



## Workforce development

Whilst it appears that there has been increased commitment to providing training and professional development on the subject of disability and violence, there are two significant challenges facing the integrated family violence sector. The first is concerned with attracting workers to take up the offered training and professional development opportunities; and the second is in sustaining initiatives in order for growing numbers of workers in the family violence response system to be exposed to relevant skills development.

In this section, we document recent training initiatives and workforce development needs of the family violence sector and, where feasible, the disability sector. We have also included information about recent conferences and forums that focussed on issues of violence against women with disabilities.

### 7.1 Developments in family violence training

In 2003 the Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence contracted the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV) to map family violence education and training for key occupational groups. It involved the mapping of induction and in-service training undertaken by key occupational groups as well as existing Victorian TAFE, University (including post-degree qualifications) and adult, community and further education courses for occupational groups that come into contact with those who experience family violence. One of the issues the mapping project was asked to consider was whether training packages took into account the specific needs of Indigenous and CALD women. Whilst disability is raised within the body of the report the actual project specifications, for this 2003/2004 project, did not directly mention women with disabilities. Four years on we see a positive shift within government: for example, in May 2008 the Department of Planning and Community tender document for the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework Training states that the Training Program is to incorporate culturally appropriate components for Indigenous and CALD persons *and for people with a disability*.

#### DVRCV's mapping project in 2003/04

The DVRCV mapping project found that few professional groups included family violence as a component of their induction programs (Clancy 2004a & 2004b). Exceptions include Victoria Police, Child Protection, Court Network, Victoria Legal Aid and most telephone counselling services. It also found that family violence is not a compulsory (core) unit in any TAFE courses and its inclusion as a TAFE elective unit is usually dependent on the experience and qualifications of

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teachers. TAFE Colleges run a number of Community Service Training Packages including courses that lead to qualifications in community sector professions such as welfare, disability, and youth work. The lack of *compulsory units* in family violence within these courses is a significant gap given the future role these workers may play with clients affected by family violence. Similarly, university courses do not provide specialist family violence units. Of the courses that do include family violence, it is always as a component of other units.

When disability or family violence sector workers have been asked about their workforce development needs in relation to supporting women with disabilities experiencing family violence, both sectors have readily identified training as a priority. Individuals and agencies from the disability sector have shared their thoughts around the need for training that focuses on disclosure and referral. The family violence sector has identified broader training needs based on 'disability awareness', how to navigate access to disability support services and building worker confidence in supporting women with disabilities.

VWDN AIS asserts the importance of both sectors having the opportunity to challenge their existing attitudes and beliefs in relation to women with disabilities' experience of family violence.

While dealing with family violence is not the primary role of disability support workers, women with disabilities are reliant on them acquiring the skills necessary to recognise disclosures of violence, to respond with appropriate information or provide support enabling women to access relevant family violence services.

A key finding of the DVRCV mapping project was that agencies and individuals who respond to those affected by family violence should make these responses within a theoretical framework that is articulated and translated into policies and practice. Training is a major contributor to the development of expertise in linking theory and practice when responding to family violence. Encouraging participants' willingness to take on new ideas, skills and practices is dependent upon the training program providing the opportunity for them to examine their own attitudes and beliefs. It is important to contextualise training to suit the roles of different professional groups in recognising and responding to family violence.

## DVRCV's SAAP training: 2003, 2004, 2006

In April 2003, as an initiative of the Violence Against Women with Disabilities project, DVRCV's training team developed and delivered a highly successful cross-sectoral training program in domestic violence and disability to both disability and family violence sector workers in the western metropolitan region. Subsequently in 2003, 2004 and 2006, the DVRCV SAAP training calendar advertised Domestic Violence & Disability training programs. Two programs were scheduled for rural Victoria, one in a metropolitan region and another in central Melbourne. For the earlier training programs DVRCV gained support from the respective (now defunct) Regional Family Violence Networkers who were keen to promote and ensure local training on disability and family violence occurred. One of the rural trainings went ahead, albeit in a limited format, with 12 participants registered from the disability sector. Two other training sessions (the other rural and the metropolitan training sessions) had to be cancelled at the last minute due to lack of registrations. DVRCV trainers and the Regional Family Violence Networkers had, in retrospect, underestimated how reliant the western region training had

been on the networks established by the Violence Against Women with Disabilities project leading up to and beyond the training dates. Committed to the training, DVRCV delivered a one day training session in central Melbourne to 11 participants as part of the 2006 SAAP calendar. In addition to offering specialist training in domestic violence and disability, DVRCV has worked to ensure the inclusion of disability within its accredited training programs, *Introduction to Domestic Violence* and the *Not Seen or Heard: the Effects of Domestic Violence on Children*.

