**SAFE AT HOME / SAFE AT WORK**

# GUIDE FOR SDA OFFICIALS RESPONDING TO MEMBERS EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC/FAMILY VIOLENCE

**WHAT IS DOMESTIC/FAMILY VIOLENCE?**

Domestic/Family Violence takes many forms and tends to increase over time, becoming more serious and frequent. The perpetrator can be male or female. The violence may include the following forms of abuse:

* Intimidation
* Control
* Isolation
* Emotional
* Physical
* Sexual
* Financial
* Spiritual

**DOMESTIC/FAMILY VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE**

The abusive person may make it hard for your member to get to work; they may *harass them at work* or when they *arrive or leave work*. They may also *harass and intimidate co-workers*, who then may *blame your member*. Your member may then be worried that because of what is happening, *they may lose their job*.

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR THE SDA TO HELP A MEMBER EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?**

For those experiencing Domestic/Family Violence, maintaining paid employment and financial independence is vital to having choices to deal with their situation and successfully breaking the cycle of domestic violence.

Domestic/Family Violence can affect:

* the wellbeing and safety of your member and co-workers in the workplace. For many, the **violence can also occur in the workplace**, including harassment by **abusive phone calls, texts and emails**.
* your member’s ability to **attend work**
* your member’s capacity to **get to work on time**
* your member’s work **performance**; potentially leading to disciplinary action and the **loss of their job**
* your member’s ability to juggle **work and family responsibilities**

***We can help our members to be safe in the workplace.***

**Impact of violence on the workplace - STATISTICS**

In a 2011 survey of over 3600 union member respondents (19% of whom were men) **30% reported that they had personally experienced Domestic Violence**. Of the 30% who had experienced Domestic Violence:

* **Nearly half** reported that the **violence affected their capacity to get to work**, mainly due to the abuser inflicting **physical injury or restraint** (67%), **hiding keys** and **failing to care for children**.
* Nearly one in five **(19%)** who experienced domestic violence in the previous twelve months reported that the **violence continued at the workplace,** commonly in the form of **abusive phone calls** **and emails** (12%) and the **partner physically coming to work** (11%).
* The main reported impact was on **work performance**, with **16% of victims reporting being distracted, tired or unwell, 10% needing to take time off, and 7% being late for work.**

*REMEMBER – YOU ARE* ***NOT*** *A SOCIAL WORKER OR EXPERT IN THIS FIELD AND YOU ARE* ***NOT*** *EXPECTED TO BE ONE. YOU ARE NOT EXPECTED TO DETECT IF A MEMBER IS EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.*

***YOUR ROLE IS TO ASSIST YOUR MEMBER TO MAINTAIN THEIR EMPLOYMENT AND TO REFER THEM TO EXPERT ADVICE:* They should call1800 737 732 for expert advice**

THE DOs AND DON’Ts

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| DO | DON’T |
| **Be sensitive:** Approach your discussion with the same sensitivity and confidentiality you would use with someone experiencing sexual harassment. Be aware the member may be traumatised.  **Assure them they are not to blame:** No-one deserves to experience violence. Some people do not discuss Domestic Violence because they feel guilty or ashamed.  **Ask what impact Domestic Violence is having on their work life:** Your concern is with the impact Domestic Violence is having on your member’s ability to attend work without interference, for them and their colleagues to be safe in the workplace, and to have the necessary time to attend to their personal and family responsibilities under the circumstances.  **Ask what your member would like you to do:** Does your member want you to advocate on their behalf with their Manager or HR? If so, ensure your member attends any meeting with management and has control over next steps.  **Check the relevant Enterprise Agreement:** Many Agreements now contain domestic violence clauses or provisions in other clauses providing rights and entitlements for employees experiencing domestic violence. Check the relevant Enterprise Agreement and advise your member of their rights and entitlements.  **Refer them to an expert - 1800 RESPECT:** Advise your member that you are not an expert but strongly advise them to call this confidential, free, 24/7 hotline to put them in touch with the relevant experts who are able to assist them.  **Advise the member to get information about legal protection.** The workplace should be included in any Domestic Violence Protection Order. Note: People do not have to be separated, they can continue to live in the same house and stay in the relationship but with an Order that the violence stops.  **Discuss a safety plan:** Ask your member what they need to ensure their workplace is safe. Go through the actions listed in the Safety Plan. This may need to be revised after seeking expert advice.  **Inform them about the increasing risks of doing nothing**: If a member’s work is being interrupted or interfered with as a result of Domestic Violence, all research indicates that the risk of the situation worsening is very high. This may affect the member, their children, extended family and other colleagues in the workplace as well. ***Action can be taken to manage the situation.***  **Be mindful that in some cases disclosing domestic violence can be a safety risk**: In some cases, when someone discloses domestic violence to a manager their employment may be jeopardized. They may be terminated or if they are casual they may not get any shifts. We can assist members in an unfair dismissal case if this happens.  **Encourage your member to keep a diary in relation to attendance at work** and reasons for any absence/late arrival/early finish. Encourage them to note any relevant communication with management or HR. **Note**: It is also a good idea to keep a diary of all Domestic Violence incidents. This should be kept in a secure place.  **Ensure that your member can contact you or the SDA when needed**: Make sure you provide the Union contact details.  **Be vigilant about maintaining privacy:** It could be a safety issue. This includes the safe keeping of any notes or documents. | **Become personally involved**: Your role is not to fix the domestic Violence but to help your member at work. Under no circumstances should you visit the member’s home or place yourself at risk.  **Be judgemental or ask questions about why the violence is occurring**: This is not for you to understand or form an opinion on. Your responsibility is to ensure the member can get to work and do their job safely.  **Ask for any more information about what is happening in the home or in the member’s private life than is necessary to protect the member at work:** These matters are not our concern. You are not a Domestic Violence counsellor, so refer them to someone who can assist. Most companies have Employee Assistance Programs; however, the counsellors do not usually have specific expertise in these matters. In this situation it is best to refer your member to 1800 RESPECT as they are experts in dealing with domestic violence and can refer members to other services.  **Ask ‘why don’t you leave?’ :** It is the member’s decision to stay or go. These situations are often complicated and difficult. Do not judge their decision.  **Tell them what to do:** You are not a Domestic Violence expert. After you have informed them of your role and what you can do to assist, let them make the decision about matters which affect them.  **Condemn the member for deciding not to do anything**: It can take someone experiencing Domestic Violence a long time to address the situation. The best you can do is provide the contact number 1800 737 732 and offer any industrial assistance. If your member chooses not to pursue either, do not be critical of this decision. |

