

# CHOOSING FAMILY VIOLENCE AND GENDER EQUITY TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY THAT DELIVERS RESULTS

A TOOL FOR EMPLOYERS, HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING  
PROFESSIONALS

“Approaches that contribute to ending domestic and family violence in the workplace are smart investments that can result in strong financial benefits for companies. Supporting survivors of violence to stay working ... optimises productivity and profitability”

- **Miwa Kato Regional Director UN Women  
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific**

TOGETHER BUSINESS AND THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SECTOR CAN CREATE CHANGE IN THE WORK-PLACE, IN THE COMMUNITY AND ACROSS THE COUNTRY THAT ENABLES WOMEN TO BE SAFER AND HAVE THE DIGNITY AND RESPECT THEY DESERVE.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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This resource has been developed by the Women's Information and Referral Exchange (WIRE) and Women's Health in the South East (WHISE) on behalf of 14 Community Sector organisations who deliver capacity and capability development services to create gender equity and address family violence in workplace. This work is based on their significant long term experience in creating a safe and equitable community for all women and girls.

The authors acknowledge the traditional owners of the land. We pay our respect to elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge that sovereignty of this land has never been ceded and we are committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our work.

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This resource is designed to help businesses get the right training provider to deliver training in family violence and gender equity. It has been developed by women's health and community services organisations who are experts in assisting, supporting and managing those affected by family violence. They have been providing professional training and consultancy services cross-sector for over 15 years that recognises the important relationship between the employer, the employee and their customers and the need for a workplace response to family violence.

This resource is for Employers, Human Resources and Learning Professionals and consultants who work in the area of family violence and gender equity. This resource can be used when your organisation wants to select a training provider to build understanding, skills and knowledge in your workplace on:

- What family violence and gender equity is, in a workplace context
  - What the community and government response to family violence is
  - How to create a gender equitable workplace
  - What the causes of family violence are and how gender inequity is a lead driver of violence against women
  - How to identify the red flags where an employee, colleague or customer may be experiencing family violence
  - What practical steps people and culture practices can take to support employees experiencing family violence
  - What appropriate responses and referrals for customers experiencing family violence can be
  - How to identify an employee who uses or may use violence and what legally and appropriate responses can be used to maintain health and safety in the workplace
  - How existing policies and practices for leave management, flexible working, technology use, health and safety and appropriate workplace behaviour (discrimination, harassment and bullying policies) can be adjusted to support victims of family violence
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# WHY YOUR ORGANISATION SHOULD FOCUS ON FAMILY VIOLENCE AND GENDER EQUITY

**“BY 2021–2022, INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE ALONE IS PROJECTED TO COST THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY \$15.6 BILLION ANNUALLY OF WHICH \$456 MILLION WILL BE BORNE BY EMPLOYERS.”**

More than 60% of women report experiencing some form of violence at work and one in four women have experienced violence perpetrated by a current or former partner with most of these women participating in the workforce. This impacts adversely on organisations through increased absenteeism, presenteeism and staff turnover whilst also reducing productivity, morale and the organisation’s brand and reputation.

Addressing family violence and creating a workplace culture of respect and equity is just good business and leads to financial and social benefits for employers, employees and customers.

**“WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER IS THAT FUNDAMENTALLY, VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS ENTIRELY PREVENTABLE. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN STEMS FROM GENDER INEQUALITY...”**

Organisations that create a workplace culture of respect and equity can stop violence from happening in the first place. Research tells us that workplaces are more likely to attract and retain a diverse and productive workforce and be considered Employers of Choice if a respectful workplace culture is created. Strong workplace policies and procedures to support those affected by violence to stay in paid work are critical to help the employee escape and recover from violence. Business will benefit from this financially through increased productivity, improved employee health and well-being and reduced absenteeism and operating costs.

**“...63% OF WOMEN WHO WERE EXPERIENCING HIGH FINANCIAL STRESS ... HAD A HISTORY OF ECONOMIC ABUSE, COMPARED TO THE POPULATION AVERAGE OF 15.7%”**

Customers who can’t pay their utility bill, default on a loan payment and who access hardship programs or end up with debt recovery teams are more likely to be experiencing family violence. Frontline staff are well placed for early intervention and with the right training, will be able to identify the family violence red flags and prevent customers from slipping into entrenched poverty and hardship. Early intervention also means customers are more likely to be able to pay their bills, in future resulting in reduced collection activity and costs for the business as well as a more engaged workforce who have the confidence and skills to genuinely engage and support their customers.