### DHS' support for training

During 2007 to 2008 we are seeing an unprecedented level of disability and family violence training being offered. The Department of Human Services fund the delivery of the *Integrated Pathways Training*. This training is intended to provide an induction and orientation program for workers in the family violence sector, specifically those working within family violence services, child protection, police and the court system. The training is primarily targeted at Department of Human Services (Office of Housing and Office for Children) funded family violence agencies. In 2007 DHS funded the development and delivery of a new competency as part of this training package, *Orientation to Disability Work*. This elective unit is designed for those working with people who have disabilities and who experience family violence. To date, out of the 80 training places offered, 43 participants have completed this unit.

DHS Disability Service Division has contracted Swinburne University of Technology (TAFE Division) and Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria to develop and facilitate a two-part learning program aimed at assisting workers in the disability and family violence sectors to provide for a more unified approach in supporting women with a disability who may be experiencing family violence. The *Women with a Disability Family Violence Learning Program* will be rolled out across all eight DHS regions throughout 2008. The facilitated practice forums provide a space not only to promote a common understanding of issues, but also of the respective roles and responsibilities of different professionals. There is unlimited opportunity for the development of cross-sectoral collaboration, working together to strengthen strategies and improve local responses. The training component of the learning package is open to disability workers only, 20 places available in each region. Training has been delivered in both the Hume and Southern regions with 8 and 15 participants respectively. Potentially 143 disability support workers will receive training during 2008 if full participation is achieved in the remaining scheduled training.

Whilst the significant increase in training opportunities being offered throughout 2007 and 2008 is cause for celebration we need to be mindful that with approximately 11,000 disability workers in Victoria (and an unknown number of family violence workers), there needs to be a workforce development strategy committed to ongoing training aimed at building competency in the area of responding to women with disabilities experiencing family violence.

Although both the disability and family violence sectors have repeatedly identified the need for training in relation to domestic violence and disability it appears both sectors find it difficult to make a firm commitment to training when offered. To date all training programs have been delivered to less than capacity numbers with a few of DVRCV training days cancelled due to lack of registrations; and yet, feedback from those who have attended the programs has been extremely positive. It appears that competing training needs and or opportunities may be a barrier to both sectors receiving adequate training in relation to family violence

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and disability. Agencies and individual workers are continuously faced with limited access to training budgets, a limited number of days a worker can realistically attend training and competing training opportunities. Until violence against women with disabilities becomes a priority issue for government and community, agencies and individual workers may subsequently fail to prioritise this issue as a high training need.

### **7.2 Training and professional development initiatives**

Below, we map the sector-wide training initiatives provided to family violence and disability workers, relating to women with disabilities experiencing violence, over the last twelve months and training planned within the next twelve months (from June 2007 to June 2009).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See appendix 3 for more details about individual initiatives.

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## Training and Professional Development Activities for Family Violence and Disability Workers Relating to Women with Disabilities Experiencing Violence - 2007 and 2008

### Training

| Date            | Training Activity  | Delivered by             | Delivered to                          | Attendance | Where         |
|-----------------|--|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------|---------------|
| <b>2007</b>     |  |                          |                                       |            |               |
| June 2007       | Sexual Abuse Trauma Experienced by Mental Health Clients           | MHTDU/The Bouverie       | mental health workers                 | <b>28</b>  | Melbourne CBD |
| Oct 2007        | Integrated Pathways (Full Course/ 1 day disability)                | Swinburne/DVRCV/NTV      | family violence workers               | <b>11</b>  | Melbourne CBD |
| Dec 2007        | Integrated Pathways (Full Course/ 1 day disability)                | Swinburne/DVRCV/NTV      | family violence workers               | <b>9</b>   | Melbourne CBD |
| <b>2008</b>     |  |                          |                                       |            |               |
| Feb 2008        | Integrated Pathways (Orientation to Disability – Stand alone unit) | Swinburne/DVRCV          | family violence workers               | <b>7</b>   | Melbourne CBD |
| Feb 2008        | Sexual Assault and Cognitive Impairment                            | Family Planning Victoria | sexual assault counsellors            | <b>19</b>  | Boxhill       |
| April 2008      | Integrated Pathways (Full Course/ 2 day disability)                | Swinburne/DVRCV/NTV      | family violence workers               | <b>16</b>  | Melbourne CBD |
| April/June 2008 | DHS: Women with a Disability Family Violence Learning Program      | Swinburne/DVRCV          | disability sector workers Hume Region | <b>8</b>   | Benalla       |

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|               |   |                    |   |           |               |
|---------------|---|--------------------|---|-----------|---------------|
| May/June 2008 | DHS: Women with a Disability Family Violence Learning Program | Swinburne/DVRCV    | disability sector workers Southern Region | <b>15</b> | Dandenong     |
| Oct 2008      | Sexual Abuse Trauma Experienced by Mental Health Clients      | MHTDU/The Bouverie | mental health workers                     | n/a       | Melbourne CBD |

\*\*\*\* Swinburne and DVRCV will roll out the training component of *The Family Violence Learning Program* across the remaining 6 DHS Regions between June 2008 and December 2008 with the potential to train a further 120 disability workers.

\*\*\*\* The *Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework Training* will be delivered between July 2008 and June 2009 .

