

Appendix 4

Responding to Family and Domestic Violence Procedure

A step by step guide

Step 1 - Identify

1. Be aware of factors that increase the risk or likelihood of a person being abused.
2. Look for possible **signs of abuse**.
3. If you suspect a client is being abused; if indicators suggest they are at risk; or they fall into a mandatory screening group, ask suggested screening questions (see Screening for FDV form [FDV950](#)).
4. If client doesn't disclose but you suspect: provide information on support services; screen at future presentations; consult with your line manager; and document reasons for your concern.
5. If client discloses: acknowledge abuse; validate their experience; refer on for a Risk Assessment if possible. If not, go to step 2.

Interview clients alone. Do not use relatives as interpreters.

Step 2 - Assess

1. Identify risk factors (see Assessment for FDV form [FDV951](#)).
2. Identify what protective factors are in place e.g. what other support services are currently involved with the family? Do they have a safe place to go? A safety plan?
3. Ask client their own assessment of their level of risk.
4. Consider any other additional factors e.g. substance misuse, mental health issues, cultural/ language barriers?
5. Does the client have children in their care? Assess their safety (see [FDV951](#) for guidance).
6. Determine if client and/or children are at risk of harm or at high risk of serious harm.

Telephone advice from the Women's Domestic Violence Helpline (1800 007 339) may be helpful and can assist with undertaking a risk assessment over the phone.

Step 3 - Support and refer

1. Identify what action is required to address their immediate safety (see FDV *Flowchart*).
2. Discuss options with client and make appropriate referrals.
3. Consider release of information without client's consent for high risk cases (refer to delegated authority).
4. If appropriate provide written information about FDV support services available in your area.
5. If recent sexual assault - refer to Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC).
6. If suicide risk – refer for mental health assessment.
7. Schedule a follow-up appointment if appropriate.
8. Consult with your line manager/ social worker.

If it is suspected that a possible crime may have been committed (e.g. theft, fraud, neglect, sexual or physical assault) involving the police should be discussed and documented.

Step 4 - Document

1. Document disclosures in the client's own words (use verbatim where possible).
2. Document any evidence of injuries, treatment, referrals and information provided to the client.
3. Photographic evidence of injuries is preferable.
4. Do not record on the client's hand held record.

Be aware that records can be subpoenaed to court. Documents may be accessible under FOI to a person who has an appropriate interest.