# CHECKLIST FOR ACTION

## GETTING STARTED

It can be hard to know where to start but don't let this stop you. The good news is many other organisations of all sizes and from a range of industries have developed family violence and gender equity strategies that are working, building positive brand recognition, improving staff morale and customer service. Before you start:

**USE THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS** Talk to other like-minded organisations that have a strategy in place to discover what works and what can be adopted by your organisation. Consider joining Thriving Communities Partnership so that you and your staff can be supported by partners undertaking similar work. Go to the Economic Abuse Reference Group website for tips on good practice.

**CREATE BUY-IN WHERE YOU CAN** If possible gain leadership commitment to implement best practice family violence mitigation practices for both staff and customers. Nominating a senior executive from your organisation to champion this initiative is a practical step that can lead to strong positive results. If you don't have this from the beginning aim to work towards it as part of your ongoing strategy

**DEVELOP A CLEAR POLICY** on family violence for the organisation for your staff, customers and if appropriate, suppliers. If you don't have this policy when you commence training roll out, that is okay – you can use the training to inform how you develop your policy .

**THINK ABOUT DISCLOSURES EARLY** When conversations or action around family violence starts, it is very common for staff to disclose their own experiences. Develop clear policy and practices in relation to disclosure of family violence. Good policies for disclosure of family violence identify the person responsible for overseeing process and the resources available to assist customers and staff when a disclosure occurs. If you don't have this policy, you can start by working out a process that will be utilized by human Resources, managers and the trainers before roll out of training.

**KNOW YOU ARE ON A JOURNEY - THE END POINT MAY AS YET BE UNKNOWN TO YOU** It is normal for organisations developing a gender equity or family violence strategy to discover that the more they learn, the more they discover has to be done. For instance, finding out that some of product and information materials need to be rewritten so that they 'do no harm' and reduce vulnerability to family violence and discrimination. This can be expected as part of your planning.

**Remember:** It is okay if you cannot tick all of these boxes before you commence your work. As a first step, engage with an expert training provider. They can help you identify the best approach and learning solution to suit your organisation and where you are on this journey.

# PRINCIPLES OF BEST PRACTICE TRAINING



## “WHAT DO I NEED TO LOOK FOR AND PLAN FOR TO IMPROVE OUR POLICY AND PRACTICE REGARDING FAMILY VIOLENCE?”

Good partnerships between businesses and training providers to address family violence are based on an understanding that any behavioural change takes time and that good training is more than informing - it is changing the attitudes and behaviours that are the drivers of family violence and building sustainable capability within the business.

## PRINCIPLES FOR TRAINING THAT CREATES CHANGE

### PARTNERSHIP TRAINING

Providers that are committed to eliminating family violence and increasing gender equity will want to work in partnership with you to reach common goals.

### EVIDENCE INFORMED

An expert training provider will base their content on material backed by evidence, research and real life case studies.

### PROVEN KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

Family violence is complex. Providing inaccurate information endangers staff and customers and ultimately hurts the whole organisation. Risks are mitigated by working with training providers with proven knowledge and experience in delivering training in family violence and gender equity. Check out the websites of any trainers you are considering and check with organisations they have previously worked with to ensure that their claims of expertise and experience are real.

### MANAGING DISCLOSURE AND SAFETY

Trainers must be experienced in managing disclosures from victim/survivors and perpetrators - this includes being able to manage room dynamics, the needs of individual participants that disclose and the safety of all participants. Check qualifications of trainers and their experience working with victim/survivors of family violence and managing disclosures in a training environment.



### SKILLED DELIVERY

A trainer must be knowledgeable and must be able to impart complex ideas (which may be challenging and upsetting) in a way that is understandable and creates buy in. They must be able to flexibly adapt to emerging situations and respectfully manage difficult conversations.

### RELEVANT

Training should be applicable to the participant's role and function. Ensure information and clear guidance is provided to the training organisation so the training can be appropriately tailored.