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## Professional Development

| Date        | Professional Development   | Delivered by         | Delivered to   | Attendance | Where         |
|-------------|--|----------------------|--|------------|---------------|
| Dec 2007    | Violence, Abuse and Mental Health                                | DVRCV/guest speakers | family violence & community sectors  | <b>45</b>  | Melbourne CBD |
| Feb-June 08 | 4 half-day facilitated practice forums                           | Swinburne/DVRCV      | Hume region: Disability Services staff/disability NGO's and family violence sector     | -          | Benalla       |
| Feb-June 08 | 4 half-day facilitated practice forums                           | Swinburne/DVRCV      | Southern Region: Disability Services staff/disability NGO's and Family violence sector | -          | Dandenong     |
| Feb 2008    | Supporting women with disabilities: Practice Development Network | DV VIC/VWDN          | DV Vic members   | <b>7</b>   | Melbourne CBD |

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|           |   |             |                          |          |               |
|-----------|---|-------------|--------------------------|----------|---------------|
| May 2008  | Supporting women with disabilities:Practice Development Network | DV VIC/VWDN | DV Vic members           | <b>8</b> | Melbourne CBD |
| July 2008 | Disability and Family violence                                  | DHS         | South West IFV committee | -        | Warrnambool   |
| July 2008 | Disability and Family violence                                  | DHS         | South West IFV committee | -        | Geelong       |

\*\*\*\* Swinburne and DVRCV will roll out 4 half day facilitated practice forums component of *The Family Violence Learning Program* in the remaining 6 DHS Regions between June 2008 and December 2008.

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### Forum/Conference

| Date        | Forum  | Delivered by                                   | Delivered to   | Attendance | Where     |
|-------------|--|--|--|------------|-----------|
| August 2007 | Take Back the Castle (included a focus on women with disabilities) | Aust. Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse | Policy makers, government reps. Family violence sector                           | <b>85</b>  | Melbourne |
| Oct 2007    | What to do, Where to go, What to expect                            | Family Planning Victoria                       | workers, carers consumers  | <b>80</b>  | Carlton   |
| Nov 2007    | Diverse and Inclusive Practice: Redrawing the Boundaries           | Aust. Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse | women with disabilities, violence & disability sectors,policy makers, government | <b>80</b>  | Sydney    |
| April 2008  | Responding to Abuse  | DISTSS   | disability sector  | <b>160</b> | Preston   |

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## 7.3 Conclusion and recommendations

Consultations with disability and family violence sector workers (in the course of the DVRCV Violence Against Women With Disabilities Project research), and the consultations for this research, revealed that workers in both sectors have readily identified training as a priority. Disability workers revealed their interest and need for training that focuses on disclosure and referral, whilst family violence workers identified broader training needs based on 'disability awareness', how to navigate access to disability support services and build worker confidence in supporting women with disabilities.

The mapping of sector wide training initiatives for 2007 to 2008 regarding women with disabilities experiencing violence reveals an unprecedented level of disability and family violence training; however, these initiatives will only reach a small proportion of workers in either of these sectors.

There are, therefore, considerable challenges to workers' engagement with training opportunities. There is a need for leadership from managers and strong support from regional co-ordinators, and word of mouth, in devising ways to support workers to take up training opportunities. Family violence workers explained that whilst their respective agencies may encourage staff to do training, their workloads have increased to such an extent that they are reluctant to do training as there is no-one to fill in for them. This means they do not have the opportunity to network or get information about training for supporting women with disabilities. To date all training programs have been delivered to less than capacity numbers with some training days cancelled owing to lack of registrations.

## Recommendations

That funding agreements require workforce development strategies that give particular consideration to identifying the need for strengthening and furthering training:

1. That family violence is made a *compulsory component* of all of the TAFE community sector profession courses (Certificate IV) and that it includes a focus on disability and violence. That said, training on violence against women needs to include education about women with disabilities being at greater risk of being targets of violence and thus incorporate how to respond to women with disabilities in all generic training programs. This will ensure a maximum number of family violence workers have access to skills and expertise on supporting women with disabilities.
2. That the *Strategic Framework for Family Violence Reform* incorporates and sustains the disability and family violence training currently being offered. For example, there needs to be ongoing funding of training programs for disability workers (such as DHS' *Women with a Disability Family Violence Learning Program* and associated practice forums).
3. That training programs emphasise and explore the ramifications of the fact that women with disabilities experience violence in diverse residential settings.



4. That government provides funding to enable education about family violence and its impact on women and children with disabilities to be incorporated into the training of the judiciary, lawyers, and court officials.
5. That the relevant legislative frameworks for disability and family violence are incorporated into the training of workers in the disability and family violence sectors.
6. That all domestic and family violence workers are trained to respond to the needs of all women, including women with disabilities, and that they develop policies to ensure access and non-exclusion from service provision.
7. That the promotion of training in relation to marginalised issues is given leadership from managers and strong support from regional coordinators, and word of mouth.