

## Identifying and Responding to Family Violence Procedure- Template

(*Name of Organisation*) will support and resource our staff across all aspects of community housing provision to have a shared understanding of family violence. Staff will utilise the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework Family Violence Screening Tool to identify family violence. Through understanding our role in identifying indicators of family violence and referring to tenancy management staff for further investigation, (*Name of Organisation*) will develop and enhance their early intervention approach to vulnerable tenancies and victims.

In order for (*Name of Organisation*) to effectively identify and respond to family violence we will:

- » Ensure all staff across receive training on foundational knowledge and identifying and responding appropriately to family violence.
- » Inform renters that assistance is available to those affected by family violence by displaying posters, pamphlets and information on website.
- » Enable renters to report family violence to us in different ways, including in person, in writing, over the phone and online.
- » Investigate all reports of family violence that we receive. Recognising that reports of antisocial behaviour might also be related to incidents of family violence and will also be investigated.
- » Give victim-survivors the opportunity to opt for a staff member of the same gender to deal with their case wherever practicable.
- » Ensure that victim-survivors know that they can meet staff in confidence at (*Name of Organisation*) offices or at an agreed safe place. We will also agree to the method of contact that the victim-survivor wishes us to use to stay in contact with them.
- » Work with partner agencies to ensure co-ordinated services to prioritise the victim-survivor's (including children's) safety.

Adapted from Community Housing Industry Association NSW Strengthening practice in responding to domestic and family violence: A toolkit for community housing providers

» Advise victim-survivors of external agencies who can offer further advice and support (for advice on tenancy issues, legal advice for example) and make facilitated referrals on their behalf and with their consent if required.

» Encourage victim-survivors to engage with family violence support and advocacy services and make referrals on their behalf and with their consent if required.

The Residential Tenancies Act has provisions aimed at increasing protections and outcomes for victim-survivors of family violence.

### Maintaining a tenancy

(*Name of Organisation*) acknowledges the right of victim-survivors to live in safety and free from family violence. The appropriate response to the maintain the victim-survivor's tenancy will depend on the situation and the victim-survivor's choices. This may include:

- » Making referrals as appropriate to allow victim-survivors to apply to VCAT to have an agreement transferred into their name (excluding a perpetrator) and also to protect themselves from the debt created by the perpetrator due to damage to the property or unpaid rent.
- » Providing consent for property safety modifications. Where the victim-survivor is not receiving support from a local family violence service, offer a referral to a specialist family violence service for a home safety assessment to ensure modifications are appropriately monitored, of high quality and act to increase safety.
- » Ensuring in circumstances where victim-survivors need to be away from the property that tenancies are sustained without causing financial hardship in such circumstances.

### Ending a tenancy

(*Name of Organisation*) acknowledges that victim-survivors may choose to end their tenancy for a number of reasons, including for their safety. (*Name of Organisation*) will assist with this process by:

- » Making referrals as appropriate to allow victim-survivors to apply to VCAT to remove themselves from the agreement and also to protect themselves from the debt created by the perpetrator due to damage to the property or unpaid rent.
- » Ensuring debt or property damage is appropriately managed and the victim-survivor is not being charged for debt that is the result of family violence
- » Waiving notice periods for victim-survivor renter to terminate an agreement.
- » Assisting the victim-survivor/s to access the property safely retrieve their belongings.
- » Offering a referral to a family violence financial counsellor to support a victim-survivor to ensure that creditors are contacted at the time of relocation, to ensure they apply hardship provisions and or payment plans (if relevant) and are given sufficient relevant information so they do not share information on the victim-survivor's whereabouts with the perpetrator at a later date.
- » Offering a referral to a support agency to assist with an application to the Victorian Housing Register for a priority property transfer.

### **Working with perpetrators**

*(Name of Organisation)* will take appropriate action against anyone responsible for perpetrating family violence. The appropriate response to the perpetrator will depend on the situation. This may include:

- » Contacting the Police and other emergency services if the situation requires an immediate response due to safety or in circumstances where a crime has been committed.
- » Referring to support workers who provide specialist services to perpetrators to assist them to gain support in addressing their issues, such as *Men's Referral Service or WithRespect*.
- » Seeking secondary consultation and share risk relevant information (in accordance with relevant

legislation e.g Information Sharing Schemes) with other services.

- » Reporting concerns about the impact of the perpetrator's violence on any children to Child Protection or other relevant authorities.
- » If the perpetrator is the head renter or co-renter, negotiate with the perpetrator to relocate them to another property if this is the desire of the victim-survivor and if it is safe to do so, which will require the perpetrator to agree to being relocated.
- » If it is not considered appropriate/safe to relocate the perpetrator and if the RTA supports the situation, refer the victim-survivor to an appropriate legal service for support in applying to have the tenancy transferred solely into their name.
- » If it is not considered appropriate/safe to relocate the perpetrator or terminate the perpetrator's tenancy, relocate the victim-survivor(s) to a safe property. Due to the circumstances, this may be to crisis or transitional accommodation with a plan in place with support worker(s) to obtain long term, stable and affordable accommodation. Contact *Safe Steps* for a family violence risk assessment and emergency accommodation options.

*(Name of Organisation)* will monitor family violence incidences across our housing portfolios to support identification of perpetrators and monitor the success of our actions in supporting victim-survivors. This will assist *(Name of Organisation)* by prioritising areas or individuals affected by repeated family violence.

### **Work health and safety**

*(Name of Organisation)* utilise a robust risk assessment process to maintain safety for all staff and contractors. We ensure that all workers and contractors check renter alert registers before conducting any home visits to manage renters or their visitors who may pose a risk to staff and contractors.

## Collaborative responses to family violence

(Name of Organisation) collaborates with a range of partners across the service system in a variety of ways to support and better assess and manage family violence risk. Through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework, we have an important role in the identification and management of family violence and providing safe tenancies.

We will seek advice and guidance from local specialist family violence services. This can assist to explore options that are available locally. Victim-survivor anonymity can be used if issues are discussed in generic terms. As an Information Sharing Entity (ISE), we are always able to share information about perpetrators without their consent, and in cases where victim-survivors are deemed at serious threat, without their consent, within a legal framework (Part 5A of the Family Violence Protection Act).

### Related documents

- Family Violence Policy
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Application and Allocation Policy

### Review

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| Procedure number   |  |
| Procedure name   |  |
| <i>Identifying and responding to family violence procedure</i> |  |
| Scope  |  |
| Version  |  |
| Date approved  |  |
| Date Reviewed  |  |
| Specific responsibilities                                      |  |
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