Identifying and responding to domestic and family violence

The physical and emotional safety of all employees and their family members is of utmost importance. The practical and emotional support individual staff members require will differ person to person.

**Assistance for those in immediate physical danger**

*Staff members*

If an employee advises they are in immediate physical danger because of domestic and family violence, they should be encouraged to call the police on 000 (triple zero).

If there is a risk that the employee and/or others may not be safe within the workplace because of their involvement in a domestic and/or family (DFV) violence situation, their principal or manager should develop, in consultation with the affected employee, a[*DFV* *Workplace Safety Plan*](http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/Upload/publicsite/Education/Studentwellbeing/AttEDFVSafetyplan.docx)*.* DET’s [*DFV Workplace Safety Plan*](http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/Upload/publicsite/Education/Studentwellbeing/AttEDFVSafetyplan.docx) and [*DFV Workplace Safety Checklist*](http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/Upload/publicsite/Education/Studentwellbeing/AttDDFVChecklist.docx) can be found on the [QCEC website](http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/educational-services/student-wellbeing/domestic-and-family-violence-resources).

*Support for non-staff members*

School community members or others within an education workplace who disclose they are in immediate physical danger should also be encouraged to contact the police on 000 for advice and assistance. Specialist advice and support can be accessed by contacting DVConnect on telephone 1800 811 811 or 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732).

*Support for students and responsibilities for reporting concerns*

When there is reasonable suspicion that a school student may be at risk of harm as a result of domestic or family violence, the concerns should be discussed immediately with the relevant principal and /or reported directly to Child Safety and/or the police.

[Attachments A to F](http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/educational-services/student-wellbeing/domestic-and-family-violence-resources) contain further guidance about:

* indicators of suspected abuse and neglect, including abuse as a result of domestic and family violence
* speaking with children and young people about suspected abuse and/or neglect
* reporting processes and procedures
* contact details for Child Safety and police and
* services available to support students and families.

More detail about Student Protection obligations, can be found within the *Student Protection* procedure located at the following links:

<http://ppr.det.qld.gov.au/education/community/Pages/Student-Protection.aspx> and

<http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/catholic-education/student-protection>

**Recognising possible signs of Domestic and Family Violence at Work**

It is important for all employees, particularly principals and managers, to be aware of common signs and indicators of domestic and family violence, so that appropriate support can be offered to affected staff members.

Some indicators of abuse can also be indicators of issues unrelated to domestic and family violence, such as ill health or other personal issues**.** Therefore, sensitivity should be exercised when initiating a discussion with an employee for whom you hold concerns.

Some common signs of domestic and family violence to consider (not exclusive):

* Physical signs of violence such as bruising, scratches, fractures, other injuries and possible efforts to hide evidence of physical violence;
* Frequent or increasing absences from work;
* Lateness to work or remaining at work after hours;
* Reduced concentration and reduced work performance;
* Unstable moods – the person may be teary, anxious, irritable or withdrawn;
* Becoming withdrawn, unusually quiet or showing a loss of confidence;
* Signs of being possibly afraid of someone close to them or reporting feeling afraid of their partner;
* Appearing anxious to please their partner;
* Reporting that they have little or no say about how money is spent, or limited access to money;
* Reporting that their partner wants them to leave their job;
* Reporting that their partner is ‘jealous’ or ‘possessive’ and accusatory about relationships with others;
* Reduced or no communication with friends and family, or an inability to attend work, social or outside hours events;
* Having their partner ring them continuously to check on them, or being collected by that partner;
* Appearing to have, or reporting a reluctance to leave their children with their partner; and/or
* Reporting they are being stalked, harassed or followed.

Staff members experiencing domestic and family violence are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their principal or manager to discuss the support available.

**Approaching an employee who may be experiencing domestic and family violence**

For a range of reasons, a person experiencing domestic and/or family violence may not feel able to discuss their circumstances with their principal, manager or others within the workplace.

If an employee has been showing signs that they may be experiencing domestic and/or family violence, the person may benefit from a principal or manager approaching them to discuss support options available.

Considerations when approaching an employee:

* Ensure the staff member is alone and it is safe for them to speak and you are not likely to be interrupted;
* Approach the person sensitively and use a statement like: “I am worried about you because I have noticed…” to start the conversation;
* Respect the person’s right not to want to talk. It may be that the person is not ready to talk, or they may be fearful or ashamed;
* Reassure the person that you or others are there, should they ever want to talk about their circumstances;
* If the person discloses their circumstances, listen without judgement and believe what they tell you;
* Reassure the person that the abuse is not their fault and that the violence or abuse is a behaviour that the other person is choosing to make;
* Advise the person that their information will be kept restricted, however to ensure the safety of that person or others there may be a requirement to let other staff members know certain information. The sharing of personal information will be discussed with the staff member affected;
* Ask the person what the workplace can do to assist – each person affected will have different needs for support - and provide the staff member with time to consider what assistance would best meet their needs;
* Identify any safety needs with the person while at work - using the [*DFV Workplace Safety Checklist*](http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/Upload/publicsite/Education/Studentwellbeing/AttDDFVChecklist.docx)and [*DFV Workplace Safety Plan*](http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/Upload/publicsite/Education/Studentwellbeing/AttEDFVSafetyplan.docx)*,* identify measures to help increase the safety of that person and others;
* Assure the person there is a range of departmental supports available for staff affected by domestic and family violence. These include:
	+ paid leave provision;
	+ flexible work arrangements;
	+ temporary or permanent relocation or transfer; and
	+ access to free, confidential counselling through DET’s employee assistance provider;
* Encourage the person to contact a specialist domestic and family violence for confidential advice and information.

Staff members who use violence or abuse and are seeking support to change this behaviour are also able to access confidential, specialist advice and support from services such as DVConnect or general counselling support from the relevant CSA’s employee assistance provider.

**Referring affected employees to specialist support services**

Specialist domestic and family violence services can provide telephone crisis counselling, information and referral to crisis care facilities and refuges, support and advice with making safety plans, information on domestic violence orders and court support, access to interpreter services, emergency transport and information on longer term counselling services.

The [Queensland Police](https://www.police.qld.gov.au/programs/cscp/dv/whatDomViolc.htm) <https://www.police.qld.gov.au/programs/cscp/dv/whatDomViolc.htm> and [Queensland Government](http://www.qld.gov.au/community/getting-support-health-social-issue/domestic-family-violence/) (<http://www.qld.gov.au/community/getting-support-health-social-issue/domestic-family-violence/>) websites also have a large range of useful information and resources on domestic and family violence.

Within Queensland, DVConnect offers the following counselling and information services:

* Womensline: Ph: 1800 811 811 (24/7 telephone service)
* Mensline: Ph: 1800 600 636 (9am-midnight, 7 days)
* Sexual Assault Line: Ph: 1800 010 120 (8.30am – 11.30pm, 7 days)

Or contact the national 24/7 1800RESPECT (Ph: 1800 737 732) telephone service for support and information on Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault

General and 24/7 crisis counselling can also be accessed through the [Catholic schooling authority responsible for the school or workplace](http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/upload/publicsite/catholiceducation/schooldirectory/SD201507-All.pdf).