

Family Violence

What is family violence?

Under the Victorian Government's Family Violence Protection Act 2008 Family violence is:

(a) Behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person if that behaviour

- is physically or sexually abusive; or
- is emotionally or psychologically abusive; or
- is economically abusive; or
- is threatening; or
- is coercive; or
- in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person;

Or

(b) Behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, behaviour referred to in paragraph (a).

Interchange Outer East's policy

IOE has a duty of care to all of those supported by the agency. If family violence is witnessed or suspected within any of the families IOE supports, staff and volunteers are expected to follow these protocols:

As a volunteer or support worker:

If a volunteer or support worker directly witnesses family violence they should ensure the immediate safety of themselves and those they are supporting. They are to contact 000, and when possible the IOE emergency phone.

If a volunteer at IOE suspects family violence in a family home – whether suspicions are linked to any bruising/fearful behaviour, or verbally reported by an individual, the volunteer should ensure the immediate safety of themselves and the person they are supporting, and notify the rec leader/co-ordinator as soon as practical for further investigation.

Any volunteer or support worker who witnesses family violence, or are involved with suspected/alleged family violence will be offered debriefing.

As a co-ordinator:

If a co-ordinator has received a report within the agency of family violence directly witnessed or suspected by an IOE volunteer or support worker, they need to ensure that a thorough incident report is completed and the team leader/manager is notified.

Anyone in the family flagged as 'at risk', should be provided with contact phone numbers for support. See the "what is family violence" fact sheet by DHHS, saved in Key documents – Resources.

Debriefing will be available for any co-ordinators managing a family violence situation.

As a team leader/manager:

If a team leader/manager has received a report within the agency of family violence directly witnessed by an IOE volunteer or support worker, they need to ensure police have been notified. Information should be accessed from the police about;

- Status of investigation
- Determination of who is 'at risk'
- Actions in place
- Restrictions related to access to children
- Safety concerns regarding IOE staff

If a team leader/manager has received a report within the agency of family violence suspected by an IOE volunteer or support worker, they need to ensure that an incident report is completed.

Follow up actions should include:

- Feedback on working in the home to be gained from known support workers
- Contact made with case manager, relevant external service providers involved with the family are to be contacted and briefed on suspicions
- A risk assessment completed

If a team leader/manager believes that there is enough evidence to validate concern, or multiple reports of suspected family violence, police should be contacted to investigate the matter.

Anyone in the family flagged as 'at risk', should be provided with contact phone numbers for support. See the "what is family violence" fact sheet by DHHS, saved in Key documents – Resources.

Debriefing will be available for any team leaders/managers managing a family violence situation.

Notifications made to the emergency phone:

If you are on the IOE emergency phone, and receive a page to advise of a directly witnessed or suspected/alleged family violence incident, you are required to ensure that:

- Any family members who are witnessed to be victims of family violence (or at risk of being so) are safe for the immediate future.
- The volunteer/support worker is safe for the immediate future
- Police have been contacted if anyone's safety cannot be confirmed
- The team leader/manager is contacted to ensure they are aware of urgent follow up required
- The volunteer/support worker is given an immediate opportunity to debrief the event, with formal debriefing to be scheduled in the coming days.

Please refer to **"what is family violence – fact sheet"** by DHHS, which is saved in Key Documents – resources.