

## INFORMATION SHEET

Family violence, or domestic violence, is when someone uses abusive behaviour to dominate and control another person in a family or relationship.

Sometimes, violent and controlling behaviour falls into more than one type of abuse, or it might not seem to fit into any of the categories listed here.

What matters is whether you are controlled or feel afraid because of the behaviour.

Any behaviour or action that constitutes family violence is unacceptable, even if it's not a criminal offence.

## Types of family violence



### Physical abuse

- Hitting, punching, pulling by the hair, choking, pinching, pushing, stabbing or restraining you in any way. Physical injuries are often directed at parts of the body that other people won't see.
- Using weapons to frighten you or causing damage to property.
- Not letting you sleep, eat, or take your medication.



### Verbal abuse

- Harassing or threatening you.
- Saying things to frighten you. For example, telling you that your children won't live with you if you leave the relationship.
- Calling you insulting names.
- Undermining you as a parent in front of the children.



### Sexual abuse

- Forcing you to have sex when you don't want to.
- Making you engage in sexual practices you are not comfortable with.
- Making you wear clothes that you're not comfortable with.

If you're affected by family violence, it's important to know you're not alone.



**If you feel unsafe and need help right now, call 000 (triple zero).**

You can also find support services on page 2.



### Emotional abuse

- Withdrawing from you and not giving you support.
- Controlling you with anger or by not speaking to you.
- Expressing extreme jealousy.
- Stopping you from using the phone or transport.
- Not letting you make your own choices.
- Harming your pets.



### Social abuse

- Putting you down in front of other people.
- Lying about you to other people.
- Isolating you from people who support you.
- Not letting you visit a doctor on your own.
- Controlling your life; not letting you have a life outside the home.



### Financial abuse

- Controlling the money so that you are dependent on them.
- Forcing you to sign for loans you might not agree with.
- Questioning you about every purchase you make.
- Using joint finances for personal use.
- Incurring debts for which you're also responsible.



### Spiritual abuse

- Not letting you practise your own religion.
- Forcing you to follow a religion that you don't want to.



## Stalking

- Constantly calling you, or sending text messages, emails, faxes, letters or unwanted gifts.
- Loitering near your home or workplace.
- Spying on you or following you.



## Coercive control<sup>1</sup>

This is a form of family violence which involves a pattern of controlling and manipulative behaviours.

There are 12 signs of coercive control:

1. Isolating you from your support system.
2. Monitoring your activity throughout the day.
3. Denying you freedom and autonomy.
4. Gaslighting.
5. Name-calling and severe criticism.
6. Limiting your access to money and controlling your finances.
7. Reinforcing traditional gender roles.
8. Turning your children against you.
9. Controlling aspects of your health and your body.
10. Making jealous accusations about the time you spend with family or friends.
11. Regulating your sexual relationship.
12. Threatening your children or pets.

<sup>1</sup> Lamothe C (2019) How to Recognize Coercive Control. healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health/coercive-control>

## Who is affected?

Family violence affects people of every community, age, gender and sexual preference.

Children are affected by family violence, even if the violence is not directed at them. For example, they will be affected if they hear, witness or are exposed to the behaviour or its effects, such as a distressed adult, an injured person or damaged property.

Family violence has significant psychological, emotional, and physical impacts on those who are directly affected by abuse, and on those who witness the violence.

**It's important to seek support for family violence.**

Family violence is a deliberate act and usually happens more than once.



Over time, it tends to happen more regularly and the level of violence increases.

**If you feel unsafe and need help right now, call 000 (triple zero) immediately.**

This information sheet is based on content in our booklet, 'Safe from violence: A guide for women leaving or separating'. To download this booklet and other free resources, visit [rav.org.au/resources](http://rav.org.au/resources)



## Where to get support

Everyone has the right to feel safe and free from abuse and violence in their relationships.

If you, or someone you know, is affected by family violence, the following organisations can help.

- **1800RESPECT, 24/7**  
Phone 1800 737 732 or visit [1800respect.org.au](http://1800respect.org.au)
- **Safe Steps (Victoria), 24/7**  
Phone 1800 015 188 or visit [safesteps.org.au](http://safesteps.org.au)
- **MensLine Australia, 24/7**  
Phone 1300 78 99 78 or visit [mensline.org.au](http://mensline.org.au)
- **Sexual Assault Crisis Line (Victoria)**  
Phone 1800 806 292 or visit [sacl.com.au](http://sacl.com.au)
- **Rainbow Door (Victoria)**  
Phone 1800 729 367 or visit [rainbowdoor.org.au](http://rainbowdoor.org.au)
- **The Orange Door (Victoria)**  
Visit [orangedoor.vic.gov.au](http://orangedoor.vic.gov.au)

We also provide links on our website to other support services, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culturally and linguistically diverse people, and people with disability. View the list at [bit.ly/violence-trauma-support-services](http://bit.ly/violence-trauma-support-services)

## How we can help

We recognise the significant impacts and complexities of family violence, including living in fear and intimidation.

We provide family violence prevention, support and recovery services including men's behaviour change and men's case management programs, women's groups, and counselling for people of all genders. We can also provide referrals to other support services such as those listed above.

Visit [rav.org.au/family-violence](http://rav.org.au/family-violence) to learn more.

We are committed to providing safe, inclusive and accessible services for all people.



We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways of Australia and we support Aboriginal people's right to self-determination and culturally safe services.