**1800 RESPECT / 1800 737 732**

**SAFETY PLAN**

BELOW ARE SOME ACTIONS WHICH MAY BE CONSIDERED **TO IMPROVE THE SAFETY OF YOUR MEMBER, CO-WORKERS AND CUSTOMERS IN THE WORKPLACE**.

The appropriateness of these measures will depend on the individual’s circumstances and that of the workplace. Some may already be in place, while others will need to be negotiated. This checklist provides a basis for discussion with your member and management.

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| **POSSIBLE ACTION** | **YES/NO** | **COMMENTS** |
| Paid time off to attend court to get a domestic violence protection order. This can include prohibition of contact at the workplace, and is highly recommended if there is a fear that the perpetrator will attend the workplace and present a risk to the member, other staff or customers. Management should be advised of any protection order which includes conditions which encompass the workplace, or prohibits contact with the worker. |  |  |
| Paid time off to attend to other matters such as medical treatment, relocation of home or children’s school, meetings with teachers, police matters, Centrelink appointments, counselling. |  |  |
| Changes to start and finishing times. Variations to avoid predictability. |  |  |
| Changes to location of work. |  |  |
| More than one person on the shift. |  |  |
| Arrangement to be able to leave the shop floor and go to a safe place, and to call the manager if the perpetrator should present at the workplace. |  |  |
| System for warning staff of intruders in the workplace. |  |  |
| Cards or keys to access worker only areas. |  |  |
| Safe parking (well lit and close to workplace). |  |  |
| Safe escort to car. |  |  |
| Video surveillance and signs to notify that it is in use. |  |  |
| Desk/under counter panic button. |  |  |
| Door chimes/other means to notify when someone enters the workplace. |  |  |
| Employment of security at the store/regular security patrols. |  |  |
| **Training of staff**:  -Emergency plan with procedures for contacting police when workers observe threatening behaviour  -How to question strangers/intruders in a non-confrontational manner  -Internal code word(s) known to all staff to indicate help is needed  -How not to reveal location/movements of the worker  -Clear reporting procedures for incidents of violence/threats |  |  |
| Screen and Track telephone calls and record voicemail messages. |  |  |
| Provide staff/security with photo of the abusive person. |  |  |
| Establish the contact details of a relative or friend who is able to communicate with the worker and check on their welfare if the workplace is unable to contact their employee (the member may be locked at home without access to a phone, or incapacitated). They should have the union’s contact details too. |  |  |

**1800 RESPECT / 1800 737 732**

**RESOURCES**

**1800 RESPECT / 1800 737 732** - National, 24/7, hotline which offers free counselling. It links people experiencing domestic violence to local expert resources which offer support.

Giving your member this number to call is ***crucial*** in assisting them to find expert help and advice in dealing with Domestic Violence.

**If you believe your members is very vulnerable or at risk of self harm, refer them to one of the following numbers.**

**LIFELINE – 13 11 14**

**KIDS HELPLINE – 1800 55 1800** (This is open to children and young people aged 5 – 25 years).

**Other information which may be of interest:**

**Domestic Violence Protection Order information sheet**

**SANE Factsheet – How to help when someone is suicidal**

**1800 RESPECT / 1800 737 732**