



Our goal must be a society where all people are safe in their home, families and close relationships; where violence and abuse are not acceptable; and where all relationships respect the equality and dignity of each person. This is part of the Gospel vision of love and respect.

- *Victorian Bishops 2016*

Domestic and family violence is a crisis in Australia.

On average, each week in Australia a woman dies as a result of family violence.

1 in 4 children experience the fear and distress of witnessing their mother being abused.

Overwhelmingly the victims of domestic and family violence are women and children.

What is domestic and family violence?

Domestic and family violence is a pattern of abusive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship where one person assumes a position of power over another and causes fear.

It can take the form of physical, emotional, financial or spiritual violence and can occur in many different kinds of relationships—from one partner to another, or from an adolescent toward a parent, or from family members toward an elderly parent.

Although women and children are most often victims of family violence, men can also be victims.

All violence is unacceptable.

What can we, as a Catholic community, do about domestic and family violence?

The Victorian Family Violence Royal Commission highlighted the important role faith communities can play in the lives of Victorians affected by family violence.

The Victorian Catholic bishops have called on people of faith and church organisations to

- learn about domestic and family violence
- reflect on our own attitudes
- equip ourselves with the knowledge to assist those who ask for help, through referrals to specialist services where needed
- do what we can in our relationships, parishes, communities and organisations to eliminate violence and its impact.
- foster in our families and communities alternatives to violence
- Our aim is to make all Church communities places of support and healing

How do you respond to someone facing domestic or family violence?

The key messages in responding to victims of domestic and family violence are **sensitivity** and **confidentiality**.

We do not advise you to counsel or attempt to mediate. An appropriate response is to listen and refer the person to a professional service.

Services that can help someone who is a victim of family violence:

POLICE: Call 000

If anyone is in immediate danger, ask for the Police for immediate assistance

SAFE STEPS – 1800 015 188

A state-wide 24-hour, 7-days-a-week crisis support and accommodation service for women and their children.

1800 RESPECT – 1800 737 732

A national 24-hour, 7-days-a-week service, for advice or support in relation to sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling.

Services that can help men end their abusive behaviour:

MEN'S REFERRAL SERVICE – 1300 766 491

A national 24-hour, 7-days-a-week, anonymous and confidential counselling, information and referral service to help men stop using violent and controlling behaviour.

Resources

The **Victorian Catholic Bishops** have released a Statement urging the Catholic community to play a part in preventing and responding to domestic and family violence. The statement can be read at: www.css.org.au/dv

Catholic Social Services Victoria are developing a resource kit to assist individuals, parishes and organisations respond to those who seek assistance, and play a role in preventing domestic and family violence. A copy of this will be distributed to parishes in February 2017.

The website www.css.org.au/dv contains information about training programs available to parishes and organisations.

For further information about this initiative or any of the materials, please contact Catholic Social Services Victoria: office@css.org.au, tel 9287 5566.

*We must always say 'no' to violence in the home -
Pope Francis*