### CREATING A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Trainers must be able to provide a space in which new and challenging information is shared. This requires trainers to professionally and respectfully challenge harmful beliefs that participants hold around family violence and gender equity. Ask the trainer how they have managed situations like this in the past and how they will for your specific organisation.

### INFORMATION THAT LEADS TO ACTION

Learning should be tailored to include your organisation's policies and procedures that are relevant to the participant's role and function. Workers need a clear understanding how family violence and gender equity policy relates to their day to day activities. If you're only just beginning this journey, awareness raising sessions can be used as an influencing technique to bring senior leaders on board and start this process. This builds a shared understanding of the issue across the organisation.

### INCLUSIVE

The training needs to be inclusive and draw attention to the family violence needs of people from different communities and perspectives e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women with disabilities. Good training is inclusive of all your workforce and customers. Ask the trainer how they incorporate diversity and inclusion in their training in a way that doesn't perpetuate harmful stereotypes.

### REFERRAL INFORMATION

Training will include referral information relevant to both staff and customers - both internal and external to the organisation.

## GOOD TRAINING ON FAMILY VIOLENCE AND PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE THAT IS AIMED AT HR PROFESSIONALS WILL:

- Build practical understanding of the impact of unconscious bias in the organisation
- Demonstrate the impact of family violence on any IR, OH&S and organisational policy settings
- Provide opportunities to undertake safety planning and plan for the referral pathways that will be provided to employees – this work will leverage existing policy settings of the organisation
- Include evidence based information for engaging with perpetrators without collusion





# QUESTIONS TO ASK A TRAINING PROVIDER

**CONFIDENT RESPONSES TO THESE QUESTIONS DO NOT GUARANTEE A HIGH QUALITY PROVIDER, BUT MAY HELP TO GIVE AN INDICATION OF THE TRAINER'S ABILITY AND EXPERTISE.**

QUESTION	WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A RESPONSE
How did you acquire your expertise in this topic?	Professional training and work experience in family violence.
What evidence and frameworks is your training based on?	Evidence informed frameworks such as Our Watch's 'Change the Story', strengths based and gender informed.
How do you take into account the likelihood that there will be victims/survivors as well as perpetrators in your audience?	Recent examples of strategies that trainers employ to prepare for this and what the trainers do in the training environment if this arises. Look for how the trainer may manage "collusion" in the training room and their understanding of what to look out for if there are victims/survivors that may not immediately disclose. Seek to understand how they would go about processing any disclosures and its impact on colleagues.

QUESTION	WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A RESPONSE
<p>How do you respond to attendees who may disclose that they are victims/survivors of family violence?</p>	<p>Look to see if they have experience in customising referral pathways for your organisation. Do they ask for your policies and can they provide examples of previous work. See if the potential provider outlines both appropriate individual responses to disclosure and organisation wide.</p>
<p>How do you respond to staff who may be reluctant/refusing to engage?</p>	<p>As well as recognising that some staff may be reluctant based on personal experience/trauma, a trainer should also be confident to respond to individuals who may be disruptive or dismissive of family violence as a problem.</p>
<p>What is the basis for your advice to the audience about responding to co-workers or customers who disclose family violence? How would you respond to disclosure or perpetrators in the training setting?</p>	<p>You should hear a confident response that their advice and their own responses are based on research/evidence, and that they ideally have experience applying these strategies in practice.</p>
<p>What are some common myths about family violence that you would address in training?</p>	<p>Look for evidence base and breadth of examples that the trainer calls upon. Seek to understand if a) they know a broad range of myths and b) how they address them in the training room. As an extra ask if they provide support to encourage training participants to dispel myths once they leave the training room.</p>
<p>What are the outcomes you are expecting the organisation and participants will achieve as a result of attending this training?</p>	<p>Look for concrete change examples and seek to understand what change indicators and outcomes have been used in other organisations. Look for specific outcomes rather than broad generic ones and look to see if the trainer uses this opportunity to understand your organizational needs so that the outcomes can be tailored.</p> <p>If the outcomes they predict sound too good to be true, they usually are.</p>
<p>How would you like to work with us?</p>	<p>Check if they are asking about your policies and procedures and how much they want to know about your organisation. Not asking these questions could indicate they are not interested in converting information into action and change.</p>

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