and family violence can occur in different parts of the social services system including justice, police, health, child protection, social housing and homelessness services